MECHANISMS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN TRAINING PERSONNEL FOR THE HOUSING AND UTILITY SECTOR IN UKRAINE BASED ON THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Today, the housing and utilities sector of Ukraine, despite a fairly long and wide discussion of the situation at all levels, is one of the most ineffective spheres of the national economy and has hardly been affected by the reform processes. The problems of housing and utility services such as their extremely low quality, their constant pollution of the environment, their danger of emergencies, including those with serious consequences, their ineffective management of the housing and utility sector of Ukraine, and their shortage of qualified managers affects almost every resident of the country.

These quality of housing problems seriously affect the well-being of the population. Therefore, it should be noted that finding qualified specialists and managers in the field of public services, who would correctly assess current political and economic situations in Ukraine and who understand the European field of housing and utilities management along with its adaptation to modern political and economic situations in the country.

Key words: *housing and communal services, management, associations of co-owners of apartment buildings, associations, personnel policy, management mechanisms*

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, there have been major changes in the housing and utility services sector of Ukraine as enterprises transitioned to work in market economy conditions. The transfer of utility assets to private operators based on concession agreements took place. The region has several long-term programs for the modernization of housing and utility services, energy-saving, providing the population with high-quality housing and communal services. For the successful implementation of these programs, specialists require modern knowledge and high qualifications in the relevant fields. Currently, such specialists are lacking.

The problem of providing specialists for the reform processes in the housing and utilities sector of Ukraine has not been resolved at this stage of the national economy's development. In addition, the issue of sufficient training of relevant specialists in the field of apartment buildings management, financial and economic activities and contractual obligations of homeowners associations, management of safety and quality of housing and utility services, natural monopolies and management organizations, investment and innovative management and public-private partnership in the housing and utilities sector has not been addressed.

The problems of reforming the housing and utility services of the regions and the country as a whole, the development of market relations in this area, the staffing issues during the reforming process, and improving the training of personnel for the sector at different times were dealt with by L. Bezzubko, V. Bogachev, Valiev S., Galyamov Y., Gindin M., Gorbunov A., Gorina A., Grinchel B., Dorofienko V., Dronov A., Zhbanov P., Zotov V., Islamov E., Kalinsky S., Kondratyeva M.

The purpose of the article is to determine the organizational and economic mechanisms for improving the quality of educational services of personnel training for the housing and utilities sector of Ukraine based on the study of European experience.

2. THE MAIN PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE HOUSING AND UTILITIES INDUSTRY

Attention should be paid to the training of personnel at the level of secondary vocational education. Educational institutions of the region graduate about 600 specialists per year in the professions most in-demand in the industry - operators, machinists, locksmiths, assemblers, and electricians. This number would be sufficient but after graduation, no more than 10-15 graduates (2-3%) come to the industry. The rest, for various reasons, postpone their employment at utility companies or do not associate it with this industry at all. More than 30 percent of young people upon graduation are drafted into military service; some go to work in construction, oil production and refining, and commerce. The value of the work of specialists in the housing and utilities sector remains underestimated and, as a result, not prestigious. Of great importance is the level of wages, which in the housing and utilities sector is lower compared to other sectors of the region's economy, the absence of government measures aimed at increasing the interest of young people in mastering the professions of the utilities sector.

The personnel problem in the housing and utilities sector is more acute than in any other sector of the economy. Today, more than two million people work in the country's housing and utilities sector, while the deficit of qualified personnel in the industry has exceeded 47 percent. The average age of workers in the industry is approaching 50. More than half of the management personnel of housing and utility enterprises do not have specialized education and did not receive any further training for ten years or more. [1].

The main personnel problems of the housing and utilities industry are:

- Lack of qualified personnel (janitors, locksmiths, cleaners, painters).

The shortage of working personnel is compensated by assigning one and a half, two, or even three work areas to one employee. This practice significantly affects the quality and timeliness of the provided services. And, as a result, the population's dissatisfaction is growing, the number of complaints about the work of housing and utility companies and the cost of services is increasing.

The lack of skilled workers can be explained by the following factors:

- low prestige of blue-collar occupations in the housing and utilities industry;

- low level of average wages of workers in the industry;

- hard, little-automated labor of workers;

- “aging” of personnel, the reluctance of young people to get a job at the enterprises of housing and communal services.

- Lack of motivation.

The analysis shows that at most housing and utility companies, it is difficult to build effective and more flexible systems of material and non-material incentives for workers plus there are no perceived career prospects. There is a lack of experience in maintaining and developing corporate culture, a well-functioning system of personnel motivation as well.

The lack of qualified workers in the housing sector can be solved by the following means:

- by granting of benefits for workers in the industry for housing and utility payments;

- by offering employment with training in working specialties to young people, in particular, university and high school students in need of part-time work.

- by establishing a closer interaction of housing and utility companies with specialized secondary technical educational institutions to attract future graduates to work in specialties in the field.

The educational system provides few opportunities for mastering practical skills in a chosen specialty. As currently designed, industrial internships are insufficient, for they are mostly of too general a nature, without taking into account the specifics of given trade.

- Low level of education and qualifications of the administrative and managerial personnel of housing and communal enterprises.

Management of an apartment building requires extensive knowledge in various areas including but not limited to compliance with regulatory and technical requirements for the maintenance and use of housing and communal infrastructure; contractual activities with tenants, contractors, implementation and control of energy-saving, information and other innovative technologies, several of others [2].

A Solution to these problems is possible only if education is modernized in order to maximize the satisfaction of employers' requirements in the assimilation of knowledge by students about innovative, breakthrough, environmentally balanced, energy-saving projects and technologies. In the context of reforming the housing and utilities sector, support for the development of small and medium-sized businesses in this area is of great importance, since small and medium-sized businesses have greater flexibility in meeting the needs of the population, create new jobs and contribute to the revenue of the city's budget. However, the system of professional training and retraining of personnel for small and medium-sized enterprises in the housing sector as a system is practically absent. And without staffing, and thus, without the use of new materials in construction, repair, and reconstruction, innovative technologies in diagnostics, installation, and repair of engineering networks, without the use of new organizational and legal forms in the housing and utilities sector, no modernization of this diversified structure is possible [3].

Following reasons for the shortage of qualified management personnel in housing and communal services, as well as the lack of high professionalism in management organizations, can be named:

- lack of an independent director of personnel training;

- absence of real possibilities of obtaining additional professional education;

- lack of own scientific schools, a system of professional educational institutions, systematic work with young personnel [4].

The need for continuous development and training of personnel in the housing sector today is dictated by political and economic changes both in Ukraine and in European countries. Modern employers are clearly aware that the main competitive advantage of a company is its talented personnel, specialists who are ready for continuous development. However, if initially employers introduced both internal corporate training systems and used the services of external trainers and consultants, today they approach this issue more rationally. The issue of assessing the effectiveness of training becomes more important.

3. EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

The European system of personnel development presupposes training, first of all, for managers in field training and seminars, as well as by presenting company projects at conferences. The company's specialists are trained mainly in training centers and institutes of their corporations through a lecture format or training. It is worth noting that the professional training and education of personnel takes place within the framework of a dual system, which involves the passage of a theoretical knowledge block in training centers and a practical block directly at the enterprise. Many technical universities and special colleges in Europe provide education that allows the graduate to immediately work as a manager. In Western countries, high requirements are imposed on the property manager following the law. The training of specialists in housing management is at a high level.

In developed European countries, the need to acquire special knowledge and skills in the field of residential real estate management is dictated not only by legal restrictions, but also by market conditions: Western “experienced” owners will not entrust their property to unqualified specialists for management. For example, in London, there are special institutions for supporting homeowners: centers for helping residents. Such centers employ professional psychologists, economists, sociologists. As a rule, they have state and municipal grants to work with residents and help various organizations of residents. In Hungary, according to the Homeowners' Associations Act, only a person who has received

appropriate professional training can be a condominium manager. In Germany, a home manager must have a higher education, and also possess such personal qualities as communication skills, the ability to negotiate and resolve conflicts. Abroad, professional management communities offer various educational courses, both basic and advanced. Training in such courses contributes to the acquisition of deep knowledge and practical skills [5].

In most foreign countries, for example, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and others, housing and communal services management is considered as a separate type of entrepreneurial activity, for which the management organization receives remuneration from the property owners. The homeowners association is responsible for the maintenance of the building. Major management decisions are made by the governing bodies (associations) of homeowners, while the manager prepares and justifies recommendations for the board of the union [6].

Thus, taking into account foreign experience, it seems appropriate to increase the role of a manager of a management company in Ukraine and the need to move to new European standards in the field of housing and utilities management. The housing and utilities market creates requirements for management companies, failure to comply with, which makes them uncompetitive. In addition, the competitiveness of the management organization increases with the availability of certificates confirming its professionalism, experience, and financial stability, as well as unswerving adherence to standards in the field. [7].

As the experience of Poland has shown, the system of the transition of housing and communal services from the public sector to entrepreneurial activity implies transparent management regulation in this sector. To achieve this, in 1997, Poland passed the "Real Estate Management Act" (Ustawa o gospodarce nieruchomościami) [8]. The Act lays down the rules for the management of real property and defines professional activities per the law.

The opportunity to make money on the provision of services that were previously provided only by municipal companies turned out to be quite attractive. Now there are more than 15 thousand registered managers in Poland - these are both large companies and private contractors. At the same time, houses are not at all obliged to conclude contracts with such companies - however, in most cases, it turns out to be more profitable than solving such problems on their own. Today, the vast majority of apartment buildings use the services of management companies.

The management market is open to everyone - only persons or companies that have committed offenses, including those of a financial nature, cannot engage in such activities. In turn, having opened the public services market for private business, the state initially only retained control over their qualifications, by carrying out licenses. However, even here the state moved away from interference as much as possible, delegating most of the work to the managers' associations. Housing managers' associations have been established in each city, which in turn constitute several nationwide federations.

These associations were engaged in training future managers, and the role of the state became limited to conducting professional audits Representatives of the real sector were invited to the commission. However, obtaining a manager's license was a rather laborious and costly process. Thus, in 2014, Poland decided to cancel the mandatory certification of housing managers. However, now Poland plans to return licensing by switching to a pan-European system. Once they do a Polish manager will be able to work in any of the EU countries.

In the EU, a prerequisite for the work of managers is that they carry liability insurance. Similarly, contractors are subject to compulsory insurance: electricians, plumbers, and so on. Simply put, by signing a contract with a professional manager, homeowners know that the damage from their possible mistake will be compensated by the insurance company. This ensures a high level of consumer confidence, without which reforms would never be successful. At the same time, the risk analysis of insurance companies that risk their own money is much better guaranteed by the professional level of managers than any certificate from the state. [9].

4. MECHANISMS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN TRAINING PERSONNEL FOR THE HOUSING AND UTILITY SECTOR IN UKRAINE

Based on the study of the European experience of effective management in the field of housing and utilities, it can be concluded that one of the important conditions for the successful implementation of the outlined plans for the modernization of the housing and utilities sector in Ukraine is the level of qualification and the development of human resources in this area.

It is well known that a highly efficient and flexible system of higher, technical, and professional education, oriented to the market, is one of the main factors in ensuring the sustainability of the development of the housing and utilities sector and the communal complex. It is worth mentioning that the employment rate of graduates is mainly influenced by the level of their professional knowledge, practical skills, and competencies, which are formed during the period of practical training under the guidance of experienced specialists based on successful enterprises.

In a market economy, only companies staffed with highly qualified personnel, who promptly respond to changes in technical equipment and the emergence of new technologies, can meet modern requirements. In this regard, appropriate adjustments have been made to the main provisions of state education standards, groups of key competencies have been identified, and educational programs have been structurally unified. At the same time, it is necessary to attract potential employers, industry associations, and business structures to the development of standards and educational programs that is, it is necessary to create educational, scientific and production consortia uniting educational institutions, scientific institutes, and production enterprises (industry associations). This integration is also relevant for the training of scientific engineering personnel for the housing sector [10].

Based on the need to modernize and develop the housing sector, as well as to stimulate the formation of the institution of professional management companies in the housing sector, there is also a need for new generation specialists in the management of urban infrastructure, utilities, and housing. Often, graduates of universities, colleges, and lyceums do not have sufficient skills and knowledge to work in modern production conditions, and young specialists preparing for the housing sector are no exception.

Therefore, educational institutions need to establish an integrated system of educational and industrial internships for students, which would include the development of mechanisms and methodology for organizing educational internships in coordination with housing and utility companies. In this regard, the experience of Germany which employs a dual training system is useful.[4].

To make the personnel training system in Ukraine more effective, housing and utility companies need to come up with an initiative both to introduce the principles of dual training and to retrain existing personnel. Dual training involves targeted training of personnel for the company with the passage of industrial apprenticeship and subsequent employment. For retraining and advanced training, it is necessary to create educational centers with the support of regional authorities. These centers will also be useful for representatives of municipal authorities in terms of acquaintance with modern methods of organizing the work of the municipal economy, the tariff setting system, regulatory legal acts in the areas of heat, electricity, water supply, and sanitation. In general, it is necessary to increase the level of interaction between the authorities to resolve issues of training in the housing and utilities sector. To meet the needs of industrial organizations and enterprises in professional development and retraining, it is necessary to consider the possibilities of developing and implementing a system of additional professional education for housing and utilities specialists according to specialized training programs at the bases of universities, colleges, and industry enterprises.

One way to develop a personnel training system for the housing and utilities sector to develop a system of additional professional education for specialists in the housing and utilities sector. This would allow improving the process of training, retraining, advanced training of personnel and at the same time to act as an economic entity that makes a profit for the implementation of the intellectual potential of the teaching staff of universities and scientific laboratories in the form of new knowledge.

Modern technical universities must meet new criteria, the dictates of the times, the realities of competition, and even outstrip the production of new technologies in the development and birth of ideas.

Therefore, the reorientation of universities to work in the segment of both basic education and professional training in the housing sector is becoming more important. At the same time, the demand for additional education services offered by the university not only lays the financial basis for the existence of the educational institution but will testify to the high level of teaching, laboratory equipment and will be the most important indicator of the high rating of the university. This circumstance is applicable to secondary technical and vocational educational institutions [10]. On the bases of higher technical educational institutions, it is necessary to create – "Centers for advanced training of housing and communal services employees" in order to enhance integration in matters of personnel training, dissemination of knowledge, the propaganda of the policy of development of the housing and utilities sector.

For the housing and communal services of Ukraine to be modern, it is necessary to introduce modern technologies, and the manufacturers of these technologies should participate in the formation of educational programs. It is advisable to create a special "Scientific and educational complex in the field of housing and utilities management" to create a stable system of staffing of enterprises in the industry by using the potentials of the parties in the field of training and retraining of personnel, introducing innovative technologies, reforming professional education in the field of housing and communal services taking into account the requirements of employers, creating a system interaction between education and the sphere of housing and communal services, aimed at modernizing the housing and communal services.

The Ministry of Housing and Utilities of Ukraine in the form of a non-commercial partnership can be called upon to be an element of the innovative infrastructure of the system for training personnel for the housing sector, as well as certification of personnel and services in the housing sector. It is assumed that the main tasks of such a partnership include: the organization of sustainable interaction between business entities, the state (represented by its bodies) and homeowners (represented by their associations), the creation of a system of training, retraining, and certification of professional personnel for the housing sector at all levels of education, the formation of a civilized market in the housing and utilities sector, the development of all types of entrepreneurship (public, private, public-private), the development of a regulatory framework for the housing and communal services sector, the definition of a policy in the field of training personnel for housing and utility services. At the same time, training programs and practical classes in the "Scientific and educational complexes in the field of housing and communal services management" should be drawn up, taking into account the recommendations of representatives of housing and communal services enterprises and municipal services. As a result, after graduation with a thesis in one of the branches of the municipal economy, a student is ready to be employed as a highly qualified manager by a company in the housing and utilities sector.

5. CONCLUSION

After studying the foreign experience in improving the qualifications of housing and utility sector employees and adapting it to the political and socio-economic situation in Ukraine, one concludes that there is a need for a new type of educational institutions that combine primary, secondary, and higher professional education based on a dual model of education. This should improve the quality of educational services in training personnel for the housing and utilities sector leading to a more sustainable market.

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