

Realization of principles of transparency of public administration in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)¹

Realização dos princípios de transparência da administração pública na República de Sakha (Yakutia)

Recebido: 13/07/2019 – Aprovado: 13/11/2019 – Publicado: 02/01/2020

Processo de Avaliação: Double Blind Review

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ABSTRACT

This paper is devoted to the study of the principles of transparency in the public administration in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). In Yakutia – the Arctic region of the Russian Federation, the readiness of civil society institutions to take an active role in solving social problems is an important issue. In 2018 a study on the assessment of social practices of organized interaction between the public service and the citizens in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) was conducted. At the first stage, the authors did a

¹ Funding: The reported research was funded by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research and the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), grant № 18-411-140001

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corpus-based content analysis of 28 administrative regulations. At the second stage, the questionnaire survey was conducted. The respondents are students (N=280) and public servants (N=139). The results showed that there is a need to ensure openness and transparency in the decision making process. However, citizens are not ready to take the active role in public administration yet.

Key words: Public service; Transparency; Arctic region; Public administration; Civil society; Social practices.

RESUMO

O artigo é dedicado ao estudo dos princípios de transparência da administração pública na República de Sakha (Yakutia). Para Yakutia - a região ártica da Federação Russa, a disponibilidade das instituições da sociedade civil para participar ativamente da solução de problemas sociais é uma questão importante. Em 2018, foi realizado um estudo sobre a avaliação das práticas sociais de organização da interação entre o serviço público e os cidadãos da República de Sakha (Yakutia). Na primeira etapa, os autores fizeram uma análise de conteúdo baseada em 28 regulamentos administrativos. Na segunda etapa, foi aplicado questionário. Os entrevistados são estudantes (N = 280) e funcionários públicos (N = 139). Os resultados mostraram que é necessário garantir abertura e transparência no processo de tomada de decisões. No entanto, os cidadãos ainda não estão prontos para participar ativamente da administração pública.

Palavras-chave: Serviço público; Transparência; Região ártica; Administração pública; Sociedade civil; Práticas de gestão.

1. INTRODUCTION

The transparency of public administration means the readiness of the authorities to publicly discuss socially important decisions, provide information about their activities and ensure that public opinion is taken into account. In the literature that analyses the social transformation in the conditions of the fourth technological revolution one can find the opinion that new technologies will contribute to the increasing role of citizens, giving them the opportunity to directly participate in the development of management decisions regardless of their place of residence or official status (Schwab, 2016).



In such conditions, the functions and significance of the public service as the main governing entity significantly change. If, in the context of traditional bureaucracy, the main task of an official is administration, that is, formalized administrative activities, now the task of reconciling goals and social values is increasingly coming to the fore. The social values on which government relies are socially endorsed beliefs about the basic goals of human existence. The new concept of administrative reform, called Good Governance, implies that the success of public administration is determined by the coherence of public interests and values that leads public servants in carrying out their official duties. Within the framework of the social management system, this implies the translation of the needs of the population into the political subsystem, and legitimized, that is, legally fixed, norms and rules - into the self-governing subsystem.

Within the framework of the concept of traditional bureaucracy, one of the core values was, on the contrary, the opacity and elite character of state administration, which determined the isolation and special social status of the public service. They were based on two principles: firstly, state administration was based on state-imperious sacredness, originating in the archetype of the “wise old man” (Vasilieva, 2018); secondly, the information that is necessary for making state decisions is regarded as exclusive, secret, and its disclosure is treated as treason. The requirement of transparency is in direct conflict with these principles.

Thus, during the reform, the very essence of interaction between citizens and the state had to change: paternalism, which excluded the ability of citizens to participate in key management decisions, should be replaced by partnership. The key problem of public administration in this case becomes the governability of the public service, which means the ability and willingness of officials to set and achieve certain goals in cooperation with other actors – politicians and civil society institutions.

By 2013, in the Russian Federation were created conditions required to increase the importance of openness and transparency of public administration as a publicity value. It was adopted a several documents, in particular, the Concept of reducing administrative barriers and increasing the availability of public services, in which information transparency was defined as one of the main criteria for the assessment of efficiency of the executive authorities:

1. Ensuring the availability and timeliness of providing information about the activities of officials, including the Internet.



2. Public discussion of draft government decisions, including in the form of public hearings and consultations.
3. Extensive use of the opportunities provided by new information technologies, such as social networks and specialized platforms.
4. Involvement of citizens in the control of public service, including in the field of personnel policy.

Thus, it was supposed that increasing the transparency of public authorities will automatically ensure the involvement of citizens in the adoption of socially significant decisions. However, no less important is the willingness of citizens to participate in public administration. This is of particular importance for the Arctic region of the Russian Federation. The sparseness of population, territorial remoteness, difficult natural conditions that hamper the technological development of the Arctic regions, necessitate the maximum involvement of all residents in the implementation of socially significant projects. Only conscious and active participation of citizens allows providing a positive social evaluation of the results of reforms and optimizing costs (Anderman, Austin, & Johnson, 2001; El'meev & Tarando, 1999; Graaf & Paanakker, 2014; Hayden, 1988; Borisov et al., 2018).

2. DEVELOPMENT

The model of traditional bureaucracy for the first time was described by M. Veber (1994), who considered public servants as professional group, whose goal is performance of state functions. The Russian school of Public Administration took this model as an ideal, and introduced principals of professionalism, impersonality and formalization into the practice of government. Such authors as G.V. Atamanchuk (2008), A.V. Duka (2008), K.O. Magomedov (2010), A.V. Makarin (2006) and others have formed the modern Russian public service. They prove, that public service is an apparatus performing legislative and law-providing functions of the state, officials cannot make a socially important decision.

The authors of the “New Public Management” concept (D. Kettl (2000), G. de Graaf and H. Paanakker (2014), K. Hood (1986), W.A. Niskanen (1975) and others) laid down a new tradition in defining the public service and its role in public administration. Their concepts of “activating” or “economical” government formed the basis for most

administrative reforms carried out in various states at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. The theory of public administration that has emerged on the basis of these concepts emphasizes the importance of civil society as a subject of government and argues that it is necessary to limit the role of the bureaucracy in managerial decision-making. W. McCourt (2013) analyze the results of these reforms and make a general conclusion about their effectiveness.

Despite this, the NPM constantly was criticized. The main complaints are: decline the role of the public service as an actor of governance and the erosion of employee values, reducing the attractiveness of public authorities as a place of work, which leads to a decline in the professional qualification level of officials and even contradiction to the principles of democracy. Such authors, as D. Woods and R. Waterman (1994), G. Wyckoff G (1990), R. Wintrobe (1997), W.T. Gormley, S. Balla (2013) suppose, that some principles of rational bureaucracy can be used to improve modern governance. H.S. Chan and E.L. Suizhou (2007) shows how this combination can be implemented on the example of the People's Republic of China. The perspective of including new principles of governance into the practice of Russian public service is analyzed in the article of V.N. Yuzhakov (2015).

For now the most interesting is the concept of Performance management (PM), that is described in the works of M. Armstrong and A. Baron (1998), G. Dessler (2013), T. Curristine (2005), J.-F. Henry (2004) and others.

Based on literature review we built the following research questions:

The research question 1. What is the declared level of openness of the public service in order to interact with civil society institutions in administrative regulations on the provision of public functions by the executive authorities of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)?

The research question 2. Do the ideas about the nature of the civil service of students of the Northeastern Federal University coincide with the values attitudes that guide the public servants of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in their work?

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In 2018 a study was conducted to assess the social practices of organized interaction between the public service and the citizens in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The



research methods contained an analysis of administrative regulations and a questionnaire survey. The study had two stages. At the first stage, a corpus-based content analysis of 28 administrative regulations on the provision of public functions by the executive authorities of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) were conducted. Its aim is to determine the declared level of openness of the public service within the civil society institutions, and the supported level of interest of civil servants in organizing interaction with citizens and civil society institutions. As an indicator of openness of public service, the subjectivity of citizens of the republic reflected in the administrative regulations, defined by keywords. The key words considered were "citizen", "population" and "declarant".

In the modern Russian language, two types of syntactic structures with the verb can be distinguished - active and passive voices. In case of active voice, verbs are denoting an action performed by the subject and actively directed at the object. The active voice has a syntactic characteristic: the actor of the action is the subject, and the object is an addition in the accusative case without a preposition. The passive voice is a form of the verb, showing that the person, acting in the sentence as the subject, does not produce actions (he/she is not a subject of actions), but experience someone's action (he/she is an object of action). The passive voice represents an action as passively directed from object to subject. The most important grammatical indicator of the passive voice is the instrumental case of the noun with the meaning of the real subject of the action. In case of administrative regulations, the use of a keyword in the active voice implies the equality of the citizens as a subject of interaction, and in the passive voice, it means the secondary, subordinate role of the citizen in the process of interaction.

The second stage was the questionnaire survey. The aim of the questionnaire survey was to conduct a comparative analysis of value attitudes implemented in the process of public administration of republican public servants and students. The survey involved 139 public servants (10% of the general strength) and 280 students. The results were processed in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet program and the SPSS program.

4. RESULTS

The first stage: analysis of 28 administrative regulations. In the overwhelming majority of occurrences, citizens are perceived as objects of control - 81% of cases (see Table 1).



Table 1**The distribution of the occurrences of keywords by voices.**

	Active voice		Passive voice		Total
	occurrences	%	occurrences	%	
citizen	68	14,1	414	85,9	482
population	0	0	132	100	132
declarant	125	31,1	277	68,9	402
Total	193	19,0	823	81,0	1016

At the same time, the word “population” is not used at all in the subject context, that is, in the minds of republican officials, unorganized groups of citizens cannot be considered as full-fledged actors of interaction. The greatest managerial subjectivity is possessed by persons defined in the regulations as “declarant”, that is, those who have already received a certain communicative status within the framework of the interaction, namely, filed a formal appeal or complaint and were registered in the prescribed manner. It should be noted that legal entities can also act as declarant, which, of course, reinforces the subjectivity of this concept.

The word “citizen” in administrative regulations is more common than other keywords that define individuals who interact with government authorities in the performance of public functions. Only in 14.1% of occurrences they are considered as full participant of interaction, which means, that in the system of republican public service, citizens can in some cases be considered as an active subject, mainly in cases when a citizen gets the opportunity to demand compliance with the established rules during communication. This is evidenced by the fact that most often the key word “citizen” used in the actual voice corresponds to the verbs “notifies” (6 entries, 10.3% of the total number of verbs), “indicates” (4 entries, 6.9%) and "have" (3 occurrences, 5.2%).

Thus, we can conclude that, despite the declaration of a desire to ensure informational openness, for public servants of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) the idea, that citizens are not actors of public administration, is approved and supported by official staffing policy.

The second stage: the questionnaire survey. The results of the questionnaire survey showed that, at present, in the Republic it is remains the traditional bureaucratic

approach to assessing the prospects for public participation in government decision-making.

Answering the question about the main task of public servants, both groups of respondents gave priority to the performance of public functions, the second most important task is to meet public needs (see Table 2).

Table 2
Tasks of public service.

	Students, %	Public servants,%
Management decision-making in the area of jurisdiction	4,6	7,0
Administration, directing	9,3	7,7
Performance of state functions: defense, law enforcement, social protection, etc.	50,4	47,6
Preparation of regulations, administrative and explanatory documents	9,6	11,2
Implementation of executive orders	6,8	7,0
Provision of public services	4,6	5,6
Meeting social needs	13,6	12,6
Other	1,1	1,4

Evaluating their social status, civil servants, relying on Russian legislation, identified themselves as professionals engaged in activities in government authorities (33.6%). Most of the students, by contrast, identified officials as politicians who directly exercise public administration (29.3%). At the same time, both categories of respondents adhere to the position that officials are undoubtedly managing actors, the opinion that the government authorities are a service delivery sphere is not popular (see Table 3).

Table 3**Public status of public servants.**

	Students, %	Public servants, %
executives	22,9	21,0
the professionals	24,3	33,6
managers	5,3	5,6
politicians	29,4	28,5
employees, attendants	15,7	10,3
other	2,3	0,9

The majority of both groups of respondents defined the role of civil society in the same way – as a full-fledged participant of public administration, including political processes (43.8% of public servants and 34.3% of students). For students it is also desirable that a civil society is directly involved in the implementation of state functions, and for civil servants it is more preferable that these institutions perform control functions, but do not directly participate in the administration process (see Table 4).

Table 4**The role of civil society in public administration.**

		Students	Public servants	Total
Civil society actors are a full-fledged participant in government, including political processes	People	69	56	125
	%	34,3%	43,8%	38,0%
Civil society actors must perform those functions of the state that are not performed by the executive authorities.	People	34	10	44
	%	16,9%	7,8%	13,4%
Civil society actors must perform the tasks that the state delegates to them.	People	44	11	55
	%	21,9%	8,6%	16,7%
Civil society actors should control the	People	38	39	77

performance of state functions, but they themselves do not perform	%	18,9%	30,5%	23,4%
Civil society actors are not involved in government	People	16	11	27
	%	8,0%	8,6%	8,2%

It is interesting to observe that the interviewed public servants defined the civil society as public organizations, volunteer movement and local governments more often., that is, only institutionalized structures, and students defined it as public organizations, local governments and any associations of citizens even as they are not recognized by state institutions (see Table 5).

Table 5
Definition of civil society institutions.

	Students, %	Public servants, %	Total, %
Media	8,9	9,4	9,1
Public organizations	40,0	60,4	46,8
Volunteer movement	27,5	49,6	34,8
Political parties	11,8	10,1	11,2
Public authorities	35,0	48,9	39,6
Any associations of citizens	35,4	45,3	38,7
Other	1,4	2,2	1,7

Evaluating the effectiveness of various methods by which civil society can influence for public administration, both categories of respondents indicated two of the most effective ones – participation in elections and the promotion of public initiatives. The least effective respondents recognize the criticism of government authorities, as well as attempts by society to independently solve emerging problems (see Table 6).

Table 6**Efficiency of methods of participation of civil society in public administration.**

	Students, %	Public servants, %
Criticizing government	5,3	6,0
Through community initiatives	28,6	31,2
Independently solve their concerns (for example, to carry out cleaning in yards and porches)	13,7	14,0
By filing complaints with law enforcement agencies	19,3	19,5
By election	32,8	29,3
Other	0,2	0,0

Thus, in the Yakut community, it is widely believed that the institutions of civil society are not full-fledged subjects of government; influence on the solution of socially important issues can be acquired only by incorporating into state structures. Perhaps this is precisely due to the observed popularity of the civil service as a promising place of work.

Assessing the effectiveness of the measures that recommended in the conceptual documents, regulating the administrative reform, to improve the transparency of public administration the respondents disagreed. The most effective method of increasing the efficiency of public authorities, the students consider the raising of the qualification of the staff of public service (admitting only people with higher education and raising the qualifications of officials in specialized educational institutions). The least support is given to such methods as reducing the number of civil servants and citizens' appeals via the Internet. For officials, the most preferable are selection by professional level and public hearings. They consider the least effective reduction in the number of staff of authorities, as well as the tightening of control over their activities (see Table 7).

Table 7**Evaluation of the effectiveness of measures proposed to improve the quality of public administration**

	Assessment	Student, %	Public servants, %
Public hearing	not effective	7,9	10,1
	effective	15,7	21,6
Press conferences of public authorities	not effective	10,4	12,2
	effective	12,1	12,9
Appeals from citizens via the Internet	not effective	13,9	10,8
	effective	10,7	11,5
Changing the structure of public authorities	not effective	8,6	8,6
	effective	10,7	7,9
Reduction in the number of staff of authorities	not effective	16,8	18,0
	effective	11,1	9,4
Professional education of public servants	not effective	5,4	7,2
	effective	23,9	19,4
Involving young people to public service	not effective	4,6	8,6
	effective	13,9	11,5
Restriction of access to public service only for people with high labor potential and level of education	not effective	5,7	10,8
	effective	24,6	23,0
Tightening control over the activities of public servants by law enforcement agencies	not effective	9,3	13,7
	effective	18,9	18,0

5. CONCLUSIONS

In order to answer on the research question 1 «What is the declared level of openness of the public service within interacting with civil society institutions in administrative regulations on the provision of public functions by the executive authorities of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)?» the authors did a corpus-based content analysis of 28 administrative regulations on the provision of public functions by the executive

authorities of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). We made a conclusion that, despite the declaration of a desire to ensure informational openness, for public servants of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) the idea, that citizens are not actors of public administration, is approved and supported by official documents. Official documents use grammatical constructions, showing that citizens should be only an object of actions and obey the state.

In order to answer on the research question 2 «Do the ideas about the nature of the civil service of students of the Northeastern Federal University coincide with the values attitudes that guide the public servants of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in their work?» the authors did the questionnaire survey 139 public servants (10% of the general strength) and 280 students. Based on the results we can conclude that despite the fact that the request for information on the activities of public authorities is high, both groups of respondents consider that the most effective method of citizen participation is the nomination of public initiatives, and the most effective way to improve the efficiency of public administration is to improve personnel policy in government. The least support is given to such methods as criticism of government decisions and self-government. Thus, we can make the conclusion that the lack of readiness of public servants to ensure the openness of public administration is connected with the unwillingness of society to provide public control.

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