

ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF MANAGERS OF DIFFERENT LEVELS

Alla Pogodina,
Moscow State Psychological-Pedagogical University
Moscow, Russia
allavan@yandex.ru

Abstract

This article presents the results of the research, which purpose was to study representations of top and middle managers from various fields of activity (education, manufacturing, trade and services) about professional competences of the organizational psychologist. Respondents were offered to range 22 competences of the organizational psychologist depending on the importance degree. During the research the significant interrelation of ideas about the organizational psychologist's professional competences was found for top managers from all three fields of activity. Managers consider that the most priority competences are those that are connected with diagnostic activity of the psychologist within the organization. Also the significant interrelation of representations of middle level managers from the sphere of education and manufacturing was revealed.

The comparative analysis of managers' representations from the point of view of specifics of their field of activity showed that there is a significant interrelation of representations of top and middle managers from the sphere of their activity.

Thus, the results of the research showed that representations of managers as potential consumers of organizational and psychological services about professional competences of the organizational psychologist are defined both by manager's position within an administrative system, and by specifics of the sphere of his activity. The revealed expectations of managers as potential employers can be considered as inquiry to the establishments of higher education training experts in the field of organizational psychology.

Keywords: organizational psychologist, professional competences of the organizational psychologist, managers representations about the psychologist's activity within the organization.

In Russian psychological periodicals, on the Internet, in the framework of the practical-oriented scientific seminars and conferences the active discussion of the problems of the current state of organizational psychology is discussed, as well as the opportunities for practical psychologists to meet customers' needs within organizational and psychological services. Thus, in article written by T.U. Bazarova and A.P.Konyaeva [1] the experience of their research aimed at the determination of actual zone of customers of organizational and psychological services needs, and identifying promising areas of research and applied projects in the field of organizational psychology is examined. According to the research psychological services are used in the management practice infrequent: only one out of ten managers and 7% of those leaders who planned to use psychological services in the future refers to professional psychological aid. Despite the fact that the majority of executives do not really attract organizational psychologists to their companies, they realize the need of the professional assistance and have their own opinion about the success and effectiveness of psychological services. Researchers believe that the «mass request on professional psychological knowledge and skills is an inevitable perspective» [1, p. 47].

In this regard, another application aspect of the problem is clearly allocated, which consists of the preparation of specialists possess theoretical knowledge and practical technologies required for psychological support management and socio-psychological processes in the organization, and to satisfy customers at the proper theoretical-methodological and organizational-methodical level. In turn, the preparation of such specialists is widely dependent on how adequately educational organizations expectations and preferences of potential employers are understood, who are consumers of organizational and psychological services.

Nowadays quality of education, first of all – higher education is defined by as far as its result corresponds to needs of the customer. On a labor market

and from the point of view of vital prospects there are more demanded an ability and readiness of experts to study and be retrained during all the professional career. To solve a typical for the Russian higher school problem when students can seize a set of theoretical knowledge quite well, but experience considerable difficulties in practical professional activity, psychologists and teachers seek to reorient training from the approach directed on formation of knowledge, abilities, skills, on competence-based approach.

Competence is an ability to work effectively, to reach a result; the condition of its emergence is not only the knowledge acquired by the student, but also acquisition of experience of independent effective action, experience of the organization of own activity as providing achievement of result, experience of the analysis of the received products, an assessment of their compliance to an objective, etc.

The analysis of definitions existing now, interpretation and interpretations of the concept «competence» shows that a framework of this concept joins quite wide range of characteristics. Competence components, as a rule, are results of the analysis of key aspects of behavior, knowledge, skills which distinguish effective implementation of work from inefficient performance. M. Armstrong [2] referring to numerous researches, describes competence, as relating to work indicators which expect on this workplace. In other words, competence is related to those standards and results which the worker who is carrying out certain duties has to reach. One more difficulty is that often the concepts «competence» and «competency» / «professional integrity» are used as synonyms that, in our opinion, isn't justified absolutely. Let`s use the point of view of C. Woodruffe who considers that for the purpose of avoiding confusion, it is necessary to distinguish two terms:

- *Competency / professional integrity* is the concept relating to the person which speaks about aspects of the behavior standing behind effective implementation of work;

- *Competence* is the concept relating to work which speaks about the sphere of professional activity of which the person is competent.

It is necessary to pay attention and to that not all types of professional activity have accurately fixed list of functional duties, or these duties are very easily transformed at will either the managers, or workers. From here it becomes clear why there is no full coincidence of competence and competences within one workplace. Areas of competences are defined rather accurately because they are based on the functional analysis of works. As for competence, sources of its description are less objective. Most sharply this situation is shown in professions where there is a model «person - person» (meaning people interaction).

As for the concept of competence in relation to preparation of organizational psychologists, in our opinion, it assumes training of the expert of that kind who is capable to carry out effectively the functional duties in the organizations of various types. And here naturally appears a question that what are the competences of the organizational psychologist; what is the specific of his competence? What standards of the organizational psychologist activity which can become a starting point for development of competences exist?

Without stopping again on that ambiguity in definition of the basic concepts which exists, we will be focused on ways of formation of a profile of a position of the psychologist to the organizations (we will call it subsequently the organizational psychologist). The matter is that in relation to this position we didn't find any basic system of functional requirements. It doesn't surprise since it is very difficult now to find a position «psychologist» in the organizations, especially commercial type, though experts with basic psychological education work there rather successfully. As a rule, psychologists work in the organization on such positions, as the HR manager, the personnel selection manager, the training manager, the HR manager. In the organizations the position of the psychologist, in comparison with others on which experts work with psychological education, isn't really demanded. We believe that in many respects

such situation is connected, on the one hand, to that there are no clear ideas about a position profile, competences of the psychologist working in the organization, and from another hand – that training of psychologists of this kind «is insufficiently ground» under functional duties of a position. A certain vicious circle turns out: there is no clear understanding of standards of activity of the psychologist and training which would conform to these standards is therefore complicated.

In order to permit a problem designated above on the basis of scientific and practical development of chair of psychology of management of the Moscow State Psychological-Pedagogical University, and also on the basis of the analysis of literature and instructive documents, studying of domestic and foreign experience (in particular, the Russian Association of Organizational Psychology, the European Association of Psychology of Work and Organizational Psychology, Society of Psychology of Work and Organizational Psychology of the USA, the Canadian Society of Psychology of Work and Organizational Psychology), the model of professional competences of the organizational psychologist mediating efficiency of his professional activity was developed. The maintenance of competence-based model of the organizational psychologist is given below.

Organizational Psychologist

Purpose: Personnel maintenance

Main objectives: diagnostics and personnel and organization examination, prevention and correction, educational activity.

1. Diagnostics and examination.

• Individual personnel diagnostics

Competences:

possession of all-psychological methods of diagnostics of personal, individual and typical features, professional and important qualities for an

assessment, professional selection, certifications, job rotation, formation of a personnel reserve.

- **Group diagnostics**

Competences:

possession of social and psychological methods of diagnostics of the personnel for studying the social and psychological structure of a group, a level of development of the group, informal organizational culture, psychological climate of collective, level of unity, teamwork, compatibility of the personnel in the working groups, conflict behavior of workers in groups.

- **Research of specifics of administrative processes**

Competences:

possession of specialized methods of diagnostics of the administrative relations within the organization, style of management, the administrative concept of the head, role structure of a management team, features of motivational system of the organization, type of organizational culture, the relation to innovations, level of loyalty of the personnel.

- **Justification and carrying out expert procedures in the organization**

Competences:

ability to define need of carrying out expert procedures and to formulate their tasks, to select and complete expert groups, to provide reliability of expert estimates.

- **Diagnostics of dysfunctional conditions of employees and organization as a whole**

Competences:

possession of techniques of diagnostics of an organizational stress, emotional burning out, professional deformations and so forth.

- **Participation in approbation and adaptation of techniques of research**

Competences:

knowledge about the principles of development and deployment of research techniques.

2 . Prevention and correction.

• Use of results of diagnostics for development, corrections, personnel training

Competences:

- ability to define a need of the personnel in training,
- ability to develop correctional and training programs,
- ability to use, adapt and develop programs of trainings of various orientation, ability to provide training according to this program,
- implementation of monitoring of training and training programs for an assessment of possibility of their application in an organization,
- ability to organize and carry out group discussion, situational and role, business game,
- possession of skills of representation and registration of results of work, presentation of own professional activity.
- possession of skills of use of modern computer technologies for the solution of research and applied problems of professional activity,
- possession of skills of advisory work,
- possession of skills of the psychological self-help for prevention of a stress and emotional burning out.

• Use of results of diagnostics at the level of group and the organization as a whole

Competences:

- possession of skills of creation and psychological maintenance of management teams,
- ability to form, support and correct organizational culture of the enterprise,

ability to develop and optimize systems of motivational management of work of the personnel and to estimate their efficiency.

3 . Educational activity.

• Formation of favorable image of the psychologist in the organization and adequate expectations at the personnel and the management concerning activity of the organizational psychologist.

Competences:

ability to cause personnel`s interest to psychology, to popularize and explain achievements of psychological science,

ability to create personnel`s need for psychological knowledge, desire to use it in their activity.

In order to define potential employers request to the activities of the organizational psychologist we have conducted an empirical study, where participants were senior and middle levels of the administrative hierarchy, operating in different spheres: the sphere of education; manufacturing; trade and services. A questionnaire, which includes 22 professional competences of the organizational psychologist, was used as a diagnostic tool. Respondents were asked to rank competencies depending on the degree of significance. The questionnaire was based on the competence model of organizational psychologist, developed by the authors [3]. The total number of sample amounted to 241 people.

The study revealed the ranking values of the organizational psychologist`s competencies in the views of managers and identified points of divergence and convergence of expectations depending on the level of the management hierarchy and sphere of activity.

Table 1 presents the results of correlation analysis assessing the significance of organisational psychologist`s professional competences **by senior managers** representing such spheres as education, manufacturing and trade.

Table 1.

Correlation of the Notions about the Organizational Psychologist's Professional Competences of Senior Level Managers

<i>Managers</i>	SE	SM	ST
SE	1		
SM	0,598	1	
ST	0,516	0,564	1

Reference designation: SE – senior level managers of the sphere of education; SM – senior level managers of the sphere of manufacturing; ST - senior level managers of the sphere of trade and services.

Correlations are significant ($p < 0.01$).

As it can be seen from the presented table, it is an interaction of notions about the organizational psychologist's professional competences of representatives of all three spheres of activity. It was proved also at the stage of priority competencies identification. Managers of the highest level believe that the most organisational psychologist's priority competences are those that are somehow connected with diagnostic function: diagnostics of the personnel and groups within the organization; diagnostics of the organizational and psychological parameters of the organization (ability to identify features of motivational system of organization, type of organizational culture, attitude to innovation, the level of loyalty of personnel); diagnostics of management parameters (ability to diagnose style of leadership, managerial head of the concept, role structure of the management team); diagnostics of organizational stress and burnout. At the same time the most diverse structure of professional competences is observed in the views of leaders in the sphere of education. Along with the different subjects orientation diagnostics, it also includes training and consulting work of the organizational psychologist, development and implementation of correctional programmes.

A somewhat different situation was revealed in relation **to the managers of a mid-level**. Table 2 presents the results of correlation analysis assessing the

significance of organisational psychologist's professional competences by middle level managers representing different spheres of activity.

Table 2

Correlation of Notions about the Organizational Psychologist's Professional Competences of Middle Level Managers

<i>Managers</i>	ME	MM	MT
ME	1		
MM	0,770	1	
MT	0	0	1

Reference designation: ME – middle level managers of the sphere of education; MM – middle level managers of the sphere of manufacturing; MT - middle level managers of the sphere of trade and services.

Correlations are significant ($p < 0.01$).

As is seen from the table, it is an interaction of notions about the organizational psychologist's professional competences of managers of middle level from the spheres of education and manufacturing. The «mansion» are managers representing the sphere of trade and services. The qualitative analysis showed that perceptions of priority competences of representatives in the sphere of education and industrial and manufacturing sphere are almost the same. At the same time diagnostic functions of different subject orientations prevail. At the same time, priorities of mid-level managers from the sphere of trade and services are much more variable and aimed accented on the development of a variety of practical socio-psychological skills of the staff.

During the research it was counted the degree of consistency of collective profiles of senior and middle managers using Spearman correlation coefficient. The obtained values of the correlation coefficient $r_s = -0,20$ testifies the absence of the relationship between sets of rank sequence of necessary organizational psychologist's competencies in the views of managers of different levels (the critical value of the coefficient of correlation for the significance level of $p < 0.05$ is equal to 0,424). The lack of significant correlation between the rank sequences of necessary competencies revealed serious differences in the views

of top and middle managers about the activity of the psychologist in the organization.

On the next stage of the research it was carried out the comparative analysis of views on the organizational psychologist's professional competences of managers of senior and middle levels from the specificity of activity (see table 3).

Table 3
Correlation of Notions about the Organizational Psychologist's Professional Competences of Managers of Different Levels

<i>Managers</i>	SE	SM	ST
ME	0,678		
MM		0,957	
MT			0

As it seen from the table, it is a significant correlation of notions of representatives of the top and medium levels from the sphere of education. Regarding to industrial sphere, the notions about the organizational psychologist's professional competences of senior and middle managers are practically identical. And finally, in the sphere of trade and services there is no such correlation.

Let's carry out a comparative analysis of the structure of representations of top and middle managers from one sphere of activity. Let us turn to the assessment of organizational psychologist's professional competences by managers of different levels in **the sphere of manufacturing**.

Managers from the industrial sphere regardless of the level consider that the most relevant organizational psychologist's competencies are those that are necessary for diagnostic work with the personnel of the organization and groups within the organization. Managers believe that the main function of the organizational psychologist should be to provide an information about socio-psychological parameters of the organizational environment, personnel, groups within the organization, namely: about the parameters of socio-psychological

climate in collective; about the level of cohesion, harmony and compatibility of staff in working groups; about the peculiarities of conflict behavior of employees in groups; about the peculiarities of the motivational system of organization, type of organizational culture, innovation and other socio-psychological characteristics of personnel and groups. It should be noted that the assessment of high-priority competences by managers of the top and middle levels in the sphere of manufacturing are almost the same.

During the comparative analysis of the views of senior and middle level managers in **the sphere of education** it also revealed the similarity of the structure of these representations. However, in contrast to the estimates of the heads of manufacturing sphere, the structure of representations in the sphere of education authorities reflects not only the organizational psychologist's diagnostic competences, but also competences related to the formulation and implementation of educational, correctional and training programs, as well as the celebration of the consulting work. It can be said that the notions of managers from the sphere of education about the organizational psychologist's professional competences are more differentiated.

During the comparative analysis of organizational psychologist's priority competences estimated by managers of top and middle level in **the sphere of trade and services** it was discovered the conditionality of these estimates by the manager's place within the system of administrative relations. The structure of the views of senior managers differs significantly from the structure of representations of the middle managers. Top managers consider that the highest priority competences are those that are associated with the organizational psychologist's diagnostic activities. As soon as middle managers consider as a leading psychological competences both diagnostics and those associated with conducting preventive, corrective and educational work with the personnel of the organization. It can be said that the expectations from the organizational

psychologist's activities of the leaders of various levels in the sphere of trade and services differ significantly.

Thus, the results of the research showed that the notions of managers, as potential consumers of organizational and psychological services, about the psychologist's activities in the organization are defined as by the position of the manager within the system of administrative relations, as by the specific of its sphere of activity. Because of the fact that currently the quality of education, especially the higher professional education, depends on how result corresponds to customer's needs, the expectations of potential employers identified during the survey, can be considered as a request to educational institutions, preparing specialists in the sphere of organizational psychology.

At the same time, recognizing the need to focus on the expectations and preferences of consumers of psychological services, we note that psychologists should participate actively in the formation of a favorable image of a psychologist in the organization and adequate expectations of managers about its activities in order to make anticipatory activity, «become co-creator request changes in our field of knowledge» [2, p. 55].

References

- [1].Bazarov T.Yu, Konyaeva,A.P. *Organizational Psychology: the Transition from Service Managers to Partnership with Entrepreneurs. The Experience of Empirical Research and Analysis of Their Own Practices* // Organizational Psychology, Volume 2, Number 1, 2012. p. 42-57. (Bazarov T. Yu, Konyaeva A.P. Organizacionnaya psihologiya: perehod ot obsluzhivaniya menedzherov k partnerstvu s predprinimatel'nyami. Opyt empiricheskogo issledovaniya i analiz sobstvennoj praktiki // Organizacionnaya psihologiya. – 2012. – T.2. - №1, s. 42-57.).
- [2].Armstrong M. *The Practice of Human Resources Management*. Sankt-Petersburg, 2008. 832 p.
- [3].Pogodina A.V., Litvinova E.J., Kochetova T.V. *Experience in the Development of a Competence Model of Organizational Psychologists* // Proceedings of the II All-Russian Scientific-Practical Conference “Social Psychology of Small Groups”. M:

(MSU of PP), 2011, Pp. 500-505. (*Pogodina A.V., Litvinova E.Yu., Kochetova T.V.*
Opyt razrabotki kompetentnostnoj modeli organizacionnogo psihologa // Sbornik
dokladov II Vserossijskoj nauchno-prakticheskoy konferencii “Social'naya psihologiya
malyh grupp”. – M.: MGPPU, 2011, s. 500-505.)