

Prospects for the use of the concept and methods of talent management in the practice of public service (on the materials of the Republic of Kazakhstan)

Perspectivas para el uso del concepto y métodos de gestión del talento en la práctica del servicio público (sobre material de la República de Kazajstán)

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ABSTRACT:

Contemporary Kazakhstan society is at such stage of its development, when there is a need for and possibility of reforming all spheres of social, political and economic life. The improvement of public service is a separate element of this reform. The processes of renewal of the Kazakhstan society, in particular, renewal and modernization of public service of Kazakhstan, aimed at establishing a professional and stable public service in Kazakhstan that can provide quality management services to the population, raise strict requirements for officials working in the public service. The purpose of the article is to substantiate the author's position on the possibility and prospects for using the talent management concept in the system of training public service personnel of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In the article, the relevance of the analysis of the talent management concept has been substantiated, the analysis of the scientific literature and expert materials on the problem of applying the talent management in the practice of public administration of various world countries has been conducted; the experience has been systematized and the specifics of the formation and development of the content, forms and methods of talent management in the world practice have been identified; the ways of using the talent management ideas in the sphere of public administration in Kazakhstan have been defined. The conclusion of the study indicates determining factors in the use of the talent management concept in the public service of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Keywords: public service, talent management, talent, human resource management, succession planning, human capital theory, competency, competences, competency-based approach.

RESUMEN:

La sociedad contemporánea de Kazajstán está en esa etapa de su desarrollo, cuando es necesario y existe la posibilidad de reformar todas las esferas de la vida social, política y económica. La mejora del servicio público es un elemento separado de esta reforma. Los procesos de renovación de la sociedad de Kazajstán, en particular, la renovación y modernización del servicio público de Kazajstán, destinados a establecer un servicio público profesional y estable en Kazajstán que pueda proporcionar servicios de gestión de calidad a la población, plantear requisitos estrictos para los funcionarios que trabajan en el servicio público. El propósito del artículo es corroborar la posición del autor sobre la posibilidad y las perspectivas de utilizar el concepto de gestión del talento en el sistema de formación del personal de servicio público de la República de Kazajstán. En el artículo se ha corroborado la relevancia del análisis del concepto de gestión del talento, el análisis de la literatura científica y los materiales expertos sobre el problema de la aplicación de la gestión del talento en la práctica de la administración pública de se han llevado a cabo varios países del mundo; se ha sistematizado la experiencia y se han identificado las especificidades de la formación y desarrollo de los contenidos, formas y métodos de gestión del talento en la práctica mundial; se han definido las formas de utilizar las ideas de gestión del talento en la esfera de la administración pública en Kazajstán. La conclusión del estudio indica los factores determinantes en el uso del concepto de gestión del talento en el servicio público de la República de Kazajstán.

Palabras clave: servicio público, gestión de talentos, talento, gestión de recursos humanos, planificación sucesoria, teoría del capital humano, competencia, competencias, enfoque basado en competencias.

1. Introduction

In 2011, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved the "Concept of a New Model of Public Service" (Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 119 "On the Concept of a New Model of Public Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan", 2011), but the transition to the principles of meritocracy proclaimed by N.A. Nazarbayev has not been started. For several years, "many useful beginnings remained at the level of state rhetoric; the processes adopted for implementation existed only in the form of documents and this has not led to the expected results" (Ward Howell Talent

Equity Institute, 2010). For the years that have passed since the adoption of the "Concept ...", the President failed to change the existing system, in which not the professional competency of a public officer, but loyalty to his/her "patron-protector" was a compulsory quality.

In March 2015, at the Sixteenth Nur Otan Congress, N.A. Nazarbayev stated: "It's time to open new channels for finding talented candidates for public officers, including from the private sector" (Nazarbayev, 2015). Immediately after the President's speech, several articles were published in the Kazakh press about the forthcoming "formation of a pool of talents from young hopefuls for further work in the public service" (Young Hopefuls of Kazakhstan Will Be Formed into a «Pool of Talents» for the Public Service, 2015); about the fact that "talent management is one of the innovations in the sphere of public service" (Schekunskikh, 2015).

The formation of professional state machinery on the principles of meritocracy was the first of five institutional reforms, the tasks and stages of which were specified in the State Program "100 Steps for 5 Institutional Reforms" adopted in November 2015 (State Program "100 Steps on 5 Institutional Reforms", 2015).

However, "talent management" is not mentioned in the documents, as well as in the entire legislative base of the public service of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Kazakh scientific/expert community has also paid little attention to this problem.

Nevertheless, on the website of Ward Howell Corporation, specializing in the selection of top management personnel for the largest international companies, in 2010, as an example of "how the world practices of "talent management" successfully integrate into public services of developing countries", the results of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan on enhancing the effectiveness of the public service in 2008-2009 were presented: "International organizations and independent experts recognize Kazakhstan's achievements in reforming the public service" (Ward Howell Talent Equity Institute, 2010).

In 2013, a review article was published by the team of Kazakhstan authors (Zharkeshov, Ivatova, Satmukhambetova, & Shonbaeva, 2013), who listed "global trends in scientific research in public administration and public service". Talent management in Singapore's system of public service personnel training was the first in the list of these trends. In 2015, L.U. Asylbekova and N.A. Belesova (Asylbekova & Belesova 2015) proposed in their article the criteria for selection of talents for the public service, and in early 2017 at the operational meeting in the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Public Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption A.A. Kushtarova gave recommendations on the formation of a pool of talents (Kushtarova 2017). However, systemically organized scientific research devoted to the analysis of the talent management concept has never been conducted in Kazakhstan, and this determined the relevance of this study.

2. Methods

The purpose of the study is to substantiate the author's position on the possibility and prospects for using the talent management concept in the system of public service personnel training in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The authors of this article consider talent management as the ability – art and craft – of the head to take into account in the management of an organization the specifics of manifestations of a socio-psychological phenomenon of talent in subordinate employees.

In the study, the following methods have been used:

general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, generalization) for the study of scientific literature and expert materials on the problem of applying talent management in the practice of public administration of various countries of the world;

specific scientific methods: a systematic-structural method was used to systematize the experience of talent management; a retrospective method was used to determine the specifics of the formation and development of the content, forms and methods of talent management in the world practice;

theoretical forecasting was used to identify the ways to use talent management ideas in the sphere of public administration in Kazakhstan.

3. Results

The term "talent management" ("TM") appeared by analogy with the well-known terms "performance management" and "total quality management". It was first used in 1998 in the article written by an employee of the American company Softscape Inc. (Watkins 1998), where a publication "The War for Talents" was discussed (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin & Michaels 1998).

Both publications were part of a discussion of problems of systemic management imperfections among top managers of technologically advanced companies in the 1990s, when business owners were convinced of the low efficiency of training and a "marker of success" in business was the demonstration by top managers of their confidence that the compliance with management rules and procedures described in textbooks does not guarantee success and prosperity to their companies.

The process of management training had to be restructured; not textbooks, but so-called "cases" devoted to the analysis of true "success stories" were the basic material – they described the examples of how their talented top managers created innovative management models, ignoring "scientific foundations" described in textbooks. A rather large set of such cases has been accumulated over time. Their comparative analysis showed that all "case heroes" to some extent had certain ability that none of the management theorists had previously taken into account.

It was legitimate to expect an opinion that the competitiveness of some companies really depends much on how successfully they find such workers and how reliably their loyalty is ensured by means of a special motivation system; that "talents" are such a valuable and specific "human resource" that for their effective use a special human resources management (HRM) system that is different from the usual one is required.

The idea of TM was enthusiastically adopted by many HRM specialists – they saw in it possibility of overcoming the problems of its methodology (Bersin, 2007). In the 1990s, HRM was often criticized for an excessively idealistic approach, since HRM concept and methods can only be effective in some companies, subject to the multitude of conditions the creation of which requires complete restructuring of activities and rather high costs. Thus, in small and medium-sized businesses it is simply impossible to provide the necessary conditions for successful HRM implementation (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank & Ulrich 2012).

The idea of TM allowed excluding the system imperfection of HRM for a time, and TM as the "new HRM brand" was immediately introduced into the information space of the business community and began to develop rapidly as a new product of consulting companies.

At the same time, experts and consulting companies regarded TM in the following way:

- a standard set of HRM procedures (HRM system) for all employees without their clear division by the degree of "talent": employee selection, assessment, training, retention, etc. (Ashton & Morton 2005);
- a set of "special" HRM technologies (HRM system) designed only for special (talented and "potentially talented") employees, it also implies employee selection, assessment, training, retention, etc., but not for everyone, but for a selected group (Buckingham & Vosburgh 2001).

Thus, no fundamentally new approaches, methods, procedures for working with personnel in TM have been proposed.

A category "talent" in HRM had not been considered before, so this concept could be interpreted in many ways. English-speaking authors understood talent as follows:

- giftedness, natural gift, outstanding abilities, genius; i.e. talent is unique and knowledge and skills of a talented person are inseparably linked with his/her personality (Schweyer 2004);
- a combination of certain specific knowledge and valuable skills required by any organization; i.e. talent can be developed by a person in the acquisition of experience and skills (Bersin, Lamoureux, Mallon, Laurano & Harris 2010);
- a combination of the above interpretations in any proportion; i.e. talent is a certain amount of abilities, natural gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, judgments and the character of a person, his/her ability to learn and grow (Boudreau & Ramstad 2005);
- performance: a person is talented, because he/she demonstrates the highest indicators in any kind of activity; under this approach, the following statement is used for TM description: talents are individuals that play the main role in achieving success of the company, occupying a leading position due to their abilities and performance (Hilton 2000);
- an employee's potential: i.e. talent is a person with the potential for further promotion in the company, a "future oriented" employee (Cappelli 2009);
- a combination, "a strategic balance between performance and potential" (Ulrich & Smallwood 2012);
- through the prism of competences, "which present a behavioral aspect of talent" (Campion, Fink, Ruggeberg, Carr, Phillips & Odman 2011).

Criteria for the selection of talents by researchers were also established in different ways, for example:

- "creativity/creative thinking; initiative; leadership skills; expert skills; aspiration; responsibility/control; competency" (Sleiderink 2012);
- "physical, logical, behavioral and emotional intelligence", as well as "efficiency and performance" (Lewis, & Heckman 2006).

An attempt to systematize approaches to TM in English-language publications of recent years was made by A.V. Klimova (Klimova 2016) for two reasons:

- inclusive/exclusive understanding of talent (talent is inherent in all/almost all employees – talent is inherent only in a small group of employees)
- subject-object nature (talent as a subject or an object of TM)

According to A.V. Klimova, the presented typology includes all possible TM practices (see Table 1).

Table 1. TM typology (by A.V. Klimova)

	Exclusive approach	Inclusive approach
Talent as a subject of TM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talent is an employee who makes a significant and decisive contribution to the success and sustainable development of a company; - TM is focused on identifying such positions that are critical for the success of a company and on searching for candidates to fill these vacancies, which should be "talents" (Whelan & Carcary 2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all employees of a company are perceived as initially talented – the task is to determine in what area they are talented. - TM/HRM system is "a set of integrated processes and practices aimed at recognizing the potential area of application of each employee's talent in the company's interests" (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Gonzalez-Cruz, 2013)
Talent as an object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talent is a person with exceptional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talent is understood as a set of general

of TM	<p>abilities, which allow him/her to achieve the highest efficiency in the professional activity.</p> <p>- TM is a process of searching for/selecting such employees and creating special conditions and motivation for them (Ready, Conger, Hill, & Stecker, 2010)</p>	<p>personal and special professional competences of an employee; "talented" means "competent";</p> <p>- the content of TM is virtually identical to the development of employees' competences (Thunnissen, Boselie & Fruytier 2013)</p>
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In recent years, the following TM areas have become prominent: strategic talent planning; search and recruitment; performance management; succession planning; leadership development; competence management; training and development (Hanover Research, 2010).

A more "narrow" approach has also been developed, under which TM is reduced to "succession planning". In such interpretation, the main task of TM is "to put right people with the right skills in the right position at the right time" (Cappelli 2008). According to some researchers (Cappelli 2009), the most effective method of "succession planning" is the creation of the so-called "pool of talents" (personnel reserve).

Some authors believe that the approaches to TM can be conventionally divided into American and European models (Cascio, Ariss, & Paauwe, 2014). Thus, the American approach implies that a company chooses a certain number of people (for example, the top 50), who are considered to be the most talented and promising employees and their development is invested. As a rule, in this case it is about employees who will be able to occupy important managerial positions in the future. In accordance with another approach (the European one), each person is talented and the task of HR-service is to create conditions for the fulfillment and development of this talent. It should be noted that an employee is responsible for career building, and the company helps him/her to identify opportunities and gain access to resources for development. The ultimate goal is to make sure that each employee feels at ease and can fulfill his/her potential (Iles, Chuai & Preece 2010).

In our opinion, the main systemic contradiction of the TM concept is that it is difficult to teach a huge mass of not very talented managers even to make managerial decisions, which are "based on a caring, careful and considerate attitude" to talents of their subordinates. If only because they have never experienced what it means to be talented and thus cannot imagine the problems that a talented person faces in life. Not to mention the "art of execution" of TM, for which a person is required to have special abilities, entrepreneurial talent.

The systemic TM contradiction described above can be solved by going beyond the paradigm of the TM concept, by using the so-called "human capital theory" ("Human Capital Management", HCM).

Human capital is defined in the HCM theory as a collection of:

- knowledge, abilities and skills (competences), as well as the state of physical and mental health of an employee, affecting the results (efficiency) of his/her labor activity (Sinyanskaya 2014),
- abilities and personal properties that are valuable to the company and can be developed by making appropriate efforts and investments (Becker 1993),

and this is a definition of the concept of "talent".

Summarizing the above, it can be said that at the end of the last century management ceased to meet the criteria of the scientific activity and began to develop in the paradigm of the consulting service market. The concept of TM that appeared in this paradigm was a kind of the simplified outline of the scientific HCM theory, adapted for the needs of the HR consulting market. The authors of the TM concept used a term "talent" to refer to some kind of human capital and then, expanding the target audience of HR consulting, they began to assert that every worker had talent. But this meant that "talent = human capital".

In recent years, the development of the HCM theory can be traced upon the works (Behara 2005; Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, 2008; Lombardi, & Laurano 2013). It should be noted that the application of information and computer technologies (ICTs), which are beginning to play an increasing role in making business decisions, has become the main trend of the modern era. The main advantage of ICT application in HCM is the ability to measure the effect of the methods used – it removes the main drawback of HRM practice: ICTs are effective in the assessment of the effectiveness of investments in HCM programs (Ward Howell Talent Equity Institute, 2016).

4. Discussion

Features and main trends of the use of TM in the public sector are very diverse.

For example, in the USA the exclusive approach to TM is used: talent is innate and it is practically impossible to develop it. The main focus of TM in the American public sector is on attraction and selection of talents (Hanover Research, 2010).

TM in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand is also based on the exclusive approach (Poocha-roen, Ora-om, & Lee 2013). For example, in Singapore the recruitment and promotion of public officers is carried out based on their knowledge, business qualities and achievements. The Public Service Commission together with state institutions selects capable students, and awards higher education scholarships to them. Then these students have to work for a certain time in the organizations that paid for their education. Some of them are subsequently selected for posts in the public service system. They are sent to work alternately in several institutions in order to gain broad experience. They are gradually given more and more powers for the purpose of comprehensive development and check of business qualities. While all public officers are periodically assessed using a Currently Estimated Potential system, promotion is only awarded on the basis of

achievements. Considerable efforts are also made to recruit and retain talented employees. Salaries of senior public officers are equated to salaries of the specialists in the private sector. Particular attention is paid to fostering morale and promoting staff well-being. The mechanisms used in the process of their activity are considered not only as a means of increasing the effectiveness of the public service, but also as a way to increase individual empowerment of employees and deepen their sense of responsibility for their work (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012).

A compromise combination of both approaches is practiced in Canada. The TM strategic model affecting all public officers is based on the inclusive approach. At the level of middle managers, the exclusive approach is used. Another model component aimed at all other employees is caused by such factors as increased competition of public services for highly qualified employees, changes in staff needs, ICT development, changes in citizens' expectations and needs for public services. (Glenn 2012)

In the public service of China, TM is applied inclusively within each organization (Bo Li. 2010). When choosing candidates for positions in public authorities, public opinion is also taken into account. In China this model is called "selection plus election": competent leaders are selected and promoted in their careers not only on the basis of achievements at work, but also on public support, which is identified through opinion polls, special internal assessment and various "local" elections. The Chinese assume that this model is oriented to the benefit of existing and future generations (Chen, Chan, Gao, & Yu, 2015).

A.V. Klimova (2006) identified two typical basic models of TM application in the process of selection and training of personnel for the public service.

The first model – TM with an emphasis on leadership development as a core practice – includes: leadership development; competence management for the development of standards (requirements for competences) and success criteria for leaders; performance management; search, selection and hiring of talented specialists; remuneration and compensation, training and development. TM models focused on leadership development are applied, for example, in the UK, Malaysia, China and Thailand.

The second model – TM with an emphasis on succession management – implies the management of the personnel reserve. The succession management unites all other TM practices. The model includes the following main elements: succession planning; competence management; performance management; search, selection and hiring of talented specialists; remuneration and compensation; training and development. TM models focused on succession management are applied, for example, in Russia, Singapore and Canada.

Thus, it can be affirmed that:

- the most common TM practice of the public service is a combination of exclusive and inclusive approaches that is individual for each country;
- personnel competence and efficiency management programs are mandatory elements of both basic TM models of the public service – "leadership development" and "succession management".

Regardless of the choice of the strategic priority of public service organizations between "leadership development" and "succession management", talent is regarded as:

- a certain set of general personal and special professional competences of an employee – "talented" means "competent" and "effective";
- a set of a) competences; b) the state of physical and mental health of an employee, influencing the efficiency of his/her labor activity;
- human capital, the basic concept of the HCM theory, the totality of the "abilities and properties of a person that are valuable to the organization and can be developed by making appropriate efforts and investments" (Becker 1993).

A concept of "talent" in TM has a completely different content and meaning in comparison with stereotypes prevalent in Kazakhstan. Possibly, that is why a term "talent" in the legislative base of the public service of the Republic of Kazakhstan is not used at all (indeed, as in many other countries of the world). The terms "competence" and "competency" are used; they appeared in the Russian-language public lexicon in the 1990s as a result of borrowing these terms from English. In the works of English-speaking authors, "competence" is a set of knowledge, abilities, skills and experience, while "competency" is knowledge and experience of a person necessary for the effective activity in a particular subject area (Spencer & Spencer 1993).

Nowadays, competency and competences are key concepts for the public service of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

As stated in the Strategic Plan of the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption for the period of 2017-2021,

- "the introduction of the principle of *competency-based* and competitive approach regarding entry into the public service will ensure a qualitative selection of candidates for vacant posts, the practical orientation of their professional development and the strengthening of meritocracy";
- "the public service begins from lower posts through a three-stage competitive selection: testing, assessment of personal qualities, including *competences* (knowledge, abilities and skills necessary for effective work) and interview in a public authority";
- "the institution of training of public officers requires further improvement through the strengthening of practice-oriented and *competency-based* approaches" (Strategic Plan of the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Public Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption for the period of 2017-2021, 2016).

In the Law "On Public Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan" (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 416-V, 2016):

- there is normative definition of *competences* – "the totality of knowledge, abilities and skills necessary for the effective

performance of professional activities in a particular public office" (Clause 7, Article 1);

- "the continuity of training of public officers and the development of necessary *competences*" is one of the main principles of the public service (Clause 19, Article 4);

- the basic rights of public officers include the right to the "promotion in the public service with due account of qualifications, *competences*, abilities, merits and conscientious performance of their duties" (Clause 13, Article 9);

- the promotion of public officers in the public service is carried out with due account of their qualifications, *competences*, abilities, merits and conscientious performance of their official duties (Clause 1, Article 37).

5. Conclusion

TM of the public service of the Republic of Kazakhstan can be defined as a system ensuring selection, assessment, training/development, motivation/retention of public officers with competences (talents) necessary for the effective performance of professional activities in a particular public office.

The determining factors in the development of TM of the public service of the Republic of Kazakhstan are as follows:

- the Kazakh business community is characterized by weak demand/prevalence of TM/HCM technologies: in most countries, a TM model of the public service was formed with the support of TM practice in the private sector – this approach cannot be used in our country;

- the need for special attention to TM on the part of female public officers, who make up more than half of the total number of public officers in Kazakhstan;

- promotion of ICT application in TM/HCM in the following areas:

a) basic automation: personnel administration, resume processing, etc.;

b) decision-making: ICTs allow making decisions about promotions and salaries based on data, not intuitively;

c) communication: ICTs expand the possibilities of choice, allow finding candidates to fill vacancies in the shortest possible time;

d) involvement: the use of interactive formats of interaction with employees, including distance learning and role-playing games modeling situations of the professional activity.

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