

CREATIVE THINKING AND INITIATIVES FOR ENHANCING THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE

Abstract

Significant steps towards responsive and accountable Romanian governance have been taken along the last two decades. However, problems of consolidation seem to be very near evidence. Building and sustaining democracy leads to increased commitment and organizational performance as well as improved transparency. Participatory development is recognized as a key factor for the achievement of the declared goals. Options and instruments for facilitating dissemination of best practices imply at least some challenges that are going to be mentioned and explained by the content of this article, in a descriptive, eclectic and still objective approach.

Keywords: accountability, assessment, democracy, practice, public opinion.

JEL CODES: D 73

GÂNDIRE CREATIVĂ ȘI INIȚIATIVE PENTRU CREȘTEREA PERFORMANȚEI ADMINISTRAȚIEI PUBLICE DIN ROMÂNIA

Ph.D. Anca-Mariana PEGULESCU

Department of Modern Languages and Business
Communication, The Bucharest University of Economic
Studies
E-mail: a_pegulescu@yahoo.com

Rezumat

În ultimele două decenii s-au făcut pași semnificativi către o guvernare românească receptivă și responsabilă. Cu toate acestea, problemele de consolidare par a fi destul de evidente. Construirea și consolidarea democrației conduce la creșterea simțului datoriei, a performanței organizaționale precum și a unei transparențe îmbunătățite. Dezvoltarea participativă este recunoscută ca un factor decisiv pentru atingerea obiectivelor declarate. Opțiunile și instrumentele pentru facilitarea diseminării celor mai bune practici implică cel puțin câteva provocări care vor fi menționate și explicate în acest articol, printr-o abordare descriptivă, eclectică și totuși obiectivă.

Cuvinte cheie: responsabilitate, evaluare, democrație, practică, opinie publică.



Proceedings of the 13th Administration and Public
Management International Conference
"Policy and Organizational Change in Public
Institutions"

1. ADMINISTRATION VS MANAGEMENT?

Some specialists and recognised professionals of the public administration domain consider "to administer" and "to manage" as synonyms.

Do Romanians live in a good governance society? Some of the characteristics of good governance might answer such a question (Rondinelli, 2007, p.8):

- participation;
- rule of law;
- transparency;
- responsiveness;
- consensus orientation;
- equity;
- effectiveness and efficiency;
- accountability;
- strategic vision;

One more step is taken when the term "innovation" is linked to a good governance. Even if the concept "innovation" might be explained by the dissatisfaction with the existing conditions or the special interest groups' demands that involve political parties activities, citizens' attitude, international organizations messages, a gap performance, seen and felt between expectations and results is most of the time the real cause.

Between "to administer" and "to manage", innovations should bring new ideas and specific courses of action. They do represent a process including people and decisions. New policies and specific programmes are supposed to be legitimized before being implemented. Here are some major methods through which innovations are legitimized and implemented, according to the same Rondinelli (2007, p. 10):

- enactment of law;
- administrative decrees;
- creation of new bureaucratic structures;

- reorganization of social, political and economic institutions;
- procedural or regulatory changes;
- imposition of new forms or conventions governing behaviour.

Innovations in themselves as well as the methods through which they are implemented are not to be realized without the assessment of the goals, results, desired outcomes.

Disseminating knowledge, building awareness, transposing ideas into policy may differ in:

- how open and participatory the process is;
- how politics, the market or the authoritarian controls are used;
- how visible is the degree to which decision making factors can perform.

Change and innovation have not been enhanced equally by different governances. That is why public administration and public management should work on the following problems:

- training and developing human resources;
- protecting human rights and political freedom;
- ensuring security, health, safety and welfare;
- creating partnerships and collaborations between the public and the private sectors;
- democratizing and decentralizing decisions.

Administrative reforms should improve the quality of governance, enhancing the bureaucratic accountability. The management functions are concerned with the efficacy and transparency of:

- financing;
- procurement;
- contracting;
- accounting.

Promoting technological innovation, applying knowledge, expanding information are meant to improve the quality of service delivery and enable new approaches to a good governance.

We have to admit that the public administration reform in Romania has followed a top-down approach. Although this approach has certain advantages such as a uniform and quick implementation it has

presented certain disadvantages such as instability of the reform process as different governments have had different ideas of reform and ways of implementing it (Dincă, 2012, p.8).

2. NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION.

The New Public Management (NPM) concepts are visible at different levels:

- state level, through analysis and forecast, planning, implementation and control;
- human resources and employees level, clearly marked by internal motivation;
- organisational level which is economically motivated.

The NPM focuses on the results of the guaranteed services offered to the population, involving management targets to obtain positive effects. Nobody can deny that a series of changes took place in the Romanian administrative system during the last years. The NPM applied the principle of managerial accountability and included the rule of the 4 C: coherence, courage, clarity and consideration.

The rule of the 4C represents different styles of management that underline the necessity of another dimension of the strategical thinking which establishes the human resources' objectives, tasks, competencies and responsibilities (Androniceanu and Șandor, 2006, p.96).

The public manager in Romania is the image of the new model of civil servant and it has been issued by the Emergency Ordinance no 56/2004. A public manager has to be a "change agent" with an important capacity of evaluating risks, displaying leadership, abilities and higher ethical and moral standards. Being adaptable, creative, a pro-active character, a public manager is usually recruited from young people having remarkable results in their academic activities and a special intellectual potential. Even if they are not very numerous, the Romanian public managers are acknowledged a large mobility and motivating salaries.

2.1. The main changes that occurred in the Romanian administrative system, from the NPM perspective can be seen in:

- strategic planning and multi-annual budgeting;
- departments specialized in strategic analysis;
- orienting the management of the civil servant towards job structure instead of career system.
- ICT at a broad scale;

- externalizing some public services.

The changes in the Romanian public administration is an ongoing process and should be exercised by the professionals that are result-oriented and motivated to implement NPM values and principles for developing a more efficient activity. The "citizen–client" concept that a transparent public administration would generate, should entail re-evaluation and reorganization of both the internal organizational structure and the motivational mechanisms (Văduva, 2016, p.53).

2.2. The public administration is meant to provide services and ensure law and order under the authority of the executive power. It must serve the overall needs of the individuals having to perform two categories of tasks:

- leadership and organization tasks;
- service provision tasks.

These tasks should be compared with the main roles of the public administration:

- an intermediate executive mechanism;
- an instrument for preserving the society's sales;
- an organizer and coordinator of the necessary adjustment coming from the transformations in the evolution of different areas of the society.

The public administration displays various activities:

- executive activities with regulatory character granted by law;
- advisory and information gathering;
- debates;
- the provision of services for citizens;

If we refer to any public service, the following features should be taken into account:

- the financial management of public services is subject to the law of the state general accounting;
- a public service must have a regular and continuous functioning throughout its existence;
- a public service has more subdivisions: administrative, technical, commercial, financial operations.

It has been stated that in the 21st century, there are four important roles through which any government can contribute to achieving sustainable economic and social development (Rondinelli, 2007, p.6):

- developing institutional capacity;
- enacting and implementing policies;
- focusing on pro-poor policies that combat poverty and enhance the capacities of people who are normally bypassed in the distribution of the benefits of economic growth;
- having a crucial role in strengthening the capacity of public administration to promote socially equitable economic growth;

Through the Public Administration Reform Acceleration Strategy (PARAS) that was drawn up between, 2001 and 2004, the ambitious objectives of this strategy have been only partly achieved:

- decentralizing the public services;
- extending the systems for the basic services like the water supply, sewerage, sanitation;
- restructuring the mechanism of social security;
- attracting private capital for investments in the local infrastructure;
- developing the market economy approach and reducing the mono pollution degree.

The National Plan of Regional Development 2007-2013 retained certain priority fields like:

- developing the knowledge-based economy;
- protecting and improving the quality of the environment;
- strengthening the administrative capacity;
- developing the rural economy;
- diminishing the development disparities between the regions of the country.

The public administration reform in Romania imposed public administrators to promote and maintain civic education and democracy cultivation among the citizenry. The public administrators have had the responsibility to educate, to inform, to impart knowledge (Văduva, 2016, p.33). On the other hand the competitive intelligence at the level of local public administration should display two dimensions: the information support for the public managers and the development of a competitive behaviour for the local administrative units (Brânzaș, 2015, pp. 114-117).

3. THE PROCESS OF EUROPEANIZING ROMANIA.

The process of Europeanizing Romania is very important not only for the country itself and its inhabitants but also for the whole mechanism which is the Romanian society. As any public administration is in fact the spinal column of the society the public administration belongs to, the Romanian public administration has undergone major changes since 2007. Visible results can be seen even if there are still shortcomings and aspects that require improvement. A very important conclusion drawn by professionals of the domain [i.e. public administration domain] is the "inconsistency between practice and ideas, between formal rules and informal practices" (Văduva, 2016, p.39). This inconsistency affects the depth of change. The requirement of stability and healthy regulations that are necessary for appropriate policy-making testing and implementation might be seen as an obstacle.

A good European governance in Romania would suppose:

- an external orientation in meeting the citizens' needs, wishes and creating a professional culture of quality and service within the government;
- a greater concentration on the achievement of results rather than the correct follow-up of a procedure;
- the modernization of public services and the public managers' training that would presume a clear orientation towards meeting the citizens' needs;
- developing e-governing approach and network simplification;
- achieving government's decisions transparency and responding to a volatile and turbulent external environment;

The three strands that should focus on the efficiency enhancing internal reforms of public administration are:

- timing and extent of the reform decisions level;
- measuring the efficiency and productivity of public service;
- driving the fiscal policies to stability and transparency;

The consolidation of reforms is related to citizens' interests. These reforms that boost efficiency in public service production can emerge as an outcome of spending cuts and consolidation. However, this literature ignores whether an observable decrease in expenditure originates from a reduction of service quality, or from cost savings due to a gain in efficiency.

That is why providing services and raising revenues are activities meant to improve the efficiency of public administration. The possible classification of public administration reforms would include:

- reducing administrative and financial burden;
- minimizing start-up requirements and speeding settlements;
- making e-government a steady practice;
- making systemic monitoring a regular practice;
- modernizing public management and ensuring constant professional development.

4. IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A TRANSPARENT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

A transparent public administration entails re-evaluation and reorganization of both organisational structure as well as of motivational mechanisms. Digital governing era involves e-government, internal cultural changes and a significant behaviour shift by society as a whole. The most important aspect of such an approach is the "citizen-centered" concept where citizens run their interaction with government.

This will accomplish:

- a reduction of the overall public administration budget;
- an increase in the quality of services and interagency collaboration;
- a citizens' overall satisfaction with their European and national governments.

The fundamental problem is still one of vision. The Romanian public administration should develop a sense of autonomy and accountability with regard to the citizens' specific needs and possible projects be displayed.

CONCLUSIONS

The existence of a European arena interacting with the national governments should enhance the development of the whole Romanian public administration system.

The direct exposure to European norms and values should make efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, probity and accountability as equal as crucial. A possible classification of public administration reforms should target:

- improving communication between institutional public administration and citizens;

- minimizing start-up organizing requirements;
- enhancing the efficiency of the legal system in general;
- undertaking a regulatory impact assessment;
- modernizing the public management and establishing a reform of the advisory bodies.

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