

Hiring and Promoting Young Civil Servants: Weberian Ideals versus Russian Reality*

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Characteristics of Bureaucratic Efficiency

Russians have always disliked public officials and often blamed the government bureaucracy for the country's difficulties. According to public opinion polls, Russians overwhelmingly give low marks to the performance of state officials and oppose any raise in their remuneration.¹ Their sentiment is based on fact. Bureaucratic incompetence is widespread. Moreover, Transparency International ranks the Russian state among the most corrupt in the world.²

Given the attention Russians and others have paid to the government bureaucracy as a source of Russia's woes, it is remarkable how little we know about its inner workings. For example, among the most important correlates of bureaucratic quality are selection procedures and promotion rules. Yet precious little research has been conducted on these issues in modern Russia.³ Most bureaucratic organizations prefer to remain closed to outside observers, and this is especially true in Russia where civil society exerts

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¹ Svetlana G. Klimova, "Chinovniki," April 27, 2001, on the World Wide Web at <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/articles/klimova/pa0016> (accessed June 23, 2006).

² "Indeks Vospriyatiya Korruptsii 2005," on the World Wide Web at http://transparency.org.ru/doc/CPI_2005_russ_01000_144.pdf (accessed June 23, 2006).

³ But see Robert J. Brym and Vladimir Gimpelson, "The Size, Composition, and Dynamics of the Russian State Bureaucracy in the 1990s," *Slavic Review* (63: 2004) pp. 90-112; Lev Jakobson, "Administrative Reform in Russia's Economic Development," in Kuotsai Tom Liou, ed. *Administrative Reform and National Economic Development* (Aldershot UK: Ashgate, 2000) pp. 241-270

only weak pressure for more transparency.

The main goal of the paper is to shed light on the inner workings of the contemporary Russian state bureaucracy. We focus in particular on how public officials are recruited and promoted. Using data from a unique survey of young civil servants, we address four interrelated questions:

1. What channels and procedures govern bureaucratic selection and recruitment?
2. Once admitted to the civil service, how do young officials see their government career?
3. What are the key criteria governing promotion in bureaucratic hierarchies?
4. How do the career expectations of young civil servants affect their organizational behavior and motivation, including their commitment to the civil service?

Bureaucratic efficiency is almost a synonym for an efficient state. If officials are inefficient, incompetent, and poorly motivated, the state is often unable to provide the public goods that are its *raison d'être*. As a result, the “contract” between the state and its citizens erodes, stimulating further degradation of state institutions.

State officials become efficient, competent, and highly motivated only if a certain set of institutional preconditions prevail. These conditions were first laid out by Max Weber.⁴ Weber saw the ideal bureaucracy as rational, highly professional, and apolitical. According to Weber, the bureaucrat should serve the public interest, not higher authorities, irrespective of who governs the country. To ensure such service, special rules and procedures are needed, among which are competitive recruitment, meritocratically guided promotions up hierarchical job ladders, depoliticization of the bureaucratic career and the bureaucrat’s duties, professionalization of the civil service, and a competitive remuneration package. Remuneration should be linked to status within the hierarchy and should depend on merit and tenure, not the volume of work. For insiders, the bureaucratic career must be seen as predictable if not guaranteed. All of these conditions

⁴Max Weber, “Bureaucracy,” *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, Vol. 2, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1978) pp. 956-1004.

ensure that civil servants are professionals identified with the state, not with ideologies, political parties or lobbies. As Weber repeatedly emphasized, a bureaucracy needs calculable rules and it should act “without regard for persons.... Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is ‘dehumanized,’ the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation.”⁵ (Of course, Weber was sketching an ideal type. Even officials in the most efficient bureaucratic organization have emotions, feelings, personal interests, and so on. There is always room for human weaknesses, informal relations and latent motivations in human affairs; they cannot be totally suppressed by any rational system of formal rules.)

Sociologists subsequently demonstrated that the higher the degree to which state bureaucracies approximate the Weberian ideal, the more beneficial the state bureaucracy’s effect on macroeconomic performance as measured by GDP growth.⁶ Key aspects of “Weberianness” examined in this connection are procedures governing entry into, and promotion in, the civil service. Such procedures included meritocratic and competitive recruitment, life-long-tenure, and career predictability, as measured by the filling of medium- and top-level positions mainly by means of promotions in what labor economists call “internal labor markets.”⁷

Internal labor markets usually develop in organizations where firm-specific skills

⁵ Ibid., p. 975.

⁶ Peter Evans and James E. Rauch, “Bureaucracy and Growth: A Cross-national Analysis of the Effects of “Weberian” State Structures on Economic Growth,” *American Sociological Review* (64: 1999) pp. 748-65; James E. Rauch and Peter Evans, “Bureaucratic Structure and Bureaucratic Performance in Less Developed Countries,” *Journal of Public Economics* (75: 2000) pp. 49-71.

⁷ Peter B. Doeringer and Michael J. Piore, *Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis* (Lexington MA: Heath, 1971); Paul Osterman, ed., *Internal Labor Markets* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1984). For studies of state bureaucracy from this point of view, see Thomas A. DiPrete, “The Professionalization of Administration and Equal Employment Opportunity in the U.S. Federal Government,” *American Journal of Sociology* (93: 1987) pp. 119-40; Thomas A. DiPrete, *The Bureaucratic Labor Market: The Case of the Federal Civil Service* (New York: Plenum, 1989).

are important. These skills reflect investment in firm-specific human capital, making their replacement by outsiders too costly. Demand for skills encourages employers to safeguard human capital by introducing entry and exit rules and job ladders. The correlation between the properties of bureaucratic efficiency and those of internal labor markets is not accidental. Public administration assumes task-specific skills, many of which can be acquired only by on-the-job experience in the civil service.⁸

Hypotheses and Methodology

Official statistics demonstrate the inertia of the Russian state bureaucracy. The speed of personnel renewal in the second half of the 90s was slow. Considerable staff turnover occurred at lower levels but the top ranks experienced little change. Promotions from lower to higher positions were few. As a result, young bureaucrats lacked incentives to commit themselves to the civil service, outsiders lacked incentives to seek entry, and older officials at lower levels lacked incentives to excel.⁹

The situation just described discourages accumulation of human capital. Older employees enjoy a virtual monopoly on needed skills. They protect their positions and minimize competition from young colleagues. Meanwhile, most young civil servants find themselves stuck on the lower rungs of the hierarchy. In this context, selection for promotion becomes informal and promotes the formation of clan-like teams, cemented by paternalistic relationships and implicit loyalty provisions between rank-and-file officials and their bosses. In the end, this practice undermines efficiency and the image

⁸ Recently, a contrary view known as “new public management” has become popular in some circles. *Inter alia*, it promotes the weakening of hierarchical structures and traditional grade ladders and the introduction of performance-based pay systems and the partial outsourcing of administrative duties. See David Osborne and Petr Plastrik, *Banishing Bureaucracy: The Five Strategies for Reinventing Government* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1997). In Russia these ideas became popular thanks to Alexandr Obolonskyi, ed. *Gosudarstvennaia sluzhba* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Delo”, 1999.) However, countries that have launched such reforms have encountered many difficulties in their implementation. See Nick Manning and Neil Parrison, *International Public Administration Reform: Implications for the Russian Federation*. (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank 2002). This experience suggests that the time to write off Weberian-type bureaucracy has not yet arrived.

⁹ Brym and Gimpelson, op. cit.

of the public service.¹⁰

Official data provide only the roughest sketch of the internal dynamics of the Russian state bureaucracy. They are highly aggregated and classify bureaucrats by only a few variables. If we want to know in detail how and why individuals move through the ranks (or fail to do so), we require individual-level data on many variables that are not available from official sources – including recruitment, promotion, exit, pay, and so on. These data should, moreover, be representative of the Russian bureaucracy as a whole.

Our survey of young civil servants roughly approximates these characteristics. The survey was conducted in 2001-02 and covered all officials under the age of 35 working in federal, regional, and municipal public administration. At the federal level, we surveyed personnel in all federal ministries dealing with economic regulation except the Ministry of Finance. We also selected three regions in European Russia located to the north, east, and south of Moscow. In these regions, we surveyed regional and municipal officials.

Примечание [RJB1]: Specifically, which ministries were included?

Using a standardized questionnaire we interviewed all public servants with higher education who were available during the survey week: 819 at the federal level, 294 at the regional level, and 344 at the municipal level. This constitutes just over 50 percent of all listed personnel matching our age and education criteria in the selected organizations.¹¹

Four hypotheses frame our analysis of the survey data:

1. Personal (informal) ties play a more important role in providing entry into the civil service than depersonalized, competitive, and meritocratic procedures do.
2. Internal promotion is governed more by loyalty than by meritocratic considerations.
3. Prevailing entry and promotion policies have a big impact on young officials'

¹⁰ On clan-like teams in the Russian bureaucracy, see Eugene Huskey, "Nomenklatura Lite? The Cadres Reserve in Russian Public Administration," *Problems of Post-Communism* (51, 2: 2004) pp. 30-9.

¹¹ For detailed results, see Vladimir Magun, Robert Brym, Vladimir Gimpelson, Sergei Morozkov, and Alla Chirikova, *Molodye spetsialisty na rossiiskoi gosudarstvennoi i munitsipal'noi sluzhbe: Nauchnyi doklad po itogam issledovaniia oblastnykh i gorodskikh administratsii* (Moscow, Institut sotsiologii, 2003), on the World Wide Web at http://www.isras.ru/files/extra/Molodue_spetsialistu.pdf.

expectations concerning the civil service career, thus affecting their organizational commitment and attitudes toward quitting.

4. The use of meritocratic procedures in hiring and promotion is associated with higher levels of remuneration.

Let us examine each of these hypotheses in turn.

Recruitment Channels and Procedures

Developing countries that enjoy rapid economic growth tend to employ meritocratic civil service selection procedures.¹² There are at least three explanations for why selection rules matter so much. First, competitive selection at the point of entry helps to ensure equal access to civil service positions. This is not just fair but also increases the likelihood of selecting the most worthy candidates. Second, because meritocratic recruitment means selecting the best human capital, the high cost of firing incompetent employees is reduced. Third, the use of recruitment procedures that are test-based and independent of personal discretion provides selected employees with considerable autonomy. Such procedures protect civil servants from informal top-down pressures and hinder the creation of close-knit clans, thus contributing to transparency. This encourages civil servants to be guided mainly by the interests of society and the state instead of the interests of senior officials.

Are current recruitment procedures aimed at selecting the most skilled and highly motivated employees? Table 1 summarizes the frequency with which various *formal* selection procedures were used to recruit our respondents. It shows that in 94 percent of cases, interviews were used to select new personnel. Interviews, however, are the least objective of available procedures and they are the most subject to misuse. In contrast, written examinations are the most objective and efficient selection device. Yet less than 1

¹² Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Peter Evans, "The State as Problem and Solution: Predation, Embedded Autonomy, and Structural Change," in Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, eds., *The Politics of Economic Adjustment* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) pp. 139-81.

percent of civil servants took a written exam. Note also variation by rank (highest rank=1, lowest=9). There is a weak tendency for top positions to be filled using selection devices other than interviews. Thus, the bottom row of Table 1 indicates how many young public servants passed through at least one of four meritocratic selection procedures. There is a weak positive association between this indicator and hierarchical position. Nonetheless, as we note later, many people hired for senior positions were invited to apply by top administrators.

Table 2 shows how formal recruitment procedures vary by administrative level. Regional administrations use open competition and tests for recruitment screening more often than federal ministries and municipal authorities do. In regional administration, the proportion of employees who have passed through at least one of four more meritocratic selection procedures is three times higher than in federal or municipal administrations.

Several screening procedures are not listed in Table 2. Among them are preliminary on-the-job training and work on short-term employment contract. These forms of employment allow employers to evaluate an employee's skills and motivation before making a long-term job commitment. But these forms of screening are not often used. About 11 percent of respondents were evaluated during on-the-job training or short-term contracts.

Apart from formal recruitment and screening procedures, there exists another way of reducing uncertainty in hiring. It involves relying on personal or institutional networks to recruit officials. Such practices run a high risk of patriarchalism and nepotism because the employer or his acquaintances may already be familiar with the candidate. Table 3 shows that, in fact, personal recommendations and personal relationships with prospective employees predominate among network recruitment procedures. Some 34 percent of respondents were recommended by an acquaintance of their future employer and 47 percent knew their boss personally before they were hired. Only 22 percent of young officials were hired without any preceding social contacts with their future employer.

In general, federal, regional and municipal administrations use similar recruitment channels, though some minor differences exist. The entry gate into federal ministries is opened more often by informal personal recommendations and a bit less

often by personal acquaintance than is the case at the regional and municipal levels. This difference is probably a result of the fact that in Moscow, where the federal ministries are located, the large population decreases the probability of direct ties to a prospective employer. Accordingly, indirect ties (for example, through someone's recommendation) play a bigger role.

Municipal administrations are more prone than administrations at higher levels to hire employees "from the street" and are more likely to use an employment service to identify worthy candidates. This difference may reflect the lower prestige of working in municipal administrations, which must use less selective methods to fill vacancies. More open access to these jobs probably results not from employment policy but from the existence of a relatively small labor supply at the municipal level.

If a recommendation contains information on the work experience and productivity of the applicant, then it reduces uncertainty associated with the new hire. For this purpose, the referee should be familiar with the professional qualities and experience of the applicant. In the case of the Russian civil service, however, recommendations do not often play such a role. Table 4 shows that most referees had no professional contact with the applicant they recommended. Some 59 percent of all referees are parents, relatives or acquaintances of the applicant or acquaintances of the applicant's parents, relatives or acquaintances. These contacts open access to jobs not by providing information on productivity but by using informal relations to request personal favors and subtly invoke mutual obligations. Another 15 percent of respondents were personally acquainted with their future employer and did not need to solicit a reference while another 7 percent were not recommended for a position. Only 28 percent of respondents were recommended by their university professor or others who may have been familiar with, and able to report objectively on, their work experience and productivity. These data suggest that selection procedures at the civil service entry gate do more to create loyal, clan-like teams than a rational Weberian bureaucracy.

The practice of noncompetitive recruitment with selection biased toward loyalty and personal subordination was strongly supported by many top-ranking officials

Table 1 Formal Recruitment Procedure by Rank (in percent)*

Rank \ Procedure	1 (n=25)	2 (n=16)	3 (n=7)	4 (n=43)	5 (n=179)	6 (n=382)	7 (n=471)	8 (n=204)	9 (n=46)	Total (n=1,443)
Interview	84	88	86	91	97	94	94	95	94	94
More meritocratic procedures:										
Officially announced open competition	<1	<1	<1	<1	7	6	3	<1	<1	4
Standardized test	<1	<1	<1	12	9	4	3	3	<1	4
Oral exam	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	2	<1	<1	1
Written exam	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
At least one "more meritocratic procedure"	<1	<1	<1	12	16	9	8	6	<1	8

* Because respondents were free to select any number of procedures, percentages do not add up to 100 and the bottom row does not equal the sum of the four preceding rows. Rank 1=Department Head; Rank 2=Deputy Department Head; Rank 3=Councilor; Rank 4=Adviser; Rank 5=Head specialist; Rank 6=Leading specialist; Rank 7=Specialist 1; Rank 8= Specialist 2; Rank 9=Specialist.

Table 2 Formal Recruitment Procedure by Administrative Level (in percent)*

Administrative Level \ Procedure	Federal (n=814)	Regional (n=290)	Municipal (n=343)	Average (n=1,447)
Interview	94	93	94	94
More meritocratic procedures:				
Officially announced open competition	3	9	2	4
Standardized test	3	9	3	4
Oral exam	1	1	2	1
Written exam	<1	<1	1	<1
At least one "more meritocratic procedure"	6	17	6	8

*Because respondents were free to select any number of procedures, percentages do not add up to 100 and the bottom row does not equal the sum of the four preceding rows.

Table 3 Social and Institutional Network Recruitment Procedure by Administrative Level (in percent)*

Administrative Level \ Procedure	Federal (n=814)	Regional (n=290)	Municipal (n=343)	Average (n=1,447)
Personal recommendation	45	51	40	34
The boss knew me personally and offered me the job	32	28	41	37
I contacted the boss myself but s/he already knew me	8	6	12	10
I contacted the boss on my own initiative without a recommendation	11	10	9	16
I applied through a higher school	3	4	2	2
I applied through an employment service	2	1	1	4
Other	4	6	1	1

* Because respondents were free to select any number of informal recruitment methods, percentages do not add up to 100.

interviewed in the course of our project. That is hardly surprising. Top officials tailor recruitment policies to suit their interests. They criticize competitive selection procedures for taking too much time and for their rigidity and high cost. Nor do they believe that competition will attract employees who best fit the demands of the workplace. Another factor, not mentioned by top officials, probably also explains their negative attitude toward the competitive and meritocratic selection of personnel. Such procedures diminish the authority of top bureaucrats and limit their ability to create loyal clans. To avoid competitive hiring, department bosses seek legal administrative hiring opportunities. This approach hinders the introduction of meritocratic principles into the Russian civil service.

Примечание [RJB2]: What do you mean by “legal administrative hiring opportunities”?

Although resistance to competitive recruitment can be explained by the vested interests of top officials, there are still other reasons for their attitude. Competitive recruitment relies on “signals” that allow employers to select the best applicants from the pool of job seekers. For these signals to be reliable, a special recruitment infrastructure is necessary. The infrastructure includes a culture of trust in the accuracy of résumés and recommendations, independent ratings by educational institutions, reliable and elaborate tests, and competitive procedures. An employer comparing competing applicants must be isolated from false signals and must be willing and able to identify the false signals that filter through. The abundance of false signals – common in the Russian labor market in general – is especially acute for executive searches.

Interestingly, young civil servants themselves strongly favor competitive and meritocratic recruitment. Only 12 percent of our respondents opposed it. Presumably, they believe that competition will positively affect vertical mobility in the public service.

Joining the civil service is just the first step in a bureaucratic career. The next step involves adjusting to the rules and norms that govern the organization and working out one’s own *modus vivendi* within it. For example, all young civil servants must decide whether there exist realistic opportunities for a professional career within their organization. If so, they must figure out what they need to do to maximize their mobility. If the likelihood of such a career is too low or the cost of success is too high, they must consider alternatives. Their future within the civil service and the future of the civil service itself hang on the answers to such questions. Let us therefore now turn to an

Table 4 “Who is the referee who directly recommended you for this job?” by Administrative Level (in percent)*

Referee \ Administrative level	Federal (n=801)	Regional (n=287)	Municipal (n=335)	Average (n=1,423)
My acquaintance	26	25	22	25
My parent or relative	10	13	15	12
An acquaintance of my parent or relative	18	12	14	16
An acquaintances of my acquaintance	8	3	4	6
Nobody; I was personally acquainted with the person who hired me	11	20	19	15
My university professor	9	11	6	8
Nobody recommended me and I was not personally familiar with the person who hired me	6	5	9	7
Others	13	14	13	13

* Because respondents were free to select any number of informal recruitment methods, percentages do not add up to 100.

examination of how young bureaucrats expect their public service career to develop and how they construct their professional plans.

Career Expectations

According to Weber, a long-term career is an essential characteristic of an efficient civil service because tenure duration indicates considerable investment in specific knowledge and skills acquired on the job. The key motivational device that ensures long-term careers is a credible system of promotion. To induce civil servants to remain in the organization and work effectively over a long period it is necessary to persuade them that current efforts and achievements will predictably result in higher status and earnings.

The success of this long-term process depends on the mobility of all system elements. To promote people at the bottom of the hierarchy, people in middle positions must move up, and to promote people in middle positions, top officials cannot stay forever and must retire at a particular age. Moreover, the system will function properly only if it is relatively self-sustaining, with outsiders having access only to the lowest

positions. “Lateral” entrance into middle- and high-level positions interrupts harmonious internal mobility dynamics. If few vacancies open up and vacancies for senior positions are filled by outsiders, young civil servants’ expectations for a successful career are undermined.

Such is the Weberian ideal. Let us now turn to the Russian reality. We asked our respondents: “How frequently do vacancies for the head of a sub-department open up in your organization?” We inquired specifically about sub-department heads because young civil servants may realistically aspire to that position as a first step up the bureaucratic hierarchy. It is widely perceived as a stepping-stone to further advancement. Yet only 26 percent of the young civil servants from federal ministries and a mere 6 to 9 percent from regional and municipal administrations shared the opinion that such vacancies open up rather frequently, indicating more favorable conditions for upward mobility at the federal level but unfavorable conditions overall. About 50 percent of officials at all levels said that such positions are filled by the most competent people from within their organizations.

Compulsory retirement based on length of tenure or age is a logical and common way to increase chances for promotion. However, only a little more than half of our respondents supported various restrictions on their pensionable colleagues, including compulsory retirement, moving them to lower posts, transferring them to temporary contract employment, and so on. A mere 18 percent favored compulsory retirement. Respondents in municipal and regional administrations were less inclined than those at the federal level to support compulsory retirement, undoubtedly because they face lower mobility.

To foster the motivation to achieve, it is necessary to give people the freedom to choose their level of aspiration and to remove ceilings limiting their potential achievement. Table 5 is interesting in this regard because it shows how young civil servants see their careers developing. According to 42 percent of our respondents, the young professional who enters an organization through one of the lowest posts, “in most cases will advance on one or two steps” or “can advance three or four steps, but the probability that s/he will advance to the level of sub-department head is rather low.” Some 28 percent of respondents believed that “at least in several cases s/he can reach the

Table 5 “Imagine a young professional who entered an organization through one of the lowest posts. Up to which position will s/he be able to advance?” by Administrative Level (in percent)

Administrative level Position	Federal (n=785)	Regional (n=282)	Municipal (n=329)	Average (n=1,396)
In most cases, one or two steps and no more	20	28	29	24
Three or four steps, but the probability that s/he will reach the level of sub-department head is rather low	20	14	16	18
At least in several cases s/he can reach the sub-department head level, but not higher	28	27	27	28
In rare cases s/he can reach the highest positions in the organization	32	30	28	31
Total	100	99*	100	101*

* Does not equal 100 because of rounding.

sub-department head level, but not higher.”¹³ Thus, although more than two-thirds of our respondents see opportunities for promotion, they regard the promotion ceiling as quite low.

Nearly one-third of our respondents believed that the young professional can in rare cases reach the highest positions in the organization. Using the phrase “in rare cases” undoubtedly encouraged the selection of this response. Still, we believe that this result is evidence of the existence of a substantial number of civil servants who are self-assured and have a strong orientation toward upward social mobility. Perceived mobility ceilings are about the same at all administrative levels, but federal employees are a little more optimistic about their careers.

To progress in a bureaucracy, one must be able to see the career horizon and

¹³ The question was borrowed from Evans and Rauch, “Bureaucracy and Growth...,” op. cit.

access “vehicles” for reaching it. If the career horizon is beyond one’s line of sight and available vehicles (traits such as competence, initiative or loyalty) are in short supply, ambitious and capable employees will soon begin looking elsewhere for opportunities. Accordingly, we asked our respondents: “In your opinion, what in the first instance ensures promotion in your organization?” Respondents were allowed to choose any number of the sixteen promotion criteria we listed but on average they chose about four.

Table 6 shows that our respondents believed promotion is most frequently facilitated by a level of competence sufficient for a new position (54 percent) and ability to master new kinds of jobs and develop one’s professional abilities (45 percent). Thus, the most frequently mentioned promotion criteria are task-oriented qualities necessary for learning and performing a new job. Aspects of one’s current job (for example, a record of high productivity and demonstrating initiative and independence) are mentioned less often. That is probably why people from outside the organization are often preferred for managerial positions, such as sub-department head (see Table 5).

Another frequently perceived promotion criterion is belonging to a clan-like team. The existence of teams is not necessarily inimical to the efficient performance of administrative tasks. But it is incompatible with the Weberian bureaucratic ideal. The Weberian approach is essentially individualistic. In Weber’s view, officials should ideally be free from any interest other than the declared tasks of the administrative body. Their promotion should be based on personal merit only. Thus, the existence of bureaucratic teams testifies to the imperfection of the Russian bureaucracy from the point of view of Weber’s criteria. Teams emphasize personal fidelity and service to individuals rather than the task at hand. Hence the importance of such promotion criteria as skill in self-presentation, connections and acquaintances, knowledge of the subtleties of bureaucratic functioning, and loyalty to managers.¹⁴

We can see whether and how the various promotion criteria are interconnected in the minds of our respondents by means of factor analysis. This statistical procedure

¹⁴ M. N. Afanas’ev, *Klientelizm i rossiiskaia gosudarstvennost’: Issledovanie klientamykh otnoshenii, ikh roli v evoliutsii i upadke proshlykh form rossiiskoi gosudarstvennosti, ikh vliianiia na politicheskie instituty i deiatel’nost’ vlastvuiushchikh grupp v sovremennoi Rossii*. (Moscow: Tsentr konstitutsionnykh issledovaniï Moskovskogo obshchestvennogo nauchnogo fonda, 1997) pp. 228-30.

detects underlying dimensions that may link variables. We discovered two sharply contrasting underlying dimensions and we arrayed the results of our analysis in Table 7 to highlight them. The two factors are:

- *The merit factor.* The first six variables listed in Table 7 load high (above .35) on factor 1 and low (below .27) on factor 2. These six variables all concern meritocratic promotion criteria. Ability to master new kinds of jobs and develop one's professional abilities; independence in work; initiative; a level of competence sufficient for a new position; good work in one's previous position; acquiring more higher education; and having a scientific degree – these are the perceived promotion criteria that are connected in the minds of meritocratic respondents.
- *The loyalty factor.* The last seven variables listed in Table 7 are almost a mirror image of the first six. They load low (below .17) on factor 1 and high (above .31) on factor 2. These seven variables include promotion criteria based on loyalty. Connections and acquaintances; gender; loyalty to managers; age; knowledge of the subtleties of bureaucracy functioning; skill in self-presentation as a good worker; belonging to a team; and having a scientific degree – these are the perceived promotion criteria that are connected in the minds of loyalist respondents. (Note that one of the fourteen promotion criteria – “having a scientific degree” – is ambiguous since it is positively associated with both factors.)

The implication of our findings is that the higher individual respondents scored on factor 1, the stronger their conviction that promotion criteria are based on task abilities and merit. Such individuals believe that relations with management are largely irrelevant to their progress through the ranks and that “connections and acquaintances” have a *negative* influence on career progress. In contrast, the higher that individual respondents scored on factor 2, the stronger their conviction that promotion criteria are based on (1) loyalty to their managers and their team, (2) characteristics that have nothing to do with merit (age and gender), and (3) maintaining cordial relations with

Table 6 Perceived Promotion Criteria (in percent)*

Administrative Level Criteria	Federal (n=813)	Regional (n=291)	Municipal (n=340)	Average (n=1,444)
<i>Task-oriented qualities</i>				
A level of competence sufficient for a new position	50	70	49	54
Ability to master new kinds of jobs and develop one's professional abilities	41	59	43	45
Initiative	35	48	38	38
Independence in work	28	41	33	32
Good work in one's previous position	27	39	28	30
<i>Social capital</i>				
Belonging to a team	37	42	32	37
Skill in self-presentation as a good worker	41	29	34	37
Knowledge of the subtleties of bureaucratic functioning	27	29	27	27
Connections and acquaintances	38	25	31	34
Loyalty to managers	24	14	17	20
<i>Formal criteria</i>				
Seniority in the organization	40	37	34	38
Seniority in state service	13	14	14	13
Acquiring more higher education	8	7	9	8
Having a scientific degree	9	7	3	8
Age	15	15	12	14
Gender	12	10	6	10
Mean number of items chosen by respondent	4.4	4.8	4.1	4.4

* Because respondents were free to select any number of informal recruitment methods, percentages do not add up to 100.

Table 7 Factors Underlying Perceived Promotion Criteria (n=1,444)*

Criteria	Factor 1: Merit	Factor 2: Loyalty
Ability to master new kinds of jobs and develop one's professional abilities	.70	-.03
Independence in work	.65	-.01
Initiative	.59	.03
A level of competence sufficient for a new position	.55	-.13
Good work in one's previous position	.47	.00
Acquiring more higher education	.36	.26
Having a scientific degree	.32	.34
Connections and acquaintances	-.31	.58
Gender	-.01	.57
Loyalty to managers	-.16	.56
Age	.16	.50
Knowledge of the subtleties of bureaucracy functioning	-.01	.49
Skill in self-presentation as a good worker	-.01	.44
Belonging to a team	-.07	.32
Explained variance (percent)	14	13

* For the factor analysis we used the principal components method without rotation.

managers and other valuable connections and acquaintances, skill in presenting oneself as a good worker, and so on).

With one important difference, the two factors just described correspond to the bureaucratic and patrimonial forms of state management analyzed by Weber. The difference is this: Weber held that these two administrative forms are opposite poles of a single dimension, so that the stronger the operation of meritocratic criteria, the weaker the operation of loyalty and related criteria, and vice-versa. But our factor analysis shows that two *independent* administrative dimensions exist in the minds of civil servants. In each administrative organization, meritocratic and loyalty criteria vary independently of one another.

We also found that belief in meritocratic promotion is strongest at the regional level and belief in loyalty-based promotion is strongest at the federal level. When we asked our respondents directly what is preferred when a civil servant in their organization is promoted – competence or loyalty – two-thirds of all respondents said that competence and skills are more important than loyalty. Again, this belief was most widespread

among employees of regional administrations.¹⁵ (We explain the higher level of meritocracy at the regional level below.)

It is worth bearing in mind that promotion criteria come into effect only after hiring criteria have been applied. As we saw, hiring is based mainly on personal connections and recommendations, thus ensuring a necessary minimum degree of loyalty. It seems reasonable to assume that the existence of this “loyalty filter” allows managers to emphasize meritocratic criteria to a greater degree in the promotion process.

Opportunities for Promotion and Willingness to Quit

Long-term careers are characteristic of Weberian bureaucracy but most young civil servants in Russia are not committed to them. Only 44 percent of our respondents were sure that they would not like to change their employer. Those who did not express opposition to a job change said they would like to change jobs (27 percent) or gave an equivocal answer (29 percent).

Some 64 percent of our respondents expressed the possibility that they would leave their current organization or the civil service entirely. This indicates that most young officials are not attracted to the kind of work in which they are currently employed. It is entirely possible that they view their civil service work as a way of accumulating human and social capital for alternative employment, perhaps in the private sector.

The proportion of civil servants who wish to quit is smallest in the regional administrations and largest in the federal ministries. Exact estimates of potential turnover depend on the criteria used to judge the desire to leave. We estimate the propensity to leave at roughly 20-30 percent at the regional level, 40-50 percent at the municipal level, and 60 percent at the federal level.

If, from an employee’s point of view, meritocratic procedures and rules prevail in their organization, a positive relationship between employee productivity and career success is established. Career success is then in the employee’s hands. Failure cannot be attributed to outside circumstances. The existence of such a relationship encourages

Примечание [RJB3]: Did they want to quit public administration altogether or their particular agency?

¹⁵ Perceived preference of competence versus loyalty correlates positively with individual values along factor 1 ($r = 0.39$) and negatively with individual values along factor 2 ($r = -0.26$).

high-quality work and organizational commitment.

Belief that promotion is based on loyalty and ascriptive variables (age, gender, and the like) has quite different implications. In the latter case, a direct connection between high-quality work and career success is absent, chances for promotion are vague, and promotion is mostly controlled by bosses. The best workers will be induced to leave the organization. The worst will remain. Said differently, loss of control over one's career increases uncertainty and switches on exit mechanisms.¹⁶

Using a statistical procedure know as probit regression, we can test the hypothesis that desire to change employer is (1) negatively associated with civil servants' belief in the operation of meritocratic promotion principles and (2) positively associated with belief in the operation of the loyalty principle. Simply stated, probit regression allows us to determine the degree to which numerous factors independently and jointly influence the probability that a respondent wishes to change employer. These factors include the strength of the respondent's belief in the existence of a meritocracy, and the respondent's gender, age, tenure, and level of administration. (Readers lacking the necessary statistical background may wish to skip the next three paragraphs.)

Specifically, we employ the following probit regression equation:

$$\text{Prob}(y=1) = b_0 + BX_i + CD_i + u_i,$$

where $\text{Prob}(y=1)$ is the probability that respondent i wishes to change employer, X_i is a proxy for respondent i 's belief that a meritocracy exists, D_i represents control variables for respondent i (respondent's gender, age, tenure, position in the organization, and level of administration), b_0 is a constant, B and C are estimated coefficients, and u_i is the residual.

We provide two specifications of our model. In the first case, we use the factor values identified in Table 7 as a proxy for belief in meritocratically based promotion. In the second case, we replace the factor values with answers to the question, "Which

¹⁶ Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

employee trait – loyalty or competence – is crucial for promotion in your organization?”

Recall that in both cases we are dealing with our respondents’ *beliefs* concerning promotion criteria, not with the criteria themselves. This is just what is needed to understand the degree to which an employee wishes to change his or her employer.

The marginal effects from the probit regression are presented in Table 8.¹⁷ The reference group consists of women between the ages of 31 and 35 with more than three

Table 8 Probit Regression for Desire to Change Employer

Independent variable	Dependent variable: desire to change employer			
	Marginal effects	z	Marginal effects	z
F1 –individual values of the meritocratic factor	-.090	-7.25***	-	-
F2 –individual values of the loyalty factor	.060	5.13***	-	-
Competence (1) vs. loyalty (0) is crucial for promotion	-	-	-.176	-6.72***
Male	-.051	-1.91*	-.061	-2.21**
Age < 25 years	.106	2.97***	.102	2.81***
Age 26-30 years	.058	1.78*	.062	1.847*
Tenure in organization 1 year or less	-.181	-6.23***	-.163	-5.44***
Tenure in organization more than 1 year but less than 3 years	-.052	-1.78*	-.050	-1.63
Federal level	.113	3.80***	.120	3.96***
Regional level	-.101	-2.63***	-.130	-3.41***
Specialist	.082	1.93*	.093	2.13**
Leading specialist	.085	2.13**	.092	2.25**
Main specialist	.107	2.59**	.122	2.87***
n	1,419		1,347	
χ^2	211.32		162.78	
Prob. > χ^2	0.0000		0.0000	
-2 LL	-722.85		-703.57	
Pseudo-R ²	0.1275		0.1037	

* = statistically significant at the 90 percent level.

** = statistically significant at the 95 percent level.

*** = statistically significant at the 99 percent level

¹⁷ For the probit regressions we report marginal effects since they are easier to interpret than coefficients. They indicate how a unit change in the independent variable affects the probability of a positive outcome for the dependent dummy variable.

years of employment in the municipal civil service and occupying a position higher than main specialist. Both specifications of the model are statistically significant at the 99 percent level. The coefficient patterns and signs of both specifications are very similar and in line with our hypothesis. Therefore, our hypothesis cannot be rejected.

To concretize our findings, we note that the predominance of belief in competence over belief in loyalty as promotion criteria reduces potential turnover by 17 percent, other things being equal. (This is according to the second specification.) Moreover, the desire to change employer is stronger for women than men, younger employees than older employees, and employees with more years of employment in the organization than employees with shorter tenure. Presumably, young women with quite a few years of employment are the most pessimistic about their chances for promotion since they have learned about their actual prospects.

The regression coefficients also demonstrate that, all else the same, employees of federal ministries express the desire to change their job more often than employees at the municipal level, and the latter express such a desire more often than civil servants at the regional level. This pattern is partly the result of wage inequality. Wages are highest in the regional administrations and lowest at the municipal level. Also relevant is the fact that federal officials with relatively low wages have attractive job alternatives in the private sector. For regional and municipal civil servants alternative opportunities are less advantageous since their relative wages are higher and job opportunities more limited. The greater “Weberianess” of regional administrations and the more patrimonial nature of the federal ministries are thus evident from various indicators of recruitment, promotion, and personnel retention.

Finally, it should be noted that the higher the employee’s organizational position, the stronger his or her desire to change jobs, all else the same. Just the contrary might be expected. Higher positions should be accompanied by higher wages and more influence, and should therefore decrease the desire to look for employment outside the organization. There are two possible explanations of this paradox. First, occupying a higher position means that one has come closer to exhausting the possibility for further advancement. The next floor in the hierarchy includes political positions. Promotion to

Примечание [RJB4]: Why do regional bureaucracies offer higher pay?

Примечание [RJB5]: Please clarify: With what posts do “political positions” begin?

that level is regulated by another set of rules and the number of such positions is quite limited. Second, the higher the position in the bureaucratic hierarchy, the lower the *relative* salary of civil servants in comparison with hierarchically equivalent positions in the private sector. Hence the heightened desire on the part of the more senior official to leave.

Promotion Principles and Salary

In a meritocracy, achievement and efficiency are rewarded by remuneration. It may therefore be expected that the mean wage level will be higher in more meritocratic organizations, which will also reward their effective employees more highly than less meritocratic organizations do. Meritocracy also implies selection and promotion of the best employees and elimination of the worst ones; that process leads to a general increase in the wage level of meritocratic organizations too. Contrariwise, an emphasis on loyalty will eliminate the most competent employees and retain those for whom obedience is the main resource for promotion. Such a situation will preclude wage increases and in some cases even lead to wage decreases.

To test these hypotheses we employed multiple regression analysis – a statistical procedure that allows us to determine the degree to which numerous factors independently and jointly influence respondents' wages. These factors include the strength of the respondent's belief in the existence of a meritocracy, and the respondent's gender, age, tenure, and level of administration. Our main finding is that, as predicted, wages increase with belief in the importance of the meritocratic principle. (For statistical details, see the next two paragraphs.)

Once again, the factor values identified in Table 7 and answers to the question, "Which employee trait – loyalty or competence – is crucial for promotion?" are used as independent variables for two specifications of our model. The control group consists of women between the ages of 31 and 35 years with five or more years of employment in the municipal civil service and occupying a position higher than main specialist.

Table 9 demonstrates that, for the our first model specification, the wages of respondents who believe more strongly in meritocratic promotion are higher than the

Table 9 Coefficients for Wage Regression, OLS

Independent variables	Dependent variable: log wage			
	b	t	b	t
F1 – individual values of the meritocratic factor	.013	3.56***	-	-
F2 – individual values of the loyalty factor	-.001	-.38	-	-
Competence (1) vs. loyalty (0) is crucial for promotion	-	-	.019	2.54**
Male	.025	3.07***	.026	3.07***
Age < 25 years	-.044	-4.47***	-.043	-4.26***
Age 26-30 years	-.025	-2.74***	-.025	-2.69***
Tenure in organization 1 year or less	-.135	-1.64	-.071	-.91
Tenure in organization more than 1 but less than 3 years	-.106	-1.28	-.046	-.53
Tenure in organization 4 to 5 years	-.072	-0.88	-.001	-.12
Federal level	-.017	-1.83*	-.025	-2.64***
Regional level	.102	8.23***	.097	7.64***
Specialist	-.282	-23.13***	-.285	-22.60***
Leading specialist	-.176	-16.21***	-.179	-16.10***
Main specialist	-.124	-10.97***	-.128	-11.13***
Constant	3.684	44.22***	3.618	45.70***
n	1,352		1,287	
R ²	0.506		0.504	

* = statistically significant at the 90 percent level

** = statistically significant at the 95 percent level

*** = statistically significant at the 99 percent level

wages of those who believe less strongly in this principle.¹⁸ Moreover, strength of belief in the importance of the loyalty principle does not influence wages. In our second model specification (where the merit and loyalty principles compete), the respondent's choice of one principle over the other significantly influences wages. Belief in the meritocratic principle is associated with higher wages while belief in the loyalty principle is associated with lower wages. In both specifications, the patterns and signs of the regression coefficients are very similar. In total, these results support our hypotheses.

Conclusion

¹⁸ To avoid heteroscedasticity, we estimated robust White-corrected standard errors.

The inefficiency of the Russian civil service has many deep roots, one of which comprises recruitment policies. Most young bureaucrats who participated in our survey recognized that they and their cohorts were hired mainly through informal relationships (“*sviazi i znakomstva*”), not formalized and transparent competitions, tests, and exams.

Procedures inside the office building differ from those at the entrance gate. Contrary to our initial expectations, performance-based criteria constitute a relatively important basis of promotion decisions. Social adaptability – skill in conforming to the requirements of clan-like teams, forging close personal ties to one’s boss, and the like – appears to be relatively less important. Thus, while entrance filters secure organizational and personal loyalty, performance-oriented criteria allow a measure of internal competition between rank-and-file officers, rendering the bureaucratic system workable although far from desirable.

Imperfections in recruitment and promotion practices create other deviations from the Weberian ideal-type. For example, they weaken young civil servants’ commitment to public administration and cause them to seek alternative job opportunities. This situation results in the loss of human capital in public administration and the retention of the least productive and competitive employees, and it presumably contributes to corruption and inefficiency.

We believe that existing recruitment practices persist because they bestow advantages on top insiders. Not coincidentally, most top administrators involved in personnel recruitment share negative attitudes toward competition-based selection procedures. They regard competition as inflexible, time-consuming, and expensive, but it seems to us that these characterizations are rationalizations that reveal their vested interest in the status quo. The promotion of efficiency in Russian public administration requires the introduction of meritocratic principles at the entrance gate. For such principles to work, stronger incentives are needed to attract a bigger supply of well-trained and enthusiastic candidates. Little of this can transpire, however, in the absence of a thorough housecleaning in the top tiers.