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CONTENTS

BRIEF FEEDBACK ON “AGAT CREDIT” MICROFINANCE ORGANIZATION BASED ON THE REPORT OF “KAPDEPO” INVESTMENT COMPANY: CAVEATS FOR LENDERS (BONDHOLDERS)	16
Abduganiev Abdulaziz Alisher ugli	
IMPLEMENTATION OF EU BEST AGRICULTURAL TRADE PRACTICES IN UZBEKISTAN.....	20
Khulkar Karimova Rakhmanali qizi	
THE ROLE OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN INCREASING SERVICE EXPORTS OF UZBEKISTAN	26
Jamshid Mirzakhmedov	
THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF FINANCIAL MARKETS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	30
Baymanova Mavlyuda Djuraevna, Abdullaeva Shohista, Ubaydullaeva Gulchehra Erkabaevna	
КЛИНИЧЕСКАЯ ОЦЕНКА СОСТОЯНИЯ МЕСТНЫХ ИММУННЫХ МЕХАНИЗМОВ ПОЛОСТИ РТА У ПАЦИЕНТОВ НА ЭТАПАХ ОРТОДОНТИЧЕСКОГО ЛЕЧЕНИЯ	36
Рахимбердыев Рустам Абдунасирович, Сайфулаева Азиза Анваровна	
INTEGRATING AI-BASED CUSTOMER ANALYTICS INTO INNOVATIVE RETAIL MARKETING STRATEGIES	40
Ostonaqulova Gulsaraxon Muhammadyoqub qizi	
FINANCIAL STIMULATION OF INNOVATIVE ACTIVITIES OF ENTERPRISES THROUGH INVESTMENTS	48
Bahriddinov Nodirbek Zamirdinovich	
DIGITAL DENTISTRY: LITERATURE REVIEW	52
Tursunov Begzod Sherzodovich, Zokirova Nodira Sobitovna	
THE LATEST ADHESIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN DENTISTRY	56
Rahimberdiyev Rustam Abdunasirovich, Chinibayeva Ibagul Sarsenbayevna	
ENSURING THE ACCEPTABILITY OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE INDICATORS IN THE EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION OF HOUSING FUNDS IN KHOREZM	61
Otajonov Tohirjon Khojanazar o'g'li	
WAYS TO IMPROVE CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN.....	67
Usmonova Dilfuza Ilhomovna	
CLINICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF LOCAL IMMUNE MECHANISMS OF THE ORAL CAVITY IN PATIENTS AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT	72
Rakhimberdiyev Rustam Abdunasirovich, Saifulaeva Aziza Anvarovna	
IMPROVING THE ALGORITHM FOR CONTROLLING THE CUSTOMS TRANSIT INFORMATION SYSTEM E-TRANSIT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN	76
Musayeva Shoirazimovna	
DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF THE AUTOMOTIVE BUSINESS IN UZBEKISTAN	82
Saidov Dilshodbek Razzakovich	
INTEGRATION OF MARKETING STRATEGIES IN RETAIL TRADE ACTIVITIES.....	87
Akramov Toxir Abdiraxmanovich	
CHALLENGES OF ADOPTING ISLAMIC FINANCE WITHIN CONVENTIONAL BANKING SYSTEMS	91
Safarov Shuhrat Ismatovich	
CRM SYSTEMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE RESULTS OF MARKETING STRATEGY IN DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES	95
Jamoliddinov Fakhriyor Shodiyor o'g'li	
LEXICAL-SEMANTIC ARCHITECTURE OF MODERN WORDNET SYSTEMS	101
Aynura Axmedova	
METHODOLOGY FOR ANALYZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INNOVATIVE PROCESSES AT ENTERPRISES.....	108
Kurbanova Shakhnoza Yuldashbayevna	
COMPANY VALUATION IN MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS: A STRATEGIC AND GOVERNANCE-BASED APPROACH	113
Lee Illarion Georgievich	

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON CAD/CAM TECHNOLOGIES IN DENTAL ECTOPROSTHETICS.....	118
Tursunov Begzod Sherzodovich, Hazratqulov Asrbek Ulugbek ugli	
TRENDS AND DIFFICULTIES IN THE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN ORTHOPEDIC DENTISTRY.....	123
Khojimurodov Burkxon Ravshanovich	
PRIORITY DIRECTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE MECHANISM OF ENHANCING THE ECONOMIC SECURITY LEVEL OF THE KASHKADARYA REGION.....	127
Tuyev Abdurahmon Yusubopvich	
THE ROLE OF PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL TRAINING OF DRIVERS IN REDUCING ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS.....	132
Uralbayev Anvar Ubaydullayevich	
THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES IN DEVELOPING GREEN MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR ENTERPRISES.....	135
Sapayev Akhmad Durdibayevich	
MANAGEMENT MODEL OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN SMALL BUSINESS ENTITIES AND ITS IMPACT ON ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY.....	140
Yo'ldoshev Nodirbek Ne'matjon o'g'li	
WAYS TO DEVELOP THE INVESTMENT ACTIVITY OF COMMERCIAL BANKS THROUGH THE SECURITIES MARKET.....	145
Yuldashev Fozil Turapovich	
INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE USE OF CROSS-BORDER REMITTANCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY.....	152
Gimranova O. B.	
FREE ECONOMIC ZONES AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT.....	158
Sheraliyeva Saida Azatovna	
ISSUES OF FORMATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PRODUCT ASSORTMENT IN RETAIL ENTERPRISES.....	162
Safarov Baxtiyor Djurakulovich	
STATE SUPPORT IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN FOR ORGANIZING SHORT-TERM SCIENTIFIC INTERNSHIPS OF YOUNG SCIENTISTS ABROAD.....	167
Kabashev Tairjon	
LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF DIVIDEND POLICY: EVIDENCE FROM DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.....	172
Eshev Furqat A'zamovich	
IMPROVING SMART CITY GOVERNANCE BASED ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS: A HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH.....	176
Rakhimova Madina Shukhrat qizi	
THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN TRADE: A CASE STUDY OF UZBEKISTAN.....	182
Mirzamukhamedova Shakhzoda Akmaljon qizi	
CONSUMER CREDITS IN USA.....	187
Zunnunova Xulkar Muxtorovna	
INSTITUTIONAL BASES AND FUNCTIONAL MECHANISMS OF CONTROLLING IN THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE RAILWAY TRANSPORT SYSTEM.....	194
Kayumov Zafarbek Odil ugli	
ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT PROCESSES AND PROBLEMS IN SERVICE ENTERPRISES.....	199
Ismailova Ma'mura Eldorovna	
PROBLEMS FACED BY COMMERCIAL BANKS IN BANK RISK MANAGEMENT AND WAYS TO ADDRESS THEM.....	205
Qayimova Ismigul Ilhom qizi, Tuxsanov Eldor Dilmurod o'g'li	

DESIGN OF ENGINEERING STRUCTURES AND CONSTRUCTION OF A REGIONALLY BRANCHED HIGHWAY COMPLEX.....	209
Yakubov Maqsadkhon Sultaniyazovich, Norinov Muhammadyunus Usibjonovich, Zikraev Akmaljon Alimovich	
THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVE RELATIONS IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIONAL TOURISM MARKET	216
Mirzabayev Jamshid Irkinovich	
THE ROLE OF FREE ECONOMIC ZONES IN IMPROVING THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE OF THE KHOREZM REGION.....	221
Masharipov Sardorbek Farxadovich	
ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS OF INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES.....	228
Khosilov Shavkat Bekmurodovich	
MAIN WAYS TO DEVELOP INTEREST RATE RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN COMMERCIAL BANKS OF UZBEKISTAN	234
Seytnazarov Daniyar Baxadirovich	
THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ESG STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION.....	239
Xusenova Mexrangiz	
ADVANTAGES OF USING TRADITIONAL CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF LOW-RISE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS.....	244
Otabek Hakimovich Toshniyozov	
THE METHODOLOGY FOR SELECTING AND INTEGRATING DATA SOURCES AND USING OFFICIAL STATISTICAL ENTERPRISE DATA, QUESTIONNAIRES, AND PROXY INDICATORS IN FORMING THE EMPIRICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY.....	247
Usmonov Maxsud Tulqin o'g'li, Qodirov Farrux Ergash o'g'li	
PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE PLACEMENT OF MULTI-STOREY GREENHOUSES IN INDUSTRIAL AREAS	254
Abdujabbarova Maktuba To'xtasinovna, Salayeva Ma'rifat Yashin qizi	
INNOVATIONS IN DENTISTRY: DIGITAL SOLUTIONS FOR MODERN PRACTICE	258
Sadriyev Nizom Najmiddinovich, Usarov Nuriddin	
ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF MANAGEMENT SERVICE COMPANY BUILDINGS IN THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT OF UZBEKISTAN.....	263
Adilova Madina Sobirovna, Khusainova Gulhayo Norbek qizi	
METHODS OF SEDATIVE THERAPY IN DENTISTRY (REVIEW OF LITERATURE)	268
Vasitov Otabek, Burkhonova Zараfruz Kobilovna	
SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE FORMATION AND OPERATION OF A REGIONAL TOURISM CLUSTER.....	272
Ollanazarov Bekmurod Davlatmuratovich	
ESTIMATING ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION OF PUMPING PLANTS IN IRRIGATION SYSTEMS.....	277
Urishev Omadjon, Ersin Akyuz, Gul Metin, Quvonchbek Quvondiqov	
ANALYSIS OF MANUFACTURING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR MULTI-FACETED SHAFTS.....	287
Khasanov B.M., Valikhonov D.A., Abdullaev B.I., Alibekov R.K.	
DENTAL IMPRESSIONS AND GYPSUM MODEL SCANNING ACCURACY USING A LASER SCANNER ARE COMPARED	292
Akhmadov Inomjon Nizomitdinovich, Matchanov Boburbek Ulug'bekovich	
ORAL FLUID BIOCHEMICAL AND PHYSICOCHEMICAL CHARACTERISTICS IN CHILDREN WITH ABNORMALITIES AFTER URANOPLASTY	297
Anvarova Muhtasar Anvarovna	
INDUSTRIAL DIVERSIFICATION AS A KEY FACTOR IN ENHANCING UZBEKISTAN'S EXPORT POTENTIAL.....	302
Kholikova Rukhsora Sanjarovna, Rizayeva Ezoza Bahodir kizi	
INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT IN UZBEKISTAN'S ECONOMY AND THEIR IMPACT ON SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH.....	308
Botirova Sarvinov Boburjon kizi	

INVESTMENT ATTRACTIVENESS OF SYRDARYA REGION: AN ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT DYNAMICS AND STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES	313
Mamatkulova Mukhlisa Komiljon kizi	
THE EVOLUTION OF UZBEKISTAN'S FISCAL POLICY DURING 2020–2025 AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH	318
Saidakbarova Madinakhan Anisbekovna	
THE ROLE OF MACROECONOMIC MECHANISMS AND FOREIGN TRADE POTENTIAL IN ACHIEVING INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN UZBEKISTAN.....	324
Rahimov Eshmurod Normuradovich	
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH THROUGH STRENGTHENING EXPORT POTENTIAL IN THE NATIONAL ECONOMY	332
Berdivaliyeva Madina Komiljon kizi	
THE ESSENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN TRADE POLICY IN MODERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	339
Askarova Mavluda Turabovna	
THE ONTOLOGY OF WAGES: HUMAN CAPITAL, DIGITALISATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL MEDIATION IN A TRANSITIONAL ECONOMY.....	345
Zakhidov Azizbek Rustamovich	
FORMATION OF OFFICIAL SALARIES OF CIVIL SERVANTS ON THE BASIS OF A UNIFIED PRINCIPLE: ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT TARIFF GRADES	351
Oqiljonov Azizjon Olimjon o'g'li	

FORMATION OF OFFICIAL SALARIES OF CIVIL SERVANTS ON THE BASIS OF A UNIFIED PRINCIPLE: ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT TARIFF GRADES

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Abstract: This article analyzes the current system of remuneration for civil servants based on the Unified Tariff Scale. A comparative assessment of tariff grade distribution across ministries and agencies is conducted, and its institutional and economic implications are evaluated. Drawing on international experience, the study proposes evidence-based recommendations to improve the tariff system through a competency-based and differentiated model aimed at strengthening institutional sustainability.

Key words: Unified Tariff Scale, tariff grade, civil service, remuneration system, differentiation, competency-based evaluation, institutional sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The efficiency and sustainability of the public administration system largely depend on the fair, transparent, and economically grounded organization of remuneration mechanisms. In the current context, as the functional workload of the civil service expands and governance processes become increasingly complex, the formation of a competitive wage system has become a priority in retaining and developing human capital. From this perspective, revising the practice of determining official salaries based on the Unified Tariff Scale and adapting it to economic and institutional changes represents a pressing issue.

In recent years, large-scale reforms have been implemented in the country to modernize public administration, enhance the efficiency of budget expenditure, and develop the civil service as a professional institution. However, existing disparities in the assignment of tariff grades and differing methodological interpretations highlight the need for further system improvement. In particular, the application of different grades to positions with similar functional workloads across ministries and agencies raises the issue of establishing a unified standard.

This article analyzes the current state of the Unified Tariff Scale system, its institutional and economic dimensions, the specific features of grade distribution across ministries, and the possibilities for improvement based on international experience. The aim of the study is to develop a unified methodological approach to determining tariff grades, design a differentiated evaluation mechanism aligned with job complexity and level of responsibility, and formulate scientifically grounded proposals aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of the civil service.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

Issues related to the organization and reform of remuneration systems in the civil service have been widely discussed in recent academic literature. E.V. Dolgova emphasizes the role of remuneration mechanisms in ensuring institutional stability within the framework of organizing and legally regulating the civil service. According to the author, the tariff system is not only a financial incentive tool but also an important instrument for maintaining hierarchical balance in public administration and shaping a professional кадровый composition. She substantiates that the coherence between tariff grades and position classification is one of the key factors determining the effectiveness of the civil service [5].

The OECD report “Government at a Glance 2023” identifies transparency, differentiation, and alignment with the labor market in public sector wage policy as key criteria of governance effectiveness. The report notes that many countries are transitioning to competency-based grading systems and that flexible remuneration mechanisms are increasingly important for attracting and retaining highly qualified personnel [6].

The World Bank’s 2022 study “Public Sector Pay and Labor Market Competitiveness” analyzes the relationship between public sector wage levels and labor market competitiveness. It emphasizes that when civil servants’ salaries are not balanced with those in the private sector, negative effects may arise in terms of staff turnover and institutional capacity. Therefore, the need to adapt tariff systems to labor market requirements is scientifically substantiated [7].

S. Kim and J. Lee, based on the experience of South Korea, empirically examined the relationship between compensation reforms and public service motivation. Their findings indicate that a fair and differentiated wage system strengthens intrinsic motivation among civil servants and enhances governance performance [8]. This approach confirms the necessity of strengthening the incentive function when determining tariff grades.

The European Commission’s 2022 report on governance reforms highlights that EU countries use specific job evaluation mechanisms to assess position complexity, maintain significant differentiation between professional levels, and apply compensation systems linked to performance outcomes [9].

In the human resource management theories developed by M. Armstrong and G. Dessler, the wage system is interpreted as an integral component of strategic HRM. Armstrong substantiates the need to align compensation policy with an organization’s long-term strategy, emphasizing that tariff systems should be based on the principles of fairness, transparency, and motivation [10]. Dessler highlights the importance of ensuring both internal equity and external competitiveness in wage systems [11].

M.R. Xangeldiyeva analyzes the role of tariff systems in motivating civil servants and notes that insufficient differentiation between grades weakens motivational mechanisms. The author scientifically substantiates the necessity of evaluating job complexity and responsibility levels based on clear criteria within the tariff system [14].

The UNDP 2020 policy paper analyzes international practices in reforming civil service remuneration systems and recommends competency-based grading, transparent evaluation mechanisms, and institutional monitoring systems as effective models [15].

In “Fundamentals of Labor Economics,” A.A. Karimov examines the economic essence of remuneration systems and their close relationship with productivity and social stability. According to the author, the wage system is an economic instrument that stimulates labor productivity and should be based on the principles of differentiation and fairness [16].

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates the necessity of improving tariff systems in the civil service and transitioning them to competency-based, differentiated models aligned with labor market requirements, which is a priority direction in international practice. At the same time, harmonizing the existing national grade system from an institutional and methodological perspective remains a pressing scientific issue.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for the study were collected based on the official salary schedules of ministries and agencies for 2023–2024, relevant regulatory and legal documents, and the Occupational Classification system. The collected data were examined using comparative and systematic analysis methods, while inter-grade disparities were assessed through content analysis and logical generalization. In addition, a comparative analysis with international practices was conducted.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Ensuring sustainable economic growth, increasing labor productivity, and improving the standard of living of the population are directly linked to the effective functioning of the remuneration system. The wage system requires continuous adaptation at different stages of economic development, as labor market demands, the growing complexity of public services, and the need for modern competencies in public administration necessitate new approaches.

At present, significant inconsistencies exist in the practice of assigning tariff grades to positions under the Unified Tariff Scale. The data presented in the table demonstrate that different grades are applied to positions within state bodies that are similar in terms of function, responsibility, and qualification (Table 1).

Table 1. Current Assigned Tariff Grades in Ministries¹

No.	Organization Name	Head of Department	Head of Directorate	Head of Division	Chief Specialist	Leading Specialist
1	Ministry of Economy and Finance	17	16	15	13	12
2	Ministry of Investments, Industry and Trade	16	15	14	12	No position
3	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	16	15	14	12	11
4	Ministry of Justice	16	15	14	12	11
5	Ministry of Digital Technologies	15	14	13	11	No position
6	Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment	17	16	15	13	12
7	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation	15	14	13	11	10
8	Ministry of Preschool and School Education	15	16	13	11	10
9	Ministry of Culture	No position	15	14	11	10
10	Ministry of Sports Development	No position	15	14	12	11
11	Ministry of Health	15	14	13	11	10
12	Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change	16	15	14	12	11
13	Ministry of Agriculture	15	14	13	11	10
14	Ministry of Water Resources	No position	14	13	11	10

The Unified Tariff Scale was initially introduced to establish a unified and centralized approach to remuneration in the public sector, regulate proportional relationships between positions, and ensure budgetary discipline. For a certain period, it served as a tool for maintaining vertical balance within the public administration system, limiting wage disparities, and ensuring social stability. However, in the context of deepening economic reforms, the expansion and increasing complexity of public services, the emergence of new functional areas, and growing competition in the labor market, the need to further improve the existing tariff mechanism has become evident.

First, the reduction in the number of grades requires closer alignment with the current position classification system. In some cases, positions of similar content and complexity are interpreted within different grade ranges, which creates an opportunity for further clarification and systematization. Although the practice of independent grade interpretation by agencies has provided managerial flexibility, strengthening a unified methodological approach would enhance internal balance within the system. Gradually widening the differences between grades would reinforce the incentive function and strengthen the link between professional growth and material benefits. Furthermore, a more differentiated assessment of job complexity, intellectual workload, managerial responsibilities, and financial accountability would contribute to improving overall system effectiveness.

¹ Developed by the author.

Analyzing existing practices across ministries and agencies provides an important foundation for optimizing tariff policy. For example, while a department director is evaluated at grade 17 in some structures, in other agencies a position with a similar functional workload is assigned to grades 15–16. The position of leading specialist exists as an independent role in certain ministries, whereas in others it is incorporated within another position. Studying inter-system disparities and harmonizing them methodologically creates an opportunity to establish a unified standard. While grades in the Ministry of Economy and Finance are relatively higher, similar functions in the Ministry of Digital Technologies or the Ministry of Water Resources are reflected in different grade ranges. This situation creates room for further systematization and improvement of the tariff framework based on common principles.

These processes serve as an important foundation for reforms aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of public administration. Strengthening the principles of fairness and transparency among employees contributes to improving the institutional environment, increasing the motivation of highly qualified personnel, and supporting the long-term development of human capital. Improving the remuneration system also makes it possible to preserve institutional memory and analytical capacity, ensure stability in staff turnover, and enhance the quality of managerial decision-making.

In addition, the emergence of new functions in public administration in recent years—such as risk management, the introduction of digital services, work with international indices, environmental monitoring, and data analysis—requires the development of separate tariff criteria. Introducing an updated classification that takes modern competencies into account would more accurately reflect the real value of these positions and increase the competitiveness of the civil service.

An analysis of international experience demonstrates that tariff systems are transitioning toward flexible, competency-based models. In European Union countries, multi-level professional grading systems are applied, with positions evaluated based on market value and functional complexity, and significant differentiation maintained between higher levels. In South Korea, civil service positions are categorized, with several levels within each category and substantial differences between them. In the United Kingdom, job complexity is assessed through a specific job evaluation mechanism, allowing tariff levels to be determined on the basis of clear criteria. This experience shows that an effective tariff system should be aligned with qualifications, responsibility, intellectual workload, and labor market demand.

The formation of imbalances within the tariff grade system has been influenced by regulatory gaps, an outdated position classification system, differences in funding sources, and, in some cases, approaches based on ведомственные interests. Insufficient updating of the regulatory framework and the lack of clarity in methodological guidelines have created conditions for varying interpretations by different agencies.

Under these conditions, improving the tariff system should become a key direction of public administration reform. Introducing a unified inter-agency methodological standard and assigning grades in all ministries and agencies based on consistent criteria would be appropriate. The evaluation process should be enriched with a competency-based approach, taking into account qualification requirements, job complexity, managerial and financial responsibility, risk levels, and intellectual workload in a comprehensive manner. Increasing the differentiation between grades would strengthen the link between professional growth and financial incentives. Developing specific tariff criteria for modern positions—such as IT specialists, data analysts, public procurement experts, and project managers—would align the system more closely with real needs. In addition, reducing excessive reliance on bonuses and additional payments and making the tariff component the primary share of remuneration would contribute to forming a stable and transparent financial architecture.

As a result, the Unified Tariff Scale could evolve from a nominal instrument into a mechanism that ensures real economic and institutional balance and serves as a strategic tool for managing personnel policy.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The analysis demonstrates that the tariff grades currently used to determine the official salaries of civil servants have not been formed on the basis of a unified approach. These imbalances negatively affect the fairness and transparency of the remuneration system, as well as the effectiveness of motivational mechanisms.

Therefore, it is necessary to unify tariff grades across agencies, revise them in accordance with job complexity and levels of responsibility, strengthen differentiation between grades, and reduce the share of allowances not linked to tariff grades. This would enhance the institutional stability of the civil service, strengthen human capital capacity, and improve competitiveness in the labor market.

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