

MODERNIZATION AND CHANGE OF THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes and analyses the recent evolution from the public management domain, highlighting the measures that need to be implemented in order to succeed in the realization of the change and modernization process. It also discusses the concepts, traits and principles of the management of public administration. This study it is a work instrument for theoreticians and practitioners which are interested by the modern approaches from the public management domain. The paper has also implications in the organizational sector of the local public administration institutions. We investigated the process of the change at the level of the Brasov County Council. The study allows that the experience of the County Council of Brasov to be generalized in other institutions of the local public administration, for the purpose of supporting the processes of change and modernization.

KEYWORDS: *management of public administration, modernization, new public management, organizational change, public administration institutions*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *D₇₃, H₈₃*

1. INTRODUCTION

The change is the key-word marking the present evolution of the management of public administration. The society is strongly characterized and influenced by the concept of „change”, by the constant search of ideas, models and better solutions. Seen from this perspective, management of public administration has to be able to develop pro-active strategies oriented towards improving organizational structures, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of government acts, accentuating transparency decision-making, increasing responsibility for the public good, in relation with the obligations imposed by the European standards in matter of public administration system.

Either we refer to the necessary change of techniques and methods of management used within public administration or to the significant changes of the environment in which institutions operate, it is clear that the management of public administration faces great challenges.

The paper analyses the determining role that the management of public administration has in the modern society. In this study we will investigate the main areas of analysis that require public administration reform, called “new public management”, highlighting and what it meant for the public sector in Romania. This domain is highly important for the Romanian administrative capacity reinforcement, the increase of public actions legitimacy within society, especially within strategic reform situations.

We investigated also the organizational change at the level of the County Council of Brasov. The methodology of the research involves the use of methods and instruments specific of the managerial scientific investigation. The results of the research contribute to the increase of the quality of the

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public services offered to the citizens of Brasov County and they can be extended to other local communities.

2. THE CHANGE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The current period is the period when globalisation and more and more complex financial problems, dealt with in all states of the globe, are emphasized. These acute situations require the revision of fundamental principles in the public sector. If, until recently, it was considered that the mandatory requirement towards this service would be first of all trust, contemporary society demands, among others, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency from the public administration institutions. Adapting to the needs of increasingly demanding citizens is absolutely necessary.

The public administration system is frequently criticized for its lack of flexibility and resistance to change. Organizational changes involve responses to the external challenges (of macro and micro-environment) and/ or internal ones (innovation, crises, conflicts) and aim to accommodate the organization to the development requirements of the society in general (Năstase et al., 2012). Organizational flexibility, manifested in the ability to respond to environment challenges, is an essential requirement for the local government institutions to be able to adapt to the economic and social realities of the community they serve and to promptly meet its needs. The clear delimitation of power and influential actions within the public administration, organizational structure, internal information flows and their management, all of them are elements that need to be adapted to the new conditions of operation. The focus must be set on the present and on the future, on training skills according to the new demands of the labour market and training. This implies new answers, both theoretically and practically, from the science of management in general and of the management of public administration in particular (Dragomir Ștefănescu, 2012).

The preoccupation to change is neither simple nor easy. It implies a huge volume of work, learning the new managerial practices, methods and laws. Nowadays it seems like the most often used notions are: efficiency and effectiveness, reform, modification, flexibility, performance, transparency and communication. These are in conflict with the classical values of public administration. The conclusion is that society values (characterized as modern) are in conflict with the public sector values (static, conservative). From this situation might emerge the crisis in public administration.

The concept of "good government" assumes transparency and participation in all fields. The change in the public administration must be conceived and made as a creation act oriented towards the improvement of the organizational structures and of the flexibility of the managerial acts, by permanently training the managerial team and the public servants. At the level of the public administration should lay more emphasis on the improvement of managerial skills as a factor likely to enhance performance in the activities carried out, with good results in the development of the community and the satisfaction of the interests of citizens, in their quality of beneficiaries of the public services.

3. THE MODERN APPROACHES FROM THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The globalization, the modification of the labour conditions, the development of communications and new technologies will request other form of public administration.

The modernization of the public administration is a delicate and complicated problem. The international speciality literature is not rich in empiric results of modernization actions under the general motto of the "new public management" or in the analysis of sustainable modernization of the public sector (Hill, 1997). Since 1993 the sustainability concept in the public sector appeared in the scientific discussion regarding the „new public management”. Are identified the following aspects

for sustainability in the notion of the public administration: management of quality, coordination, evaluation, social responsibility, the improvement of the organization performance and the motivation of the public servants, the improve the quality of government services supplied to citizens, modern means of communication, computerization of public administration, reducing bureaucracy, increasing the quality of services supplied to citizens, accessibility of public services, whose beneficiaries are the citizens, the business environment and the public servants, introducing information technology, upgrading institutional, developing information systems, broad and non-discriminatory access to public services and reduce tariffs for these services.

The last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century are characterized by the rapid growth of information and knowledge transfer speed and the rapid disappearance of many traditional barriers. The traditional model of supplying the public services, administrative planning and decision centralization, is replaced with public services management, based on the direct relationship with the market (Flynn, 1990; Androniceanu, 2005) The new public management is a reform model of the public sector, which refers to the managerial, organizational and structural changes. The four levels interact between them and a vertical hierarchy is not taken into consideration (Figure.1). The main levels where the most important reforms take place are the middle ones, the institutional and managerial level (Pollit, 2004).



Figure 1. Levels of public management reform
Source: adapted from Pollit (2004, p.17)

The approach of modern values specific to the new public management within the Romanian public sector represents a requirement of the challenges society faces nowadays.

The general aimed objective is to modernize public administration by introducing an information system in accordance with the requirements imposed by the information society. The purpose and role of information systems is to provide quick and easy access to information regarding key factors, decisive in achieving objectives in exercising managerial control in an efficient and effective manner. Information system should be support for the implementation and simplification of rules and administrative procedures to ensure a broad and non-discriminatory access to public services and reduce tariffs for these services. (Dragomir Ștefănescu, 2012). The major reform called “electronic government” must be initiated by policy makers at the highest level. Interaction with citizens can be better tailored to the needs of citizens through e-government beyond the artificial divisions between services. Upgrading institutional communication by introducing information technology has resulted in increased efficiency in public administration activity, in eliminating bureaucracy and increasing the quality of public services.

This modernization process of the public sector needs high professionalism from the civil servants. Civil servants must understand that meeting the requirements and needs of citizens is the essential element of their activity.

4. PROCESS OF THE MODERNIZATION OF THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In the context of the actual reform of the administrative system in our country, the public administration needs to be ready to tackle the challenges involved by the alignment to the standards of a modern European administration and to offer the community the levers and instruments enabling it to express and develop in a community context. The implementation of some specific elements to the European public sector can efficiently contribute to the definition of the modernization process in the Romanian public administration. The alignment to the EU standards requires the reduction of bureaucracy in administration and workload for civil servants, which involves the use of effective solutions tailored to the realities of public administration in Romania. A competitive organizational model has to be focused on the values of transparency, effectiveness, responsibility and commitment to the public good, values which are common to efficient European models of public government.

The deep structural changes that the Romanian public management is presently undergoing involve numerous organizational changes. Organizational change inside the institutions of the public administration cannot be achieved without major conception changes as regards their management. The fundamental objective resides in increasing the quality of the public services (Ștefan et.al, 2011).

Adopting European standards of good practice for quality public services requires changes in the organizational structure, the fund of values, attitudes and behaviours of public servants (Dragomir Stefanescu & Pânzaru, 2009). The interest to the good of the community and the responsibility towards the citizen are values of a culture developed at institutional level, which should be deemed valid and accepted as the correct model of organizational conduct.

The existing human capital within public institution is mainly dominated by the complex of 'dependence for past'. The insufficiencies found are related to: discontinuity, lack of responsibility, as well as a slow technologization process for providing public services. There are many useless rules that must be mastered, rules that cost money. The transition from the outdated and conservative mentalities to an environment of values and attitudes encouraging performance, is a process to be completed as soon as possible by the Romanian public administration system.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE WITHIN THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BRASOV

The purpose of the research consisted in the analysis of the manner of involvement of management in organizational change within the County Council of Brasov and proposal of concrete measures for improving and perfecting organizational change management

The study was conducted by means of a survey by questionnaire on a sample of 27 civil servants from all compartments and departments of the County Council of Brasov.

The results of the questionnaire carried out on a representative sample of employees of the County Council of Brasov show that 5,22 % of the questioned sample of employees have declared that the decisions related to organizational change have always been made following the consultation of the employees, while 68,78% maintained that such decisions are more often than not made following the consultation of the employees. 26% of the questioned employees have declared that decisions are sometimes made with the consultation of the employees (Figure 2).

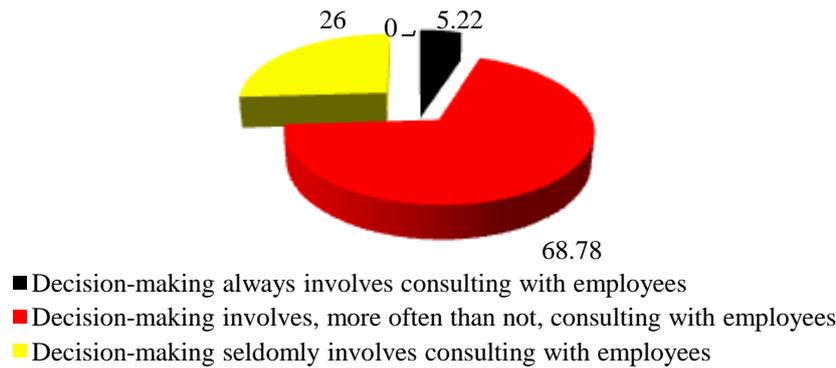


Figure 2. Opinions of the employees of the County Council of Braşov on the decision-making process concerning organizational change

Throughout the organizational change process, the relations between the executive managers and the employees of subordinated departments are very good in proportion of 16,89% and good in proportion of 72,22%. In proportion of 10,89% of the questioned employees have declared that the relations are tensed (Figure 3).

The scientific investigation conducted has pointed out the fact that, at the level of the County Council of Brasov the organizational change is achieved through a democratic management favorably perceived by the employees (77,78% of employees consider that management style to be democratic).

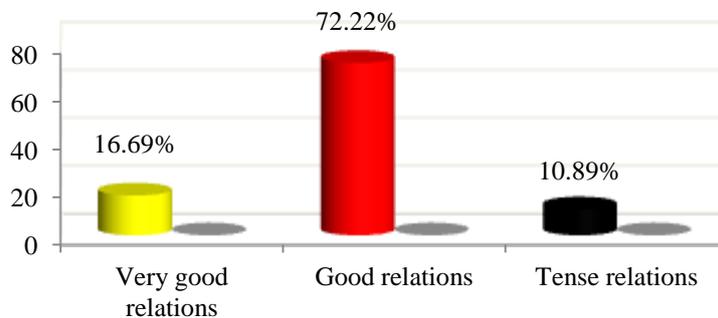


Figure 3. Types of relations between executive managers and their subordinates in the organizational change process

The results of the research have led us to a series of recommendations which give the County Council of Brasov a more qualified and realistic perception of the complex issues raised by organizational change.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the modifications imposed by the knowledge-based society on the public administration system, organizational change should lay more emphasis on the improvement of managerial skills as a factor likely to enhance performance in the activities carried out.

We consider that the Romanian public administration made great advancements within the change and modernization processes: the implementation of the European community legislation, the transparency of the governing and administration, the governing efficiency, the legislation simplification. Apart those significant steps we may mention some sensitive aspects: the incomplete

depoliticization of the public position, the reforms interruption within the transition from the high political level, the lack of resources for education and vocational training. We consider that the updating the educational system is necessary for public administration because the existing human capital within public institution is mainly dominated by the complex of "dependence for past".

The preoccupation for change and for modernization is neither simple nor easy. It implies a huge volume of work, learning the new managerial practices, methods and laws. The change in the public administration must be conceived as a creation act oriented towards the improvement of the organizational structures and of the flexibility of the managerial acts, by permanently training the managerial team and the public servants

The scientific investigation conducted at the level of the County Council of Brasov has pointed out the fact that the organizational change inside the institutions of the local public administration cannot be achieved without major conception changes as regards their management and increasing the quality of the public services. The results of the research have pointed out the fact that the institution has taken on the role of originator of change and modernization processes.

In conclusion, it is evident that modernization and change inside the institutions of the public administration cannot be achieved without major conception changes as regards their management. The fundamental objective resides in increasing the quality of the public services and the responsibility towards the citizen, in their quality of beneficiaries of the public services.

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