

OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ***

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Abstract:

In Romania and other Eastern European countries, the administrative reform was often understood just as the adoption of new laws and regulations; the only instrument of administrative changes being located in the legislation. There were taken ideas, policies, procedures, laws, without properly articulated prior studies and without adaptation to the Romanian reality. Different administrative systems, different cultures, practices and different legal systems have created or create different conditions compared with other countries of the world, the more so as the functions of public management (forecasting, organization-coordination, management, motivation and evaluation and control), have been years in a row ineffective or some of them were entirely lacking.

On the development level of public function in Romania and the impact of Romanian economic news impact on the field, we identify the main existing problems.

Current status and the European integration means the adaptation of Romania to the requirements regarding the level of training and development of human resources required at international level.

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Human Resource Management in Public Administration in Romania is much less visible in public institutions and to the National Agency of Civil Servants (NACS) (1) there is a MANUAL OF HUMAN RESOURCES, with a guideline for these institutions. The manual, which we refer to, provides information on the principles and practices governing the human resources management in public administration in Romania, management mainly based on existing legal norms (rules that often create difficulties in their application). Given the set, and the characteristics of personnel management face to face with those of the human resources management in the public institutions, we rather identify the staff management characterized by (Stanciu, 2001):

- strategies developed in the short or medium term compared with those on long term, specific to the human resource management
- acceptance of subordination, and not a psychological motivation based on occupational dedication
- identification at the organizational level of some bureaucratic structures and not of some organic ties
- an unconditional subordination criterion of integration and not of integrative participation
- a vision by which the staff is included in labor costs, which is not seen as investment, etc.

A modern public service requires a change in the organizational culture, making the transition from personnel management to human resources management with strategic modernization of the first. On the other hand, the issue of leadership in public administration has given rise to numerous and profound debates in the specific literature; very often the public institutions were perceived as unable (compared to private organizations) to implement and promote a successful leadership style (Hintea, 2007). Leadership and organizational development must be in the spotlight in public administration in Romania. As an example, among the tools that could show efficacy in this regard is found Blake Mouton Managerial Grid, a two-dimensional model of leadership styles, in the sense that it uses both the personal concern and the concern for

tasks in order to identify the leadership style practiced by a person in a position of leadership. (Mora, 2008).

On the development level of public function in Romania and the impact of Romanian economic news impact on the field, we identify the main existing problems, thus:

1. Numerical reduction of human resources and of those of financial nature in the budget sector, as the main effect of the economic crisis is one of the problems faced by the local public administration in Romania, at this moment. The efficient use of public funds on the basis of a sound public financial management application but also the employment incurred as a result of the actual analysis of staffing needs (2) reported to the organizational and divided strategic objectives (Siugzdinien , 2009) would have not led to the necessity of such measures (3).

2. The poor application or the corresponding inapplicability of motivation levers, implicitly of the unitary salary system (4) (Profiroiu, Andrei, Profiroiu, 2009), relating to the human resources performance. The lack of transparency of pay, motivation, generally correlated with the absence of effective human resources policies, increase the degree of demotivation of personnel and thus the stagnation and/or drop of their professional performance.

As an example: Although we need an assessment of the way in which public officers discharge their duties and the level of professional training, especially given the fact that we are trying to create a professional corps of public servants, the question is: Does this assessment reflect the reality? Even if clear criteria are set for each category of civil servants, the evaluator's subjectivity can be hardly removed, at least for now. Public officials must be motivated, according to the established criteria and not on the basis of the evaluator's subjectivity or of the halo effect. The correct evaluation of human resources brings performance in the organization and indirectly the recognition of human capital (Alberti and Bertucci, 2005).

We estimate that, under these circumstances, the analysis and the review of the applicability of the performance evaluation system for civil servants and contractual staff of local public administration is/will be imperative. Thus, human resource motivation has to be made strictly on skills and real professional results that lead to the achievement of the objectives of the project or of the organizational ones on the whole, by meeting the defined performance criteria.

The systems of public sector performance measurement are still in a transition phase, transition identified (in a later stage) even in countries where these systems are used at all levels of government. However, procedures and performance measurement tools suffer further transformations, these ones being nor exhaustive, neither really systematic. (Androniceanu, 2005)

3. The poor development of human resources departments of the public authorities and institutions or their inexistence in some public organizations (such as city halls in rural areas). The responsibilities of such a compartment, usually belong to one of the civil servants, who is not always professionally trained to exercise such powers. A first result of this problem is the unitary non-application and/or the breach of legislation relating to public function; a second effect is the poor capacity of human resources management; and, last but not least, the inexistence or where they are formulated, the faulty application of human resource management strategies. In order to solve this problem, we think it useful to examine each entity in which to identify these weaknesses and to develop an action plan related to the complexity of each situation.

4. The deficitary system of continuous learning. In this case, we identified the improvement of public administration staff without always considering its deficit or training related to the objectives and powers of the position held and the existence of a small number of trainers who can bring additional theoretical and practical knowledge in the areas of specialization required of public institutions. Until these weaknesses will be resolved, we think it useful to

develop a working environment to facilitate learning, with a continuous evaluation of the results.

5. The damaged image of public servants (and of the contractual staff) is another weaknesses of these. The image of civil servants and public administration is determined by the perception of citizens about the evolution of corruption, as well as of the connectivity of public servants to it. Also, reducing the quality, efficiency and timeliness of service delivery to citizens reflect in their opinion the less favorable image, which is associated to the employees of public institutions. (Aguilar, Galíndez and Velasco, 2005)

6. The reduced or indistinguishable direct collaboration of the National Agency of Civil Servants (NACS/ANFP) with the local authorities and public institutions limits the role of the NACS in the civil service management. We also mention the insufficient institutional capacity of NACS, reported to the nature and volume of tasks that must be fulfilled.

On the other hand, NACS does not manage the contractual staff or the staff with special status in public institutions. We consider it necessary to have an agency to manage both civil servants and other staff that I have referred to.

7. The need

- a. to obtain some structural and process improvements of public policy management cycle in the central and local public administration,
- and
- b. to improve the quality and efficiency of public service delivery, with emphasis on decentralization.

Through the Administrative Capacity Development Operational Program, public institutions and authorities and the stakeholders in this area of interest, can access various funds in order to diminish/eliminate the weaknesses presented.

The Administrative Capacity Development/ the modernization of the Romanian public administration is an approach which aims to create a more efficient and effective public administration, with a body of competent civil servants, to the socio-economic benefit of the Romanian society. This is another lever of solving current problems of public administration amid European concerns administrative cooperation under the Treaty of Lisbon (5).

The issues presented in sections 2-3 and 5-6 are recognized by the National Agency of Civil Servants, in greater or lesser extent, as the problems faced by public administration (6).

On the other hand, since the entry into force of Resolution No. 699 of 2004 for approving the updated strategy of the Romanian Government regarding the acceleration of public administration reform, 2004-2006, we know no other strategy that had the same status and the same legal value. The only exceptions are:

1. The National Reform Plan 2007-2010 (7), a document that shows a reduced concern for the actions of the human resource in public administration, according to Public Administration section;

2. The strategy for a better regulation in the central public administration 2008-2013 (8), which the executive would take a bit later, obviously, does not include the local government and neither concerns on the human component which should offer performance on the ground of the decentralization of public administration.

Surely, the local government autonomy may allow to a certain extent the formulation of strategies to a local institutional level in absence of a framework strategy for Romania.

Also, at the local public administration level we identify a poor financial decentralization, in many cases being made only the transfer of tasks of organization and management of public services from central level to the territory, without an appropriate financial support.

3. The Government Program 2009-2012, in Chapter 19 - Public Administration Reform, includes The human resources management section, which aims to implement the law regarding the unitary payment, the review of the evaluation procedures and the continuous training of the staff, but it also aims at the issue of Increase of efficiency and transparency in the activity of institutions

of public administration, Administrative decentralization and increase of efficiency of local public administration (section that brings the novelty of developing a project on administrative-territorial reorganization of Romania), Financial decentralization.

In addition, according to the latest studies of sounding public institutions, the public servant in Romania is perceived in an almost negative manner. Thus, among the negative aspects were identified:

- The high enough score obtained by human relationships and attention paid to the chief show the application of the promotion practice based on relations (preferences, nepotism), although such persons are not competent enough
- The perception of the degree of corruption at the level of the direct chief - only 55.4% believe their boss is correct
- Discontent manifested towards earned income - 48% of respondents said they are dissatisfied enough or profoundly dissatisfied, and for 67% it meets the minimum requirements
- In terms of initiatives deterrence, only 51.8% believe that their ideas are promoted by the management of the organization they work for
- Public functions management instability under the influence of changes in the political sphere - 48 % of respondents indicate the change of the management device as a consequence of the inter-changement of governing political parties
- Public's behaviour (the rules of conduct are not followed in public or seizures of physical and verbal violence);
- Less annoying is the lack of information (on certain issues, the overall level of training or lack of civic culture).

Yet, after years of accelerated reforms in public administration, public servants' perceptions and values reflect some positive effects in the modernizing process (Mazurencu Marinescu, Niculescu-Aron, Mihaescu, 2007), but it is at a considerable distance from the public's requirements, compared to best practices standards of developed countries and to the theoretical and practical studies of the international literature in the field. (Chlivickas, 2007, Auluck, 2006)

Finally, the formulation and implementation of HR strategies in APL and hence the identification of the opportunities to improve the employees' performance is a bottom-up approach, which seeks to involve all employees and to identify the main training needs. (Osoianu-Lazar-Zaharie-Gavrea, 2008)

In conclusion, the European integration means the adaptation of Romania to the requirements regarding the level of training and development of human resources required at international level.

Amid the identified problems, we encourage and sustain the comparative theoretical and practical scientific research of human resource issues of local public administration in Romania and other states is necessary to identify and review some successful recipes, in the context of similar or different administrative structures with those of Romania.

Most, we consider an interdisciplinary approach is useful through the presented issues and the impact that each of these dimensions has on public servants (human resources – in the local public environment – on the whole) in the process of orientating the activities on customers (citizens) and increasing the quality level of offered services by techniques of improving services as TQM - Total Quality Management. (Pollitt, 2007)

In Romania, in the context of EU integration, the administrative reform can not be achieved without major changes of concept in terms of public management, its values and its fundamental principles. The administrative system and managerial practices in Romania can not stay out of major transformations in administrative systems of the Member States. Human resource management in public administration, identified as, at present, personnel management in public institutions in Romania, part of public management, has to configure and develop like the developed Member States (Androniceanu, 2008) and, why not, receive the mark of successful

strategies and performances obtained by leading companies in European and international private environment.

A major role, in addition to the interdisciplinarity we referred to might have the Public financial management. The comparative studies prove that individual approaches differ greatly. This applies both to international comparisons, as well as to the intranational ones. (Schaefer, 2006) In this case, we identify a strong connection between human resources management in public administration and public financial management, the more as the successful application of strategies for public financial management is also conditioned by (or especially by) the human resources which have responsibilities in the sphere of this management area amid decentralization of public services with specific reference to financial decentralization. On the other hand, human resources development and their motivation is conditioned by what and especially how many financial resources exist in the organization.

Viewed from the perspective of the Romanian administrative reform, the decentralization technique, on the whole, implicitly the financial decentralization, requires to the local government the ability to take new skills and responsibilities. This is a major priority for local and central public administration, but a lack of proper regulation, the inconsistency between the legislative and the status quo, the lack of a process monitoring, as well as the fact that local authorities were not prepared enough caused in some cases the transmission of responsibilities without funding sources.

The local public communities can reach their decentralized powers effectively only if they have the necessary financial resources, whether derived locally or transferred from the core, determining autonomy in the decisions of public financial management through the income and expenditure budgets. (Stoian and Muntean, 2005)

A depth study of theories and administrative functions, along with the analysis from the managerial perspective do not lead directly and immediately to the creation of loyal, efficient, well trained civil servants, but represents an important step in achieving this goal. (Matei, 2006)

There are no organisations with performance management without human resources management, and if there is no performance management, there is no even management

ENDNOTES:

1. Body set up in order to manage the public functions and the civil servants; The Mission of the National Agency of Civil Servants is to develop of a body consisting of professional, well prepared, politically neutral civil servants, who must also be able to assimilate and acquire the standards the performance of the EU, in order to efficient the public administration and to improve the relations between the administration and its main beneficiaries, the citizens.
2. We also refer to the development and implementation of a system of recruitment and promotion based on merit and competence.
3. Government policies, in this regard, are formulated both on the background of the crisis and on the contractual provisions concluded with the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and EU-European Central Bank, in the context of the loan accessed by Romania in 2009. Under these circumstances, Romania must reduce its budget deficit and implicitly reduce budget expenditures.
4. Framework Law no. 330/2009 or 284/2010 on unitary wages paid to staff from public funds.
5. The provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed in Lisbon, December 13, 2007 – which took effect on December 1, 2009. [Title XXIII - Administrative cooperation, Article 176 D (2) and 254^a (1)].
6. http://www.anfp.gov.ro/oip/doc/publicare/ghiduri%20si%20brosuri/59706ABCDEFMRU_final_fara_anexe.pdf The National Agency of Civil Servants (NACS) assumes the responsibility for updating and maintenance of the manual which we refer to in light of changes occurring.
7. http://www.gov.ro/aplicarea-planului-national-de-reforme-monitorizata-trimestrial_11a102938.html
8. The strategy was adopted to support the actions initiated by the European Commission in early 2007, Communication COM (2007) 23 – The Program of Action for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the European Union.

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