

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN MASS MEDIA: EVIDENCE FROM RUSSIA

Dr. Elena Vasilieva

Academy of sciences of Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Yakutsk, Russia

infosoc@bk.ru

Dr. Mariia Rubtcova

Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russia

maria.rubtcova@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article presents a study of mass media's opinion about the effectiveness of public service in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Data comes from two Republican printed media: newspaper "Yakutia" as the official organ of the Government, and the newspaper "Yakutsk vecherny" as the main opposition media in 2011 (baseline) and 2013 (the year of election of deputies to the State Assembly (II Tumen)). The study was conducted using the method of content analysis. Results show that mass media are avoiding positive or negative marks and prefer neutral statements. It can mean that society has no clear view about the contribution of public service in the results of socio-economic development. The legitimation of public service remains at a low level.

Keywords: Content analysis, public management sociology, legitimation of public service, Russia

ANÁLISIS DEL CONTENIDO DE LA REPRESENTACIÓN DE LA ADMINISTRACIÓN PÚBLICA EN LOS MEDIOS MASIVOS: EVIDENCIA DE RUSIA

Resumen

Este artículo presenta un estudio sobre la opinión de los medios de comunicación masivos sobre la efectividad del servicio público en la República de Sakha (Yakutia), Rusia. Para ello hemos considerado dos diarios impresos de dicha república: el "Yakutia", órgano oficial del gobierno, y el diario "Yakutsk vecherny" como el medio opositor en 2011, y en 2013, año en el que hubo elecciones para la Asamblea estatal (IITumen). El estudio se ha realizado siguiendo el método de análisis de contenido. Los resultados muestran que los medios de comunicación están evitando señales positivas o negativas y se inclinan por afirmaciones neutras. Esto podría evidenciar que en la sociedad no hay una visión clara sobre el

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papel y la contribución del servicio público en los resultados del desarrollo socioeconómico. La legitimización del servicio público sigue siendo mínima.

Keywords: Análisis de contenido, sociología de la gestión pública, legitimación del servicio público, Rusia.

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Introduction

Over the last 20 years the Russian Federation has passed through one of the most significant socio-cultural transformations, and to the greatest extent, these changes have affected the public sphere. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new principles of organization of interaction of officials and the civil society were established. In the early 2000s, the state began to return to the role of the main regulator of social life, and the need for apparatus, which will assume ever-increasing administrative powers, has arisen.

Sociological analysis of public service has a long tradition both abroad and in Russia. The research starts with M. Weber's theory (1994), in which the concept of bureaucracy and concept of the state were separated in contrast to the works of K. Marx (1964: 308-309) and E. Durkheim (1990: 97-102). During the twentieth century, many authors analyzed government, speaking to the definition of bureaucracy. Marxists and neo-Marxism – G. Marcuse (1994), Ch. Mills (1959), J. Habermas (1995) – had defined public service as one of the ruling class or stratum of society, which is "privatizing" a state and through a state, it dictates the rules of organization of public life and use it for their own benefit. Bureaucrats, in their view, performs a dual function: on the one hand, they implement the state's right of "legitimate violence", protecting the rule of law and limiting the tyranny of the capitalists to the workers, but on the other hand, bureaucrats limit the development of democracy, seeking to preserve their privileges and powers.

In contrast, representatives of structural functionalism, continuing and developing the concept of rational bureaucracy, had defined public service as an integral part of society as a system. T. Parsons (1991) and R. Merton (1996) emphasized that officials ensure execution of state functions, thus ensuring the adaptation of social systems to external challenges, and hence the survival of society. They are necessary because without them, chaos will reign. Dysfunction causing complaints can and should be eliminated in the course of the natural development of democracy, by strengthening the ability of civil society to self-motivation (see e.g. the concept of "modest state" M. Crozier, 2010).

R. Dahrendorf (1959), N. Luhmann (2001) and A. Touraine (2009) stressed that the bureaucracy in terms of the welfare state contributes to the distortion of the idea of democracy, and increasing of the volume of administrative work leads to the dissemination of the bureaucracy's dysfunctions in other types of organizations. In the post-industrial state public service acquires the features of a technocracy. Despite the fact that within the framework of neoinstitutional theory the bureaucracy had not considered as an independent institute, but the work of such authors as T. Veblen (1984), D. North (1989), and P. Berger and T. Lukman (1966), allow us to characterize the public service as social institution and its role in system of social management (Borisov et al. 2017; Tihonov, 2007; Rubtsova, 2007, 2011, 2016; Volchkova and Pavenkova, 2002; Vasilieva, 2011; Vasilieva and Rubtcova, 2015; Usiaeva, A. et al., 2016; Rubtsova and Vasilieva, 2016, Rubtcova and Pavenkov, 2016)

Research of public service in the Russian Federation began after 1990 years. Now there are three main conceptions. The first defines public service as an apparatus, which carries out legislative functions of the state. It is the base of the legislation on public service (Atamanchuk, 2008; Kazantsev, 2010; Magomedov, 2010). The second conception, which include the works of Zinchenko, (2011), Vyrypaeva, (2013) and others, has focused on problem of professionalization of officials, and has define the bureaucracy as professional activity on execution of state functions. The third conception is based on the concept of "New public management" (NGM) and defines bureaucracy as an organization for the provision of public services (Obolonsky, 2011; Jakobson, 2002).

Due to the fact that in recent times the concept of NGM is subjected to wide criticism both in the Russian and foreign literature, many research consider the public service as a complex institution (Makarín and Shrejder, 2006; Zakharov, 2009). Also wide acceptance gets the traditional definition of officials as the political class, one of the types of elites (Kryshtanovskaya, 2005; Gaman-Golutvina, 2012; Gashkov and Rubtsova, 2017). But, despite the wide theoretical base for the definition of public service, the problem of legitimation in the public administration is still one of the most actual for the Russian governance.

The legitimation in a juridical sense means the positive attitude of the inhabitants of the country, large groups, public opinion applicable to specific state institutions and the recognition of their validity. In sociology, this concept was described by Weber (1994), and then Berger and Luckmann (1966) as recognition by society of the components of the social institution's norms and values form that by them. Legitimation guarantees the credibility in the interaction of people.

Our research question is the following:

Is there any regularity of the mention of public service in the Yakutian newspapers?

Data and Methodology

To explore the opinion of mass media about the effectiveness of public service on the example of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) we have tested two Republican printed media: newspaper "Yakutia" as the official organ of the Government, and the newspaper "Yakutsk vecherny" as the main opposition media in 2011 (baseline) and 2013 (the year of election of deputies to the State Assembly (Il Tumen)). The study was conducted by the method of content analysis, the frequency of information – the number of paragraphs mentioning the units of the account in the text, unit of account: public servant = civil servant = official = government. References to Federal and regional civil service were taken into account separately.

Results of Content Analysis of Republican printed media

Analysis of mention of the public service during the year allows us to conclude about the presence of seasonal fluctuations: we can distinguish two periods, when the number of mentions of public service increases in both media – March-April and November-December (see figure 1).

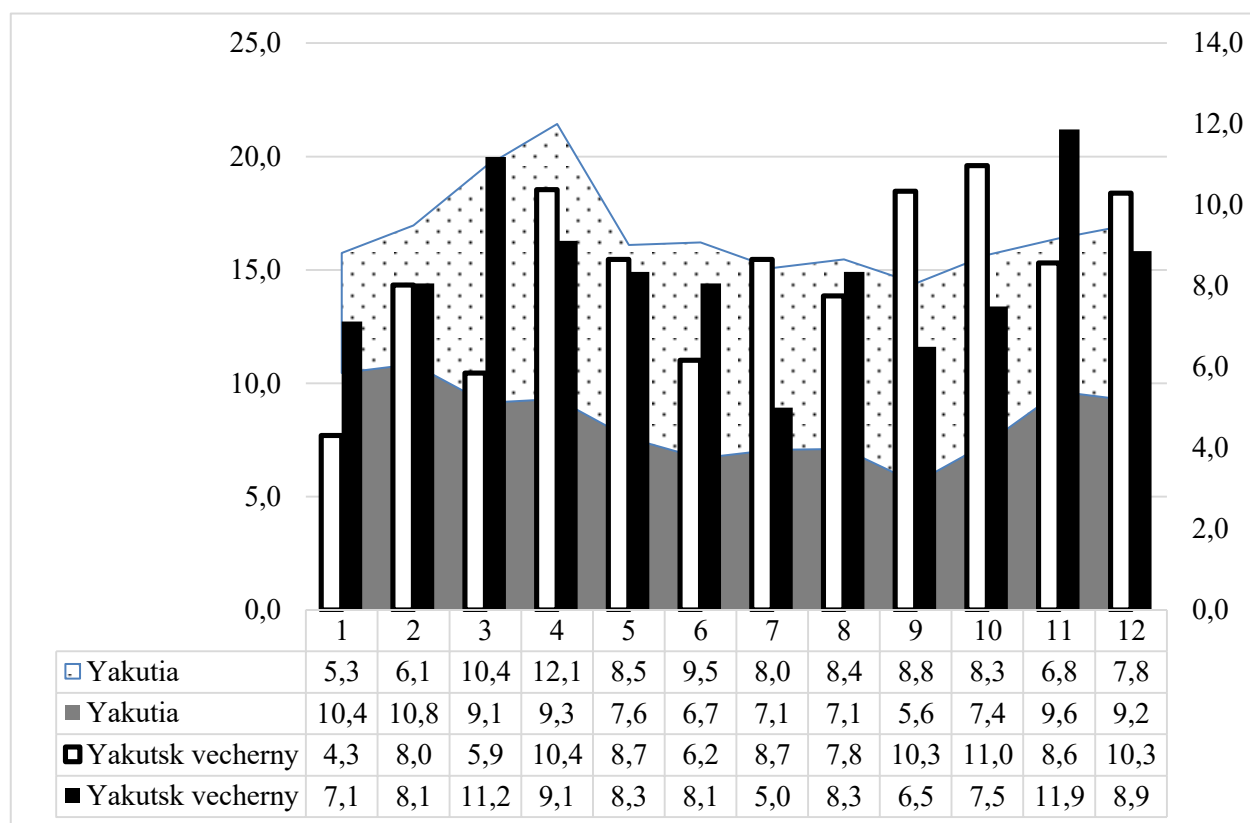


Figure 1. The dynamic of mention of the public service during the year, %

The proportion of mentions of the Federal civil service in opposition media in December 2011 was the highest during the entire period (16.7 % of total number of mentions of the Federal public service a year), but in the official media, it remained at the average level (9.2 %). The highest proportion of mentions of the Federal service in the newspaper "Yakutia" is in April and December 2013, when in the Republic was held the meeting of the State Commission on the socio-economic development headed by Dmitry Medvedev and the I-th interregional agricultural investment forum "Investments in agriculture – the way forward".

The dynamic of negative mentions shows the relationships of mass media to the government. In opposition media peak of negative mentions in the base year were in September and December (for 54.8% and 58.1% of the total number of

references in the month, respectively), i.e. in the period of summarizing results of economic development. In an election year, the number of negative references decreased. Peaks were in May (47,6%) and September (44,5%), i.e. at the beginning of the election campaign and the elections themselves. In the official media in the base year after the peak of negative references in February (16.8 %) during the rest of the year, the number of critical references remained almost flat, and the minimum level was observed in December (9.2 %). In an election year, there have been three periods of increase of a number of the negative statements – March (7.6 %), September (7.7 %) and November (8.7 %); and two periods of lower criticism – May (3.2 %) and December (5.9 %). That is, during the period beginning election campaign criticism in the direction of the Executive authorities decreased, and after the elections – has intensified.

Table 1. The distribution of mention of the public service on the character, type, and theme of message, %

		The message about political activity				
		Republic service	public	Federal service	public	
Positive report	analytical	Yakutia	2011	11,8		3,8
			2013	8,5		4,9
		Yakutsk vecherny	2011	3,5		2,9
			2013	2,6		0,0
Negative report	analytical	Yakutia	2011	13,5		19,2
			2013	7,1		8,5
		Yakutsk vecherny	2011	47,5		20,6
			2013	39,2		27,5
Positive comment		Yakutia	2011	6,7		3,8
			2013	2,8		1,2
		Yakutsk vecherny	2011	3,5		5,9
			2013	2,6		5,9

Negative comment	Yakutia	2011	4,6	1,9
		2013	1,8	2,4
	Yakutsk vecherny	2011	8,2	35,3
		2013	5,4	5,9

Conclusion and discussion

The hypothesis has been confirmed. The research shows that in newspapers of Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) – one of the subjects of Russian Federation - the number of mentions of public service has decreased in September 2013 – during the II Tumen (Yakutian State Assembly) elections. The increase in the number of positive and negative statements in March and April is due to the publication of statistical data on the results of the socio-economic development in the previous year. Also it can be relation to the discussion about development of plans for the current year and the results on the report of the Republic Government, which is held in February. The sharp decline in the number of mentions in September 2013 years is due to elections. The official and opposition media refrain from publications to avoid violations of legislation and suspicion in the use of administrative resources. The increase in the number of statements in November and December due to summarizing of the year, discussion of the budget for next year, as well as traditional intensification of political life at the end of the year.

The Yacutian newspapers define the public service as the administrator of socio-economic development and are convinced, that the efficiency of this institution is influencing to the quality of life in republic. The mass media are avoiding positive or negative marks and prefer neutral statements. This could evidence that in society there is no clear view about the role and contribution of public service in the results of socio-economic development. This suggests that the legitimization remains at a low level.

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