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# Innovation Potential of the Modern Russian Civil Servants in Public Administration

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**Abstract.** Innovation can be defined as a change in technology—more simply stated, in the way government workers/civil servants/public administrators do their jobs—whether the technology relates to a process, computer hardware or software, or the human side of the government enterprise. Contemporary advances in technology facilitating the rapid spread of information have led to worldwide societal changes and improved productivity. After analyzing civil servants' professional activities, values, and attitudes, and assessing their capacity for change, public sector organizations must adapt functions and strategies. This is a systemic, behavioral analysis of the innovation potential of Russian public administrators. Empirical data were collected using a survey of Russian civil servants of the Sverdlovsk region, an analysis of their job descriptions, expert interviews, and focus-group interviews. The objective of this analysis is to assess innovation potential of these civil servants and identify factors that facilitate or hinder innovation potential within the Russian government. From these factors, practical strategies for increasing the level of civil servants' innovation potential are deduced and presented. Results of the analysis expand management theories included in public administration literature and curricula thus leading to improved management training or retraining processes.

## 1. Introduction

Contemporary advances in technology facilitating the rapid spread of information have led to worldwide societal changes. The functions and strategies of public administration are adapting to this new “informational society of knowledge” with innovative technology intended to improve productivity. These technological innovations must follow careful analysis of civil servants' professional activities, values, and attitudes, and an assessment of their capacity for change. The objective of this analysis is to develop this diagnosis of innovation potential of Russian civil servants of the Sverdlovsk region. Employing a value methodology, the diagnosis will be derived from empirical data collected using a sociological survey of Russian civil servants of the Sverdlovsk region, an analysis of their job descriptions, expert interviews, and focus-group interviews.

### 1.1. Literature Review

Innovation is a complex concept and is studied from multiple perspectives at different levels of analysis by researchers from a diversity of academic disciplines.



In general researchers have commonly defined “innovation” as the development (generation) and/or use (adoption) of new ideas or behaviors (Amabile 1988; Damanpour and Wischnevsky 2006; Walker 2008; Zaltman, Duncan, and Holbek 1973).

In this study the concept of innovation divided for three theoretical groups: innovation as a process, innovation as IT-technologies and innovation as a specific human resource of organization.

Innovation as a process in general means the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method (Amabile 1988; Damanpour and Wischnevsky 2006; Walker 2008; Zaltman, Duncan, and Holbek 1973). According to Van de Ven, the innovation process can be described as a dynamic journey (Van de Ven et al.,2008). The journey metaphor under-scores the nonlinearity and the dynamics of the processes that include convergence, coupling, and confrontations of and between a number of social, organizational, contextual, and actor-related factors (Van de Ven et al.,2008)

Technological innovations is most common approach and in general it means a new product, service or technology which has introduced in a traditional environment and has taken and has adopted by members of society (Amabile 1988; Damanpour and Wischnevsky 2006; Walker 2008; Zaltman, Duncan, and Holbek 1973). Technological innovations comprise new products and processes and significant technological changes of products and processes.

Much of literature on public innovation in general and the growing literature on collaborative innovation and social innovation bear witness to these discussions (Baldwin & von Hippel, 2009; Bekkers, Tummers, Stuijzand, & Voorberg,2013; Bommert,2010; Harris & Albury, 2009; Moulaert, Martinelli, González, & Swyngedouw,2010; Nambisan,2008; Osborne & Brown, 2005, 2011; Sørensen & Torfing, 2011, 2012).

### *1.2. Theoretical Background*

Public innovation and governance has also generated an increasing interest—albeit mostly negative—in the public sector’s predominantly bureaucratic organization. Innovation potential is a complex concept which contains both individual factors (e.g. cognitive abilities, personality, and motivation) and contextual factors. In general researchers have commonly defined innovation potential as the internal readiness of the individuals or socio-professional groups to create new ideas or overcome natural resistance to innovations in the organization.

Some group of researchers defines the following indicators of innovation potential:

- Motivation to the innovation creation. Innovative motivation is a set of needs and attitudes of social actors towards the establishment, implementation or diffusion of innovation;
- Innovative attitudes that characterize the relation of the actor to innovate, it’s empathy and vision in the face of these changes with a focus on the future. Pro-innovative attitudes might be both positive and negative;
- Socio-psychological readiness to innovate. Someone who has this ability is creatively free and open-minded person. The readiness to innovate is the greatest manifestation of internal interest and initiative within introducing of innovations, which manifests itself in different ways;
- Innovative values. Innovation in professional activity generates new values. J. Ronquillo identified three main innovative values of person such as creativity, risk for success and focus on the future. Nowadays the most popular approach of innovative values is that of Schwartz.

Therefore, the innovative potential is determined by a set of indicators such as organizational creativity, leadership, motivation to create newness, social and psychological readiness for innovation, pro-innovative values and attitudes.

Nowadays only a small number of researchers have studied the innovative potential of civil servants in Public Administration, specifically in the Russian system of Public Sector. This is caused by the common notion that the public administration is the bureaucratic and conservative system with the established rules and norms of behavior. Thus, this system eliminates the innovative decision-making tools and innovation behavior model, especially among Russian civil servants.

Therefore, the modern Russian civil servants theoretically have a certain level of innovation potential. Innovational potential in public administration contains such components as motivation to create newness, social and psychological readiness for innovation, pro-innovative values and attitudes. However we suppose that innovation potential of Russian civil servants depends on some factors which impact directly on it level. It might be both individual and organizational factors. In this study we are going to focus on individual factors such as gender, age, education level, tenure of civil servants. In general we could define them as manager characteristics of Russian civil servants.

### 1.3. Research Questions and Task

Research question of this study: is there a significant relationship between innovation potential components of Russian civil servants (such as motivation to create newness, innovative readiness, and pro-innovative values and attitudes) and their gender, age, education level, tenure characteristics?

Research task is to analyze innovative potential, and develop practical recommendations for the successful formation of innovative values and attitudes among civil servants.

## 2. Empirical Research and Results

### 2.1. Data and Methods

Research design bases on two main stages:

1. General analysis of pro-innovative attitudes, readiness to innovate, motivation to the innovation creation, and innovative values of Russian civil servants.

2. Hypotheses testing which were formulated previously.

We used multiple sources of data. Empirical data were collected using a sociological survey of Russian civil servants of the Sverdlovsk region, an analysis of their job descriptions, expert interviews, and focus-group interviews. The study was conducted in thirty-one executive authorities of the Sverdlovsk region

The main research methods are following. Questionnaire sociological survey among civil servants of the Sverdlovsk region ( $n = 375$ ). Expert interview was conducted between seventy-eight top-managers within sixteen executive authorities of the Sverdlovsk region. Also were analyzed 135 federal and regional legal acts and job descriptions of civil servants. In conclusion, was conducted the focus group study to identify innovative roles and innovation activities of civil servants among the specialists of the Labor Department of the Sverdlovsk region. Proportion of male and female respondents is in Table 1 (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Age and gender group distribution of civil servants, Sverdlovsk region, Russia.

Age	General population				Sampling population			
	Total		%		Total		%	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
18-21	24	131	0,4	2,2	1	8	0,6	2,8
22-30	183	914	3,1	15,3	11	57	3,0	14,6
31-40	322	1595	5,4	26,7	20	99	5,2	26,9
41-50	250	1254	4,2	21,0	16	78	4,3	20,9
51-60	209	1027	3,5	17,2	13	64	3,5	17,2
61-65	12	48	0,2	0,8	1	3	0,2	0,8
TOTAL:	1000	4969	16,8	83,2	62	308	16,8	83,2

## 2.2. Results and Discussion

Civil servants in their activities create innovation projects and ideas that prove the existence of innovative potential. It is important to note that civil servants were personally interested in creating innovations which has a specific benefit and importance both for the employees and for society.

According to the sociological survey responders had answered the question: "Do you want to create innovations in your work?" As a result, 74% of respondents answered positively, while only 26% of respondents admitted that they not only want, but also can create new ideas. Similar results were obtained during the focus groups study among civil servants. In fact, we identified expression of conservative, mixed and pro-innovative attitudes.

Meanwhile the results show that conservative attitudes are dominating among the Russian civil servants. The participants were mistrustful of risky and innovative options and prefer to rely on their personal experiences. However, 3% of responders still took a chance try to create innovative ideas at their place of work.

Although the problem is that civil servants with high level of innovative potential cannot create the ideas due to the bureaucracy formed system of Russian Public Administration. For instance, proactive bureaucratic norms and values, traditions and patterns block the development of innovative potential among civil servants:

*"... I'm just tired every day asking myself the same questions and find the answers. My strength has gone; I give up, I do not create something new ... "(civil servant of the Accounting Department of Sverdlovsk Region, 22 years).*

During the survey we have noticed that innovative potential of several servants are not supported by others colleagues which are more conservative. To illustrate this point, only 4.8% of respondents receive approval showing initiative, while 40.9% believe that the initiative only listen, but they do not find support and understanding from colleagues and higher standing leadership. Thus, our results prove the existence of some factors that prevent the successful development of innovative potential.

Therefore, the results of our study have shown that the preferred method is financial incentives, but respondents also note incentives such as the impact of innovation of its positive results in the future, which correlates with the results of empirical research.

Searching of effective methods of innovation stimulating activities of civil servants remains today an important issue. Respondents were asked to identify practical recommendations for the successful formation of innovative values and attitudes among civil servants. (table 2).

**Table 2.** Recommendations for the successful forming of the innovative values in Public Administration.

Response options	%
Financial incentives for both individual and team work	45,9
Stimulation of the most diverse forms of self-development and education	15,6
Development of an innovative culture and innovative values	13,1
Developing methods to stimulate innovation indicators	11,8
Formation regulations of innovations	5,4
Involvement of social innovation and civic initiatives	1,0
Mark the clear state (national) idea	0,3
Find difficulty in replying	6,4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100,0</i>

In addition it is important to note that the creation of innovation involves a change to the personal and professional values. However, the formation of innovative professional values and value orienta-

tions of civil servants is difficult due to lack of demand for many innovative professional and personal qualities of managers.

Based on the results of empirical research, we have formulated the dominant traditional and innovative professional values of modern civil servants as a socio-professional group (table 3).

**Table 3.** Dominated by traditional and innovative professional values of civil servants

<b>Traditional values</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Innovative values</b>	<b>%</b>
Professional competence	81,3	Values of operative learning	53,4
Values of duty	76,1	Value of the project work	49,1
Values of vocational training	68,2	Values of beliefs	32,8
Business communication	66,4	Leadership and initiative	29,1
Values of discipline	59,3	Innovations and creativity	28,9
Professional commitment	44,2	Professional flexibility	25,9
Professional self-regulation	31,9	Values of risk	3,6

Analyzing the results, it is obvious that the traditional professional values are more common than innovative values. Among traditional values are included a dominant position of general values such as discipline, self-regulation.

However, the results of the study indicate the existence of a group of innovators with strong innovative professional values such as operational value of learning, understanding of the meaning and content of innovation (53.4% of respondents). In our opinion it connects with modern importance to work with IT-technologies in the work place. In addition some of respondents specifically allocate the value of project work and team activities which is also important for the modern organizations (49.1%). The project activity is one of the dominant components for innovators. However in the modern system of public service according to experts views, it is not practiced.

### 3. Conclusion

We believe that today's civil servants have all the prerequisites for the development of innovative potential. Firstly, the current trends in the management of penetration of Public Administration are a real need to modernize, and require personnel bureaucracy. Secondly, in the course of empirical research, we discovered that the modern public service is being innovative "growth", and quite logical transition into a new phase - the stage of routinization.

We believe that the holding of theoretical, methodological, and empirical sociological research can become a solid foundation for the formation of a new trend in the sociology of public service - sociology of innovation governance.

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