

# INFLUX OF MIGRANTS AS A FACTOR OF THE CHANGE IN QUALITY OF THE HUMAN POTENTIAL OF THE TERRITORY

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## Abstract

The main idea of the article is to provide rationale for the analysis of the characteristics of migrants of foreign ethnicities as a new part of the host community. The social potential of the external migrants may be used for increasing the quality of the human capital in the hosting territories. The authors of the article base their analysis on the data of the studies carried out in 2016–2017: a questionnaire survey (N=231) and in-depth interviews of the migrants of foreign ethnicities coming from Central Asia (N=16) to work in Ekaterinburg (Russia). The authors conclude that the migrants are characterized by the social characteristics, which would not impair the general quality of the city population, but, on the contrary, improve it considerably. It was revealed that the majority of migrants of foreign ethnicities possess the potential of the positive development of the characteristics under study, but cannot realize it, as they are limited by the legal regulations of reception in the territory of the Russian Federation, as well as by the problems of adaptation, integration, naturalization, that are largely related to the existing social and cultural difference between the migrants and the host community.

**Key words:** human potential, migrants of foreign ethnicities, host community, Central Asia, survey

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## Introduction

One of the paradoxes of the contemporary world is the fact that many countries suffer from overpopulation, and at the same time struggle for labor resources. As a result, labor migration becomes a significant factor of economic changes in a number of countries and regions. Labor migration today is treated as economically viable, contributing to social transformations of both the modern and the future societies. This is of particular importance for Russia, entering the stage of the demographic crisis resulting from the birth dearth that started in the 1990s. In

the context of the deficit of labor resources, looking for the reserves for the economic growth becomes a vital strategy. The present article is devoted to the problem of the insufficiently effective use of the human potential of migrants of foreign ethnicities for the development of Russia.

## Literature review

The term “human capital” is actively used to assess the state and the competitiveness of countries. Many authors have studied the relations between human capital and the level of a country’s welfare. Khan (2016) points out that the importance of human capital is generally recognized as one of the most important factors for economic growth. Effective development of human capital is determined by human potential, traditionally measured by three indicators: income (or living standards), education or longevity (Human Development Report, 2014). The United Nations Organizations (UNO) uses the index of human potential as an important indicator of the economic status of countries. In addition to the basic coordinates of human potential, there are additional indicators under consideration: cultural, social, motivational, value components, development of technology, mode of living etc. (Zaslavskaya, 2005).

Researchers rightfully pose a problem of not only accumulation, but also a sensible use of human capital in the process of the working life (Soboleva, 2017).

In relation to the large-scale processes of external migration in the territory of many countries, it is not possible to ignore the human potential of migrants, as it results in the fact that this potential is used inefficiently.

In the western scientific publications, there are works devoted to the problem of the fulfillment of human potential of migrants with the aim of improving human capital of the host community. In relation to migrants, the basic theory of human capital by Gary Becker is most often applied. This researcher puts major focus on the knowledge and skills of the migrants and the viability of investing in their development for the benefit of the host community (Becker, 1993).

In their works, researchers analyze both the internal and the external migration. The coordinate of human capital related to education attracts the most interest. Thus, for instance, Nawrotzki, Hunter & Dickinson (2012), drawing upon the fact of the higher level of education of the migrants moving from cities to rural areas, point out the importance of the fact that they possess social capital, i.e. well-formed social networks. Migrants are characterized by the absence of social capital; as a result, their knowledge and skills lose their

capitalization, which is a common problem. These authors narrow the notion of human capital to skills, education and capacity to work, and take social capital as a complex of social resources (status in small and large groups, relations with the members of these groups). Education may as well be a reason for migration, when university graduates cannot be useful in the region where they studied; this phenomenon influences significantly the economic development of territories (Franco, Haase & Lautenschlager, 2010; Santoalha, Biscaia, Teixeira, 2018).

The problem of using the acquired education relates to external migrants as well. When moving to another country, the majority of them work at low skilled jobs (Standing, 2014). The reason for it is the fact that civilized countries are in need of labor resources, but, as a rule, suffer from a scarcity of workers for low-paid physical labor. Thus, we deem it expedient to pay attention to other components of human potential of external migrants as well, using which it will be possible to increase the level of general human capital of the territory of their stay. One of such indicators might be labor potential, as the main creative element of human potential, defined as a social and economic category, demonstrating the capacity of the economically active population to work (Rimashevskaya et al., 2012).

## **Methodology**

Labor potential is the main element of human potential; the efficiency of its use directly influences the reproduction of human capital in each region and in the country as a whole. We understand labor potential as a complex of all work opportunities of a person or a group of persons and conditions for their implementation.

In accordance with the concept of Russian researchers, the authors of the article assess the labor potential of migrants from Central Asia (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Turkmenia) moving to Ekaterinburg (Russia) as permanent or temporary residents. The given method of assessing labor potential is an alternative to the approach based on the official statistical data expressed in such indicators as a human capital index and a labor potential index. The method applied by the authors is based on the data of the sociological monitoring and reflects the psychophysical condition of the group under study, its cognitive and creative potential, the value indicator, social aspirations and inter-personal skills (Baimurzina, Mirzabalaeva, 2017). The list of the qualitative characteristics of the migrants under study included: physical health, mental health, cognitive (education and qualification)

potential, creative skills, inter-personal skills, cultural level, moral level, social aspirations (Leonidova et al., 2013).

Basing on the materials of studies, carried out by the authors of the article in Ekaterinburg in 2016–2017 in the form of in-depth interviews with the migrants (N=16) and structured interviews with the migrants (N=231), we can give a general assessment of the labor potential of the migrants in accordance with the components of the above-mentioned method. In 2016, the quota sampling by sex, age and country of origin was used to select migrants from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kirgizia (a sampling error less than 5 %). In 2017, the authors of the article interviewed non-Russian migrants from Central Asia. 8 men and 8 women at the age from 19 to 57 years were interviewed. Respondents were selected by means of targeted sampling.

## Results

Physical health of the migrants. According to the legislation of the Russian Federation, labor migrants are to have medical screening results to get a work license. The migrants note that in Russia they usually pay to get a medical certificate, without attending a medical examination.

*“We pay for all certificates; usually you need like two thousands [rubles] for medicine” (a woman from Kirgizia, 53 years old).*

It is necessary to take into account that except for emergency medical care in critical situations, migrants can only use paid medical services, as they are not the citizens of Russia. Therefore, due to low income, sometimes they have to self-medicate.

*“The only thing, there have always been problems with hospitals. Even for an examination you have to pay a lot of money” (a woman from Kazakhstan, 20 years old).*

In Russia, migrants from Central Asia most often handle jobs related to physical activity (construction and repairs, cleaning, loading works etc). Besides, many of them prefer circular migration. They have to travel a lot, with long flights and rides, which leads to acclimatization and jet lags. Migrants can be viewed as physically strong representatives of their countries; or we can assume that people with such physical characteristics are the first to decide to migrate.

Mental health of the migrants. Labor migrants coming to Russia enter a different ethno-cultural, social, economic and civilization environment. In order to adapt to new conditions, a person should have a flexible mind. The studies have shown that the majority of Ekaterinburg citizens (60.2 %) have a negative attitude towards the migrants from these

countries (Britvina & Mogilchak, 2018). When the host society is antagonist to the migrants, they have to adapt to a new country, a new climate, a new city and a new social environment at the same time. Besides, not all of them are fluent in Russian.

*“When I speak, I don’t know a lot of things, just say common words. I’m not literate” (a woman from Kirgizia, 53 years old).*

*“Ooh... I didn’t understand a word. Like I need bread... and a saleswoman says: “Wut d’you need?”... And I couldn’t understand. Just thought: “What is she saying?” (a man from Kirgizia, 22 years old).*

It is a typical situation when migrants (both men and women) leave their relatives and children for a long period of time, as they are not able to take them to Russia. It is obvious that a person needs to be mentally healthy to endure such hardships.

*“There’s no money there, and I have a family. I moved when my boy was one, and my girl only two months old. Have not seen them for six years. I send money to them, talk by phone” (a woman from Kirgizia, 35 years old).*

Under such conditions, mental condition of the migrants is an important characteristics of their labor potential, so that they could be able to perform their job responsibilities, adapt and obey the laws of Russia. Only 40 % of the migrants responded that they had completely got used to the new living conditions, and every one in ten noted that he or she had not adapted to Ekaterinburg. Still, using their mental resources, the migrants have to do their jobs responsibly in the conditions of high competition.

Cognitive (education and qualification) potential. The results of our research showed that the majority of labor migrants could speak only a little Russian when they come to Russia for the first time. 14 % of the migrants responded that they understand speech, but are not able to reply; 38 % of the respondents said that they could communicate, but could not write and read in Russian. Besides the command of language for professional communication, not all the migrants have specialized education, so they have to qualify in the process of their work. Those who already have some professional education, for instance, in driving, need to have social capital (formed social networks) to apply it in Russia.

*“My friend invited me: “Come work, they pay well”, that’s what she said” (a woman from Kirgizia, 53 years old).*

*“I had a relative here, she invited us” (a man from Kirgizia, 22 years old).*

Due to a number of reasons, the migrants from Central Asia face problems with employment and take on every job that brings income. It is a typical situation when migrants, who received professional education in their native country, do not work in their

specialization, usually doing some low-skilled jobs. For instance, a man from Tajikistan, who received vocational medical education, works on the construction of a private house. A man from Uzbekistan, who received vocational technical education, also works as a builder. A woman from Kirgizia, who graduated from vocational educational institution in her native country, does cleaning in a café.

*“In general, Tajik women do low paid-jobs: janitors (yes, janitor is most likely), or packers in shops, if they know Russian” (a woman from Tajikistan, 42 years old).*

Inter-personal skills. The results of the studies have shown that migrants are ready to communicate, especially if communication takes place in the form they are used to. The survey has shown that one third of the migrants learn news when meeting the local population (32.9 %), one third communicate with them in the social networks on the internet (30.3 %). 18.2 % of the migrants mentioned that for them it is easier to communicate with the Russians. There is a number of reasons for communication due to the specific character of the city life.

**Tab. 1: In what capacity and on what occasion you communicate with Ekaterinburg citizens most often? (in %)**

Reasons for communication	Number of respondents	% of the number of respondents*
When doing work	154	67.0
As neighbors (in an apartment building or in a yard)	106	46.1
As friends	94	40.9
As customers in cafés, post offices, shopping malls, cinemas, markets etc	84	36.5
When working around the city, in the yard, in parks and gardens	57	24.8
As service providers (home renovation, cleaning etc)	49	21.3
When visiting hospitals (for adults or children)	48	20.9
As relatives	33	14.3
As parents (school, kindergarten, sports section etc)	17	7.4

Source: author's own data.

\* Respondents could choose multiple options.

Cultural level. All labor migrants from Central Asia share a relatively low level of civility (in the form it is understood by the local population); besides, many migrants move from rural areas of their native countries. Migrants of foreign ethnicities are characterized by the ethno-cultural centricity and the aspiration to maintain it in the host territory during the first years. Only 27.7 % of the respondents are ready to settle together with the Russians in the

apartment blocks, quarters and districts. Still, the interviews have shown that many migrants tend to adopt some cultural habits of the Russians, and are ready for the integration with the local community.

*“There’s a man, he’s very rich. But he treats me as my age-mate, as an equal. Not arrogant... If I had so much money, I’d probably talk down to people, yes. That is a big difference between nationalities” (a man from Uzbekistan, 46 years old).*

75.8 % of the respondents agree that it is necessary to obey Russian cultural norms (rules of communication, attitude towards women). 89.2 % agree that it is necessary to have a good command of Russian, and it is characteristic of both men and women. 38.5 % agree that they shouldn’t request a separate prayer room at work. It is quite telling that one quarter of the migrants (24.2 %) agree that the Russian culture should take the lead in Russia.

Moral level. Religious beliefs (Islam as the main religious confession) and characteristics of the ethnical culture of migrants from Central Asia result in the fact that their understanding of good morals differ from that of the local population. For instance, many migrants note the behavior of young people, which they deem unacceptable:

*“Respect to elders: for example, in a bus or a tram. When someone is sitting wearing headphones and searching the net, and an elder person comes in, and he or she just closes the eyes... In our country in 99 % everything is the other way round” (a man from Uzbekistan, 46 years old).*

In the first place, they pay attention to the upbringing of girls:

*“I watch TV at home, but when my daughter enters the room, I switch the channel. There is advertising, they show all these things, not for her age. And also half-nude women, men... In Islam it is not accepted” (a man from Uzbekistan, 46 years old).*

*“I would like to raise children in the spirit of our national culture, so that they respect and obey their parents. If it’s a girl, I would forbid her to go to night clubs” (a woman from Tajikistan, 26 years old).*

Social aspirations. 62.8 % of the respondents express a desire to stay in Russia and gain Russian citizenship to be able to find a better paid job. The desire to occupy a position with a higher status is treated by them from the perspective of income and a chance to buy their own accommodation. In the majority of cases, it is limited by the dreams about a small business or a steady job, an apartment and a chance to bring relatives to Russia and get education for themselves or their children.

Question: What does Russia have, that Tajikistan does not?

Answer: “*Stability. Reasonable subsistence. There is a future for us and our children here; unfortunately we can’t say that about our native country*” (a woman from Tajikistan, 26 years old).

“*I want my children to study, to get some education in Russia. Don’t want them to work like us, migrants*” (a woman from Kirgizia, 25 years old).

## **Discussions**

The problem of the necessity of migrants’ presence in the territory of Russia with the aim of improving the labor and demographic potential of the country is not debatable. Though, the requirements set towards migrants from other countries, their share in the population of Russia, the instruments for the integration of external migrants (Varshaver, Rocheva & Ivanova, 2017), the problems of the attitude of the host community to migrants and the change in the level of confidence in the territory related to the migrant influx (Starosta, Bzezinski & Stolbov, 2017) are being discussed by researchers. The general context of publications in Russian science in relation to this problem is negative. The authors of the article suppose that the obtained results are debatable, and allow to gain a better understanding of the problem of not only negative, but also positive results of the influx of migrants from foreign countries.

## **Conclusions**

Migrants are preoccupied with the problems of adaptation, integration, naturalization, which are largely related to the socio-cultural difference between them and members of the host community. To use their potential in a more effective way, it is necessary to carry out a number of transformations, both in the sphere of formation of the host community’s opinion, and in the legal basis. The possibility of attracting labor migrants from the post-Soviet countries undoubtedly plays a positive role in the development of the Russian society. Searching for the ways to use the labor potential of external migrants in a more effective way is a strongly relevant problem from Russia.

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