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**SOCIAL PRACTICES OF UTILITY SPHERE:
CONCERNING THE ISSUE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESPONSIBILITIES
IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY REFORMS**

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The paper covers the issues of market members' social responsibilities when a particular economic sector is being reformed, house and public utility sphere being an example of such sector. The author conceives both the prerequisites for sustainable development of an economic sector (utility sphere being an example) and issues concerning consumer protection system that is to eliminate rendering of nonconforming services as well as supplier protection system aimed against non-payers. The paper considers social and economic practices that were systematized after their content had been modified in a way. The author analyzes the factors that are significant for both the process of building up an entity's profile and employees, provided the specific characteristics of house and public utility sphere have been taken in consideration. The author's conclusion is that in this case citizens become more aware of house and public utility sphere social practices. As a result, social awareness of such practices gets enhanced. The methodological method can be applied to study the issue.

The scientific aim of the paper is to consider and establish grounds of social practices when a particular economic sector is being reformed and institutional relations are being transformed.

The technique of the work performed is based criterion identification that might contribute to establishing a basis of various house and public utility services.

In order to get the results a group of theoretical and empirical methods have been resorted to: analysis, synthesis, dialectical method that both showed inconsistency and variability of social and economic processes and juxtaposed the similarities and differences; comparative method, monitoring and method of diagrams.

The results of the work performed can be defined as the prerequisites for sustainable development of both house and public utility sphere and entities' social and economic responsibilities. The article also describes components of the house and public utility sphere activi-

ties, defines relations in this sphere, subjects and factors required to build up both entities and employees' expertise.

Sphere of application. *The results of the work may be used by local authorities, entities engaged in rendering services in the house and public utility sphere, HR specialists.*

Keywords: *social and economic responsibilities; house and public utility services; social practices; house and public utility sphere reforms.*

СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ПРАКТИКИ ЖИЗНЕОБЕСПЕЧЕНИЯ ГРАЖДАН: К ВОПРОСУ О СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТИ В УСЛОВИЯХ СОВРЕМЕННЫХ РЕФОРМ

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В статье рассмотрены вопросы социальной ответственности участников рынка в условиях реформирования отрасли на примере жилищно-коммунальной отрасли. Сформулированы условия формирования стабильного развития отрасли (на примере жизнеобеспечения), так же обозначены проблемы механизма защиты потребителей от предоставления не качественных услуг и механизм защиты поставщиков от недобросовестных потребителей (неплательщиков). Систематизированы социальные практики стали намного с учетом некоторой модификация их содержания. Юридическая, экономическая и социальная ответственность. Сгруппированы и сформулированы необходимые требования для построения профиля организации и для самих сотрудников с учетом специфики сферы жилищно-коммунальных услуг. Сделан вывод, что социальные практики ЖКХ становятся более прозрачными для жителей наших городов и регионов, что также повышает социальное восприятие данных практик необходимость применения методического подхода.

Цель статьи: *изучение и обоснование социальных практик в условиях реформирования отрасли и изменяющихся институциональных связей.*

Метод или методология проведения работы. *Проведения работы методология базируется на выявлении критерия, который позволил найти общую основу для таких явлений, как разнообразные услуги ЖКХ.*

Для получения результатов были применены группы теоретических и эмпирических методов, прежде всего это анализ и синтез, метод диалектики, он позволил показать

противоречивость и изменчивость социально-экономических процессов, соотнести общее, особенное, единичное, сравнительный или компаративистский метод, метод мониторинга, диаграмм.

Результаты сформулированы: условия формирования стабильного развития отрасли и предприятий ЖКХ, социально-экономической ответственности предприятий. Даны составляющие деятельности ЖКХ: определены стороны отношений и субъекты и требования к формированию компетенций организаций и сотрудников

Область применения результатов: исследования могут быть использованы органами местного самоуправления и предприятиями ЖКХ, специалистами по подбору кадров.

Ключевые слова: социально-экономическая ответственность; жилищно-коммунальные услуги; социальные практики; реформы ЖКХ.

At the moment the house and public utility sphere is really significant for any city, town or village, its social practices are actively discussed and evaluated by the citizens as well as are scientifically studied. It should be noted that more than often the citizens overreact when discuss the activities of the entities engaged in rendering services in house and public the sphere as they are usually concerned about both financial and social factors of the corporate responsibilities, being a part of the house and public sphere reforms.

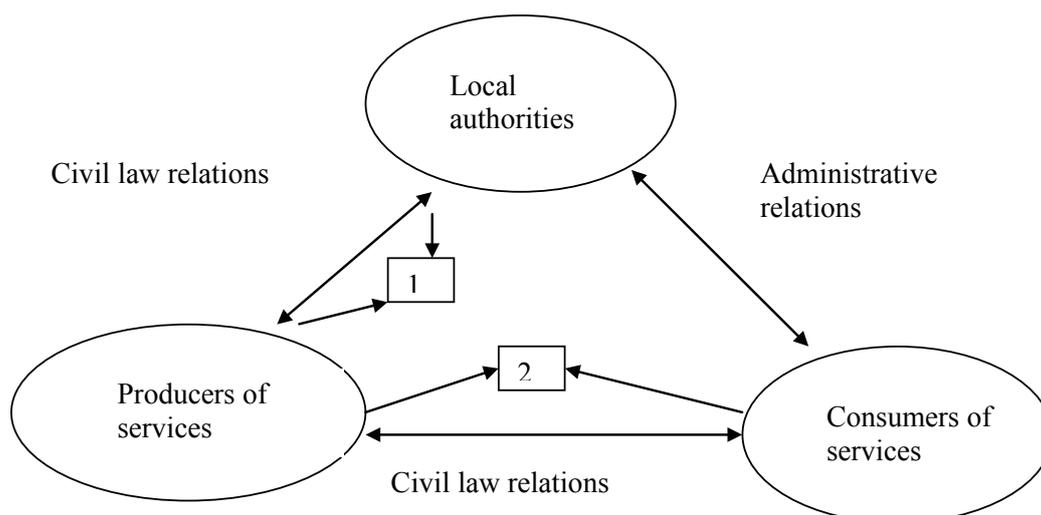
Modern scholars believe, ‘... practical systems aimed at solving the issues of social responsibilities lag behind the real political, economic and social situation.’ [1] That cannot be denied. The first thing a consumer of various services is eager to get is the employees’ commitment to their professional activities and fir fees for the services rendered. Social responsibilities are a multifactor phenomenon, ‘Today in order to build up efficient social policies one has to take into consideration the results of social responsibilities formation.’ [2] The fact is the reforms of social practices of the house and public utility sphere are far from being completed. Concerning the above-mentioned fact the issue Condominium Partnership (CP) is a real burning issue, especially when considering the newly-built houses. At the moment there are no CPs in the city. As for competition development, special events take place in the city aimed at presenting social practices of the house and public utility sphere (major repairs, landscaping, special work activities). The citizens get access to the above-mentioned practices, though there is no professional competition of entities engaged in this sphere that is largely due to budget funding shortfall.

The issues of the house and public utility sphere development are not covered in the paper as it has been done in other scientific papers, proving the fact that transition from pre-revolutionary (before

1917) methods of rendering housing services to socialistic ones was characterized by elimination of the so called ‘housekeepers’ and private companies in the house and public utility sphere. As a result, instead of competition and coexistence of various social practices there was uniformity. One should take into consideration all specific features that characterize the way the house and public utility sphere was formed in Soviet-era cities and towns (built to service a particular factory or industrial plant) in order to understand what should be done to reform and modify this sphere. The contemporary house and public utility sphere is a multisector complex that integrates social and economic, organizational, technical issues related to utility services rendering to various groups of consumers, including citizens. At the moment the public utility sphere housing funds are characterized by a high degree of deterioration (up to 70%).

An important feature of urban communal infrastructure practices is the system of entities – consumers interrelations which is affected by a technological scheme of interaction within the production process as well as conflicting interests of business and society, which are derived from the nature of public services [3, 4].

Municipal services are primarily the system of relations between the subjects of market relations. Pictures 1 and 2 show the elements (members) of the system and (enlarged) the nature of the relationship between the participants before and after the reform.



Pic. 1. *Municipal services:
the elements of the system before being reformed [3, 4]*

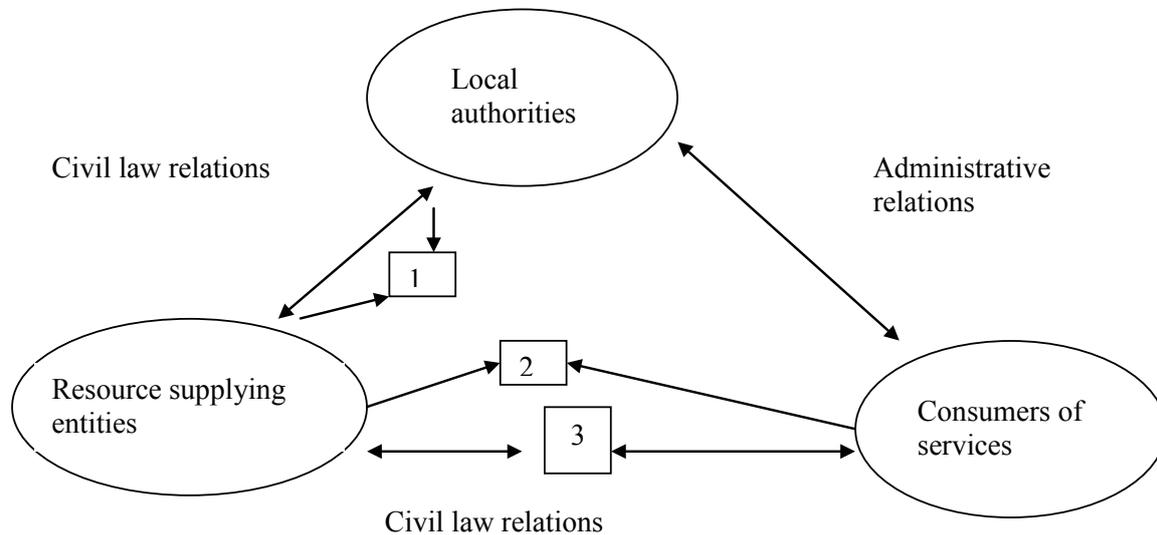


Fig. 2. *Municipal services: the complicated public utility sphere before being reformed [3, 4]*

- 1 – intermediate subjects to optimize services rendering (e.g. consumer associations),
- 2 – intermediate subjects (e.g. например, client’s entities, cash processing center),
- 3 – a new entity and Condominium Partnership management form, managing company, etc.

As it can be seen, the number of the market subjects and objects has indeed increased, whereas the interaction system between the end user and resource supplying entities has become more complex due to:

- 1) payments effecting and interaction on poor service as some consumers still use the old scheme via cash processing centers, while some consumers are obliged to effect payments via managing companies;
- 2) the fact that all-house metering devices have to be installed in addition to individual ones; also, the technique of individual billing has not been fully worked out yet. The technique shall be governed by Decree № 307 dated May, 23, 2006 ‘On the procedure of rendering public services to citizens’.

Both monitoring the activities of monopolist producers of utility services and creating a competitive environment in this sphere are considered to be burning issues. It is required to give proper and reasonable grounds while defining the list of activities of subjects of local natural monopolies which are to be regulated by the subjects of the Russian Federation.

Under the current legislation a modern model of contractual relations has been built up: a resource supplying entity – managing entity (CP) – estate owner.

First, it should be noted that attitude of city authorities greatly affects the way the house and public utility sphere structure is reformed. Under the current legislation of the Russian Federation, city authorities determine both the organizational management structure of municipal economy branches and timing as well as form of the modifications in this sphere. It is the head of the local authorities (along with the city’s legislative bodies) plays a key role in the preparation and adoption of comprehensive plans for social and economic development of the sphere, being the basis of its development.

Grants-in-aid for housing and communal services are targeted ones and are considered to be one of the types of state social assistance. They are granted to citizens by both the state authorities of the Russian Federation and local authorities provided the citizens’ expenses on housing and communal services, calculated according to the size of the standard residential unit in a particular region and the amount of the regional standard cost of utility services exceed an amount corresponding to the maximum allowable fraction of the citizens’ housing expenses in the total family income.

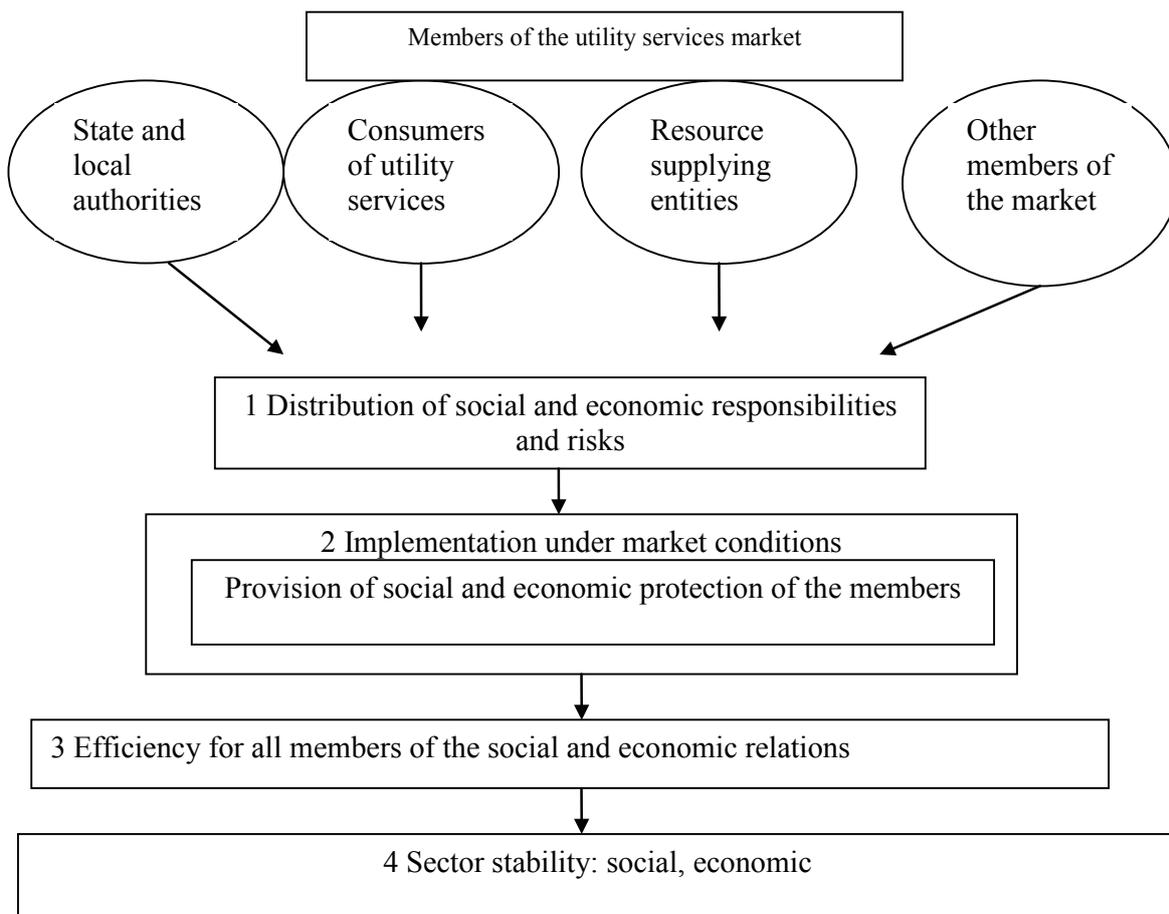


Fig. 3. Prerequisites to build up sustainable development of the sector (utility services rendering), (done by the authors)

First, social support concerning housing and communal services payments is a discount provided under the current legislation to particular categories of citizens and members of their families if they live together (if it is provided by a relevant law), as well as the amount transferred to citizens entitled to social support, who are to receive it in cash (through bank accounts, communication companies or by other means).

Second, the policy and its implementation under market conditions for companies resource depend on many factors, for example, a particular state tariff policy for the services, subsidizing consumers and services, as well as policy towards major repairs (target-oriented policy in the house and public utility sphere).

Today in Russia mechanisms to protect consumers from poor service rendering and protect suppliers from non-payers are insufficiently implemented. For example, managing companies have to bear the following risks:

- serious risks due to economically unattractive environment;
- poor technical condition of the control object.

In addition, integral efficiency of this complex assessment mechanism includes:

- efficiency of resource suppliers (break-even operation);
- efficiency of budget programmes implementation in all areas of housing and public utility services;
- efficiency of the companies that render services for blocks of flats;
- efficiency of energy-saving measures undertaken independently by residents of blocks of flats and within the investment programmes aimed at resource suppliers development and targeted development programmes;
- institutional (concerning competitiveness and services competition) and investment regulators (private investment, public-private partnerships, lending, venture capital funds).
- communication (social) efficiency of interaction of all market participants;

In order to reform the house and public utility sphere, one should use competitiveness of entities (internal and external environment evaluation) that provide utility services. Competitiveness as an economic category is associated with the category of 'quality of services and is closely linked and interdependent with it. Thus, the company's personnel, being a service provider, should develop a strategy both personal and social commitment while rendering services to consumers.

Therefore, it can be said that evaluation of the services quality is closely associated with personnel performance in accordance with the goals and mission of the entity that renders the services. From our point of view, it is necessary to apply the competence approach to personnel management in service sector, namely, carry out regular monitoring of personnel performance and assessment of social efficiency.

Transition to the so-called ‘new economics’ that is based on intellectual resources, knowledge, and high-tech information technologies, requires one, instead of evaluating efficiency of HR management from a purely economic point of view, take into consideration social factors related to assessment of qualifications and personnel competence improvement, which will contribute to:

- reducing the personnel turnover rate;
- increasing motivation;
- ensuring the competitiveness of the entity;
- improving the personnel quality.

The result of such activities should be a range of specific management techniques, whereas efficiency encouragement is closely linked with the giving ground to business expectations regarding development strategy and evaluating the external factors impact on business management policy. In this regard, the model of management competencies, along with personal psychological characteristics, should include a utility sphere specialist’s basic professional skills that greatly affect both the service quality and performance and the overall efficiency of the management process at different levels of the organizational hierarchy.

The approach we propose includes implementation of a technique that meets the above-mentioned constraints of corporate model of management competencies and includes four stages. The first stage is the formation of managerial competencies that have high potential for further adaptation to professional and applied tasks: preparation of management resolutions; making management resolutions; implementation of management resolutions; business communication and leadership skills [5]. There are certain advantages of personnel evaluation based on competency model [6].

Personal competencies/ Professional competencies /Behavioral competencies

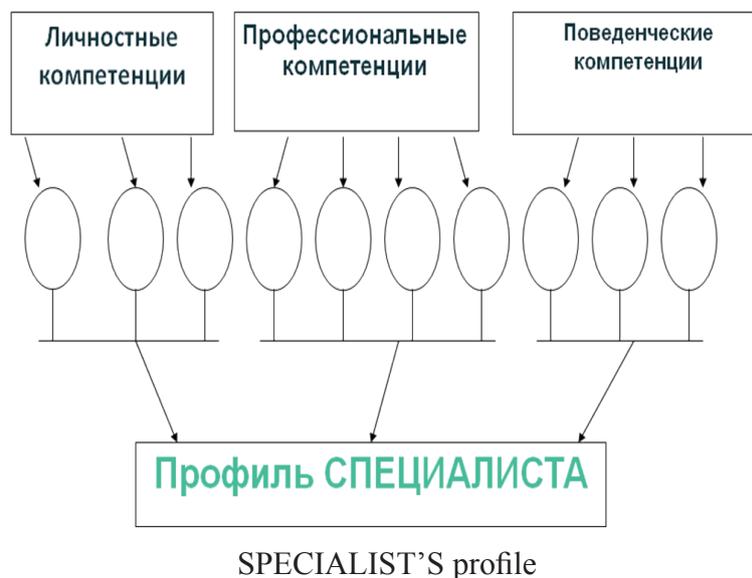


Fig. 4. Personnel assessment model based on competencies

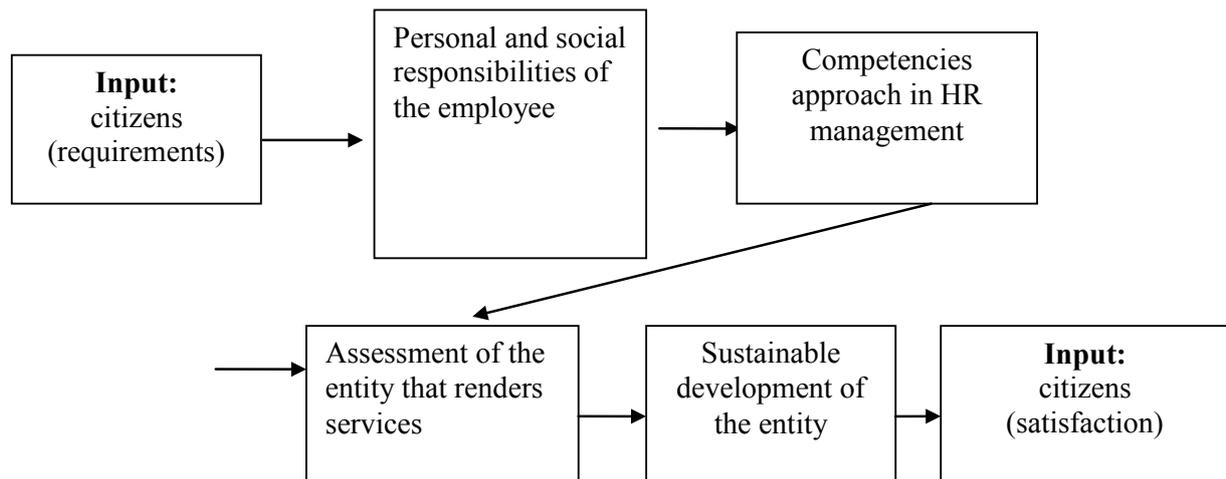
To build up an employee's profile one should do the following:

1. Develop common standards to describe work efficiency that will contribute to mutual understanding between members of different departments and at different levels. For example, this will help develop a common understanding of what 'efficient work' 'team work' mean.
2. Provide consistency of the employee assessment [7]: all experts should share the idea of what the employee's 'valuable qualities' are as well as they all should know what should be assessed and what can be ignored.
3. Provide the opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each employee and use this information for career planning and development.
4. Provide grounds for a personnel reserve building as well as and career planning.
5. To develop standards to assess the works performed.

For employees:

1. A better understanding of what an employee does and what qualities they need and what the requirements they should meet.
2. A chance to obtain feedback concerning their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Schematically, business processes optimization in the house and public utility sphere can be represented as follows (pic. 5):



Pic. 5. System of competitiveness sustainable development of the entity engaged in the house and public utility sphere based on competencies approach

Picture 5 shows it is consumers that dominate in market conditions of the business environment, so use of administrative levers for sustainable development of the house and the house and public utility sphere entities enterprises is particularly important and relevant through assessment of the personnel social and individual efficiency.

Thus, having considered the issue of social responsibilities of implementing social practices that characterize the utility sphere being reformed in Russia, the following conclusions can be made:

- social practices' elements and structure have become more diverse, their content has been modified;
- legal field of social practices implementation has changed (it has become more detailed, which, in our opinion, enhances both economic and social responsibilities and continuity of social policy concerning these issues. Their legal, economic, and social responsibilities are also being enhanced. Social practices of the utility sphere are becoming more understandable for the citizens, which is also to increase social perception of these practices as well as need for a methodical approach.

One can see that interpenetration of social and economic responsibilities has started in the utility sphere, which is to enhance institutionality of the utility sphere social practices, thereby promote the social and economic system of the Russian society to the civil state one.

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