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Formation of a Sectoral Reserve of State Civil Servants Within the Ministry of Health System

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ABSTRACT: The article addresses the formation of a talent pool of state civil servants within the system of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan in accordance with the principles of the ongoing reforms. The areas for differentiating approaches to the formation of the state civil service talent pool in line with the provisions of the Concept are analysed. The essence of innovative core mechanisms for forming the state civil service talent pool is elucidated.

RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the State Civil Service" [1] assigns managerial positions to the group of state civil service positions. This same regulatory document introduces the concept of the "National Personnel Reserve." The purpose of implementing this mechanism is to fill leadership positions in the state civil service with qualified personnel. This requires, in every sector, including healthcare, the formation of new mechanisms for preparing specialists for managerial activity, as well as for training and advanced training of incumbent managers, aimed at creating a reserve of leadership personnel that takes into account domestic developments and international experience [2].

The rapid reformatting of healthcare systems, driven by the characteristics of human civilization's development, requires the introduction of new, scientifically grounded approaches to developing the professional potential of industry leaders, as well as

methodological and practical developments in the field of managing leadership personnel [3, 4]. This necessitates studying the most successful foreign experience in forming a reserve of leadership personnel, as well as applying methods that have proven effective in practice, based on the conceptual objectives set for the national healthcare system [2].

Based on the essence of the objectives set, drawing on many years of experience in this field, and taking into account the advanced technologies of leading training centers, we developed a draft regulatory document. Following discussions and expert evaluation of this draft, on 17 November 2023 the Minister of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan issued Order No. 291 [5]. The “Concept for Organizing the Training, Retraining, and Continuing Professional Education of Leadership Personnel within the System of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan” (hereinafter — the Concept), approved by this order, serves as the basis for scientific and practical activity in this field.

Effective implementation of the Concept implies differentiating the structure and content of educational programs in the process of transforming the system of continuing professional education for healthcare leadership personnel, taking into account the level of management and the specific features of forming a reserve of leadership personnel.

Aim of the study. Analysis of innovative mechanisms for the differentiated formation of a reserve of leadership personnel for healthcare management bodies and their continuing professional education.

Materials and methods of the study. Based on the provisions of the Concept and the established structure of leadership personnel, the Department of Public Health and Healthcare Management (hereinafter — the Department) of the Center for the Development of Professional Qualifications of Medical Workers has developed and implemented a number of original algorithms.

First algorithm. Algorithm for forming a reserve of leadership personnel among incumbent managers of territorial healthcare authorities. The basis of the algorithm was an original, annual, intensive thematic advanced-training cycle, the “School of Healthcare Managers.” A general schedule for conducting the cycle and the composition of trainees were approved. The practice was introduced of annually adopting a corresponding order of the Minister of Health, based on a draft set of proposals developed by us, defining the specific subject matter, the composition of training groups, the duration of training, and the procedure for conducting the cycle. An example is Order of the Minister of Health No. 340 of 28 December 2023 [6]. This order approved the modules of the 60-credit thematic advanced-training cycle “School of Healthcare Managers: Fundamentals of the State Civil Service in the Healthcare System,” the composition of training groups formed with regard to the categories of leadership positions in territorial healthcare authorities, and the training schedule.

The mechanism developed for organizing the educational process for these training courses included:

- daily sports activities for trainees before the start of the training process;
- daily conduct, at the Department, of six academic hours of training sessions from 09:00 to 14:35. Core modules: healthcare management; economics, financing, and accounting; fundamentals of the state civil service; personnel management and workplace conflict resolution; medical statistics; digitalization; organization of medical care in emergency situations; anti-corruption; fundamentals of medical law; organization of primary health care;
- daily conduct, at the Ministry of Health, from 15:00 to 20:00, of an analysis of the results of activity for the past year and plans for the coming year on priority areas of development for the sector and the regions.

The educational process also employed the following special approaches and forms of work: operational exchange of information and analytical work through a dedicated Telegram messenger group; analysis of the transformation of territorial medical associations; analysis of the interaction between territorial healthcare authorities and national specialized scientific-practical medical centers; analysis of opportunities for international cooperation in continuing professional education involving specialists from the World Health Organization country office and Westminster International University in Tashkent; discussion of transformation projects for the healthcare systems of individual territories, presented by trainees; and preparation, by leading personnel included in the training groups, of a consolidated analysis of problems in improving performance efficiency in the relevant areas, together with proposals for their solution. On the final day of training, the results of this work were presented at analytical sessions attended by the Minister of Health and the relevant deputy ministers, and were also submitted in writing to the leadership of the Ministry of Health on behalf of the training groups.

The level of trainees' knowledge and practical skills was assessed through evaluation of a presentation prepared by each trainee on the results of their work, the results of distance-format testing, and the results of written and oral examinations.

The results of the analysis of issues raised during the “School of Healthcare Managers” thematic advanced-training cycle, together with the proposals submitted by trainees orally and in writing, were taken into account in shaping the programs and formats of subsequent training courses. Examples of the practical implementation of this approach include: the preparation of a corresponding instructional letter by the Ministry of Health; the development and conduct, in March–June 2024, of on-site thematic advanced-training cycles under the “School of Healthcare Managers” program in six regions for the heads of treatment-and-prevention institutions under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, and the regional and Tashkent city healthcare departments; corresponding changes to the modules of the training program; the inclusion of a module on international experience in the program; and the conduct of the “School of Healthcare Managers — 2025” thematic advanced-training cycles in an integrated format, in cooperation with Westminster International University in Tashkent.

Second algorithm. Algorithm for forming a reserve of leadership personnel for specialists newly appointed to a leadership position without prior specialized training. The basis of the algorithm was a special 80-credit thematic advanced-training program, “Fundamentals of Medical Institution Management,” developed by us and approved by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 4 January 2023. The aim of this cycle is to provide trainees who lack basic specialized training with the most essential theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the field of healthcare management and public health.

The algorithm provides that a specialist newly appointed to a leadership position must undergo training in this basic training cycle within one month of the date of appointment. The training program includes a 12-credit (two-day) practicum at the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, during which trainees become familiar with the organization of the work of the Ministry's main departments, the procedure for the Ministry's interaction with regional healthcare authorities and medical institutions, and form an understanding of the operation of the healthcare management structure and their own place within this administrative vertical.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OBTAINED

First algorithm. Under the training programs we developed and implemented, 35 cycles of the special thematic advanced-training program “School of Healthcare Managers” were conducted over the period 2019–2026. In total, 1,001 leadership personnel completed the training. Summary data are presented in Table 1. The analysis shows that, on average, 8.75 ± 1.89 cycles were conducted per academic year, with 12 training cycles conducted in each of the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 academic years. On average, 250.25 ± 120.87 trainees underwent training during one academic year.

Table 1: Summary data on the cycles of the special thematic advanced-training program “School of Healthcare Managers”

№	Academic year	Number of cycles	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
			Structure and number of trainees*						
1	2019–2020 academic year	5	50	**	57	**	**	**	107
2	2023–2024 academic year	12	60	14	40	307	191	**	612
3	2024–2025 academic year	12	69	13	19	23	**	11	135
4	2025–2026 academic year	6	70	14	40	23	**	**	147
	TOTAL	35	249	41	156	353	191	11	1001

Notes: “*” I — Leadership personnel of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regional healthcare departments, and the Main Healthcare Department of Tashkent city; II — Heads of territorial departments of the Committee

for Sanitary-Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health; III — Leadership personnel of national specialized scientific-practical medical centers and their branches, as well as national medical institutions; IV — Leadership personnel of territorial institutions providing specialized medical care; V — Leadership personnel of district/city medical associations; VI — Leadership personnel of clinics of higher medical educational institutions. “**” — this leadership personnel category was not included in the training groups.

It should be noted that in the 2023–2024 academic year, thanks to the organization of 12 training cycles across five areas, 612 trainees completed training, with an average group size of 51.0 people. In the 2019–2020 academic year, training was conducted in only two areas; 5 training cycles were organized, 107 trainees completed training, and the average group size was 21.4 people.

35.3% of trainees were leadership personnel of territorial specialized medical institutions, and 19.1% were heads of territorial medical associations. Taking into account leadership personnel of territorial healthcare authorities (24.9%), the share of regional representatives amounted to 79.3% of the total contingent of trainees, which attests to the pronounced target orientation of the “School of Healthcare Managers” program.

Within the framework of the “School of Healthcare Managers – 2025” thematic advanced-training cycle, for the first time, alongside training groups made up of leadership personnel from territorial healthcare authorities, groups were formed from the heads of national specialized scientific-practical medical centers and their territorial branches. Central to the training program were the directions and stages of transformation of the national healthcare system, as well as advanced foreign experience. The sessions of one full training day were held at Westminster International University in Tashkent. In addition to training sessions, as part of the program trainees engaged in organized daily sports activities and, as part of the cultural program, attended performances at the Uzbek National Academic Drama Theatre and visited the exhibition “Jadids. Letters to Turkestan.”

Second algorithm. Over the period 2022–2026, 21 cycles of the special thematic advanced-training program “Fundamentals of Medical Institution Management” were conducted under the training program we developed and implemented.

Summary data are presented in Table 2. Analysis of the data obtained showed that: each training course had an average of 5.4 trainees; 97.4% of trainees were representatives of institutions under the jurisdiction of territorial healthcare authorities; 2.6% of trainees were representatives of departmental and non-state medical institutions. The average total length of service of those who completed the training courses was 17.1 ± 0.3 years, and the average length of service in their specialty was 6.3 ± 0.4 years. A 2.2–2.5-fold difference in average length-of-service indicators among specialists newly appointed to leadership positions, between regions with high and low values, illustrates the absence of a system for standardizing the processes of forming and training a reserve of leadership personnel. 58.7% of trainees were leadership personnel of district/city medical associations, 38.7% were leadership personnel of specialized medical care institutions, and 2.6% were heads of departmental/non-state medical institutions.

We have developed a structural model for forming a reserve of leadership personnel for specialists newly appointed to leadership positions. According to this structural model, a specialist newly appointed to a leadership position:

at the first stage — during the first month of activity in the leadership position, undergoes training under a special primary thematic advanced-training program;

at the second stage — during the first year of activity, obtains a specialization in “Healthcare Management and Public Health” through training in a special 306-credit training course;

at the third stage — periodically, during one year of each five-year period, undergoes training under the general advanced-training program. In the remaining four years of each five-year period, undergoes training once a year under a special thematic advanced-training program;

Table 2: Summary data on specialists who completed training in the 80-credit thematic advanced-training courses “Fundamentals of Medical Institution Management”*

Nº	Region / institution	Number of trainees	Total length of service (yrs)	Length of service in specialty (yrs)	RMA/CM A Head	RMA/CM A Deputy Head	Spec. HCF Head	Spec. HCF Deputy Head	D,NS HCF Head	D,NS HCF Dep. Head
1	Republic of Karakalpakstan	5	15.6	9.8	2	1	1	1	**	**
2	Andijan region	9	17.1	10	5	0	0	4	**	**
3	Bukhara region	8	16.5	6	5	2	0	1	**	**
4	Jizzakh region	9	24	15	6	1	1	1	**	**
5	Kashkadarya region	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**	**
6	Navoi region	4	16.5	2	0	2	0	2	**	**
7	Namangan region	1	28	1	1	0	0	0	**	**
8	Samarkand region	20	19	4	2	6	7	5	**	**
9	Syrdarya region	4	11	2	1	0	3	0	**	**
10	Surkhandarya region	6	16.5	3	2	0	2	2	**	**
11	Tashkent region	5	13	11	2	2	1	0	**	**
12	Fergana region	7	15.4	5	2	1	2	2	**	**
13	Khorezm region	28	18	7	4	15	3	6	**	**
14	Tashkent city	5	18.2	4	1	4	0	0	**	**
	Total across THA system	111	16.3	5.6	33	34	20	24	**	**
15	Departmental / non-state medical institution	3	27.3	16	–	–	–	–	3	–
	TOTAL	114	17.1	6.3	33	34	20	24	3	
	%	100%			28.90%	29.80%	17.60%	21.10%	2.60%	

Notes: “*” THA — territorial healthcare authority; RMA/CMA — district/city medical association; Spec. HCF — health-care facility providing specialized medical care; D,NS HCF — departmental, non-state medical institution. “**” — this data does not apply to regions.

at the fourth stage — systematically engages in independent professional development through the “Online School of Healthcare Managers” platform.

The procedure developed was formalized as a regulatory document of the Ministry of Health and put into practice.

CONCLUSION

The algorithms developed with regard to the existing structure of managers, and implemented in practice, meet the requirements of differentiated training for professional managers.

The “School of Healthcare Managers” represents a specific, innovative, unparalleled, and highly effective mechanism of continuing professional education that takes into account the particular features of the work of healthcare system leadership personnel. It makes it possible to integrate the educational process with a mutually beneficial exchange of practical experience between the heads of territorial healthcare authorities and national specialized services, as well as with the analysis of performance results and the coordination of plans with the heads of strategically important departments and divisions of the Ministry of Health.

Promising directions for further improving this mechanism include organizing the educational process at the “School of Healthcare Managers” in an integrated format with leading foreign educational institutions.

For employees newly appointed to leadership positions, an 80-credit special thematic advanced-training program, “Fundamentals of Medical Institution Management,” has been developed; it has been duly registered with the Ministry of Health and forms the basis of the differentiated postgraduate education algorithm for this category of managers.

In ensuring the effective, phased implementation of the country's healthcare system transformation process, it is of exceptionally important significance that the sector's leadership personnel possess specialization in their field of professional activity, as well as continuous improvement of their professional level in accordance with the goals and objectives of the reforms being carried out.

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Author Contributions

D.A. Asadov — development of the research concept; participation in the organization and implementation of the specified training cycles; data collection and analysis.

V.A. Khakimov — development of the research concept; organization and implementation of the specified training cycles; formulation of the research aim and objectives; determination of the structure and scope of the data to be analyzed; data collection and analysis; preparation of the manuscript.

Z.K. Khakimova — participation in data collection and analysis; participation in manuscript preparation.

Sh.N. Abbaskhanova — participation in data collection and analysis.

M.I. Rasulova — participation in data collection and analysis.

I.Zh. Zhakhongirov — participation in data collection and analysis.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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