Public Service in Romania and its Role in the Development of the Administrative Capacity

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Abstract

The paper sets to research the aspects relating to the structure of the public service, which Romania has chosen to implement in the period following the adherence to the European Union, with the purpose of creating a modern administration, adjusted to the challenges of the 21st century. The study will point out the way in which the reformation methods implemented by Romania have led to the attainment of the set objectives. There will be approached aspects regarding the characteristics of the management process of public services, but also the major measures implemented by Romania in the period 2007 - 2013, towards the growth of efficiency and effectiveness of the activity of those services. In this study, special attention will be paid to the strategy adopted by Romania, in relation to the "Europe 2020" strategy, referring to the public service domain, having as a final objective the growth of the administrative capacity. The research methodology includes: comparative study, empirical research and SWOT analysis.

Keywords: efficiency; public service; management.

1. Introduction

The paper is a research on the aspects referring to the way in which Romania, as a member state of the European Union, has tried to reform its public service, as an integral part of the administrative system (Matei and Matei, 2011; 2012), the final purpose being the elaboration of public services which carry out their activity under maximum efficiency and effectiveness conditions.

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The research was thus centered on the following key aspects:
- What compartments are necessary for a good functioning, at different levels?
- What are the elements of an optimal manager?
- or What are the interconnection relations of those public services?
so that the final result be translated into a good administration.

2. The public service in Romania. Structure

It is known about the public service that it represents that entity of the state with legal personality, which fulfills an activity of general interest, ultimately with the meeting of the needs of the citizen. In order to accomplish this purpose, Romania has chosen to organize its services on two levels, respectively public services of national interest (examples: services within the Government, Ministries) and of local interest (services at the level of territorial administrative units). All these services are subjected to specific cumulative conditions (Matei, 2004), such as: satisfaction of the general interest; their creation based on a law or establishing specific competencies for the fulfillment of the purpose for which they have been created, conditions through the fulfillment of which the respective services contribute to the coming into being of a modern administration.

For carrying out their activity, public services at the central level have been assigned regulations of organization and functioning, and the competency fields are set by means of normative acts. The leadership role of the public administration in Romania has been attributed to the Government, role which it performs through the intermediary of ministries and special subordinated organisms. The latter supply public services in varied domains, such as: agriculture, health, education or justice. At the territorial level, the activity is carried out by ramifications of these services, which ensure in this way the implementation of the government policies in the entire county, with a good degree of uniformity.

As for the public services constituted at the local level (Alexandru, 2007), their role is to satisfy the needs of the local communities, even by means of involvement of the private sector. In this sense, the Romanian legislative has deemed appropriate the creation of a structure called - the County Council – which has competencies in the supply of services such as: education, social services, public order or culture. It is equally important that, for certain public services, Romania has seen fit that they be supplied by private economic operators, by means of their concessioning, based on certain contracts.

3. The characteristics of the management process of the public service in Romania

The management process of the public services, be them local or central, is characterized by certain elements, which are: the way of creation and dissolution; the structure and way of organization; attributions of the services; management of human resources; subordination relationships; naming and releasing the managers of the services; financial management; or other aspects of the management process, with reference to the procedures applied for the attainment of the objectives (Filip, 2007). Related to these elements, the following section presents the conclusions regarding the characteristics of the management process.

In Romania, the foundation of the public service is a prerogative of the legislative power, which can create such services by law or can invest the local administration authorities with this right. In what concerns the dissolution of the public services, taking into account the principle of the symmetry of the judicial acts, it is also done on the basis of the normative acts issued by the organs that created the services. The latter also establish the organizational structure, the attributions and the subordination relations of those services. The personnel is represented by public workers and contractual personnel, with various specializations, depending on the specificity of each service. Regarding the assignment of the manager, respectively the dismissal from office of the managers, those are the attribute of each separate public entity. In what concerns the subordination relations, it is noted that the functional hierarchical subordination is characteristic for Romania, both at the local, and at the central level, given the fact that the subordinated organs benefit from professional support from the superior level. The financial management of the public services, lies in ensuring the financing sources for the coverage of the material and personnel expenses, from the level of the state budget from their own income or from the local budget, depending on the specificity of each service.
Lastly, in the same domain of the management process, another aspect worth mentioning is that Romania has chosen that at the level of the public services, there will be implemented an Internal Management Control System. This System implies that each public entity would analyze the risks associated with its activity and would elaborate appropriate plans towards the limitation of possible consequences, the final purpose being the practice of a management of superior quality.

4. The efficiency of the public service in Romania

Analyzing the activity of its public services, Romania manifested its preoccupation for: their orientation towards the citizen, the reduction of the time needed for the supply of the services or the implementation of cost and quality standards. In relation to these standards, for the period post-adherence, the efforts have been concentrated on the efficiency of the public services in key domains such as: education or social assistance. In this sense, in education (Government, 2013), for the efficiency of the pre-university sector of the field, there have been established the cost standards for such services. The methodology of calculation that was applied allows the justification of all expenses, which leads to the efficient allocation of resources, with the identification and elimination of non-justified expenses.

In the field of social assistance (Government, 2010), at the level of the local public administration, the local councils have been legally invested with the possibility of creating social services. For providing these services under efficient conditions, there have been established cost standards, based on the necessary of financing expenses. These standards define the minimum cost for this kind of activities.

It is considered about the public services that the way in which they are supplied to the citizens, constitutes a relevant indicator for measuring the performance of the reformation processes to which they have been subjected. Yet, with all efforts, at the end of the period mentioned above, a simple analysis has shown the continuous existence of certain deficiencies, which Romania proposes itself to overcome through a reformation programme, in the period 2014 - 2020.

5. The public service in Romania from the perspective of the Europe 2020 Strategy. SWOT analysis

The analysis of the public administration from Romania, consecutive to the implementation in the interval 2007 - 2013 of a programme of improvement of its efficiency (Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reformation, 2007), has laid at the basis of the elaboration of the programme which Romania wishes to implement for the next period, in accordance to the Europe 2020 Strategy. There has been reached the conclusion that, for the modernization of the public administration, it is necessary to approach the following aspects: widening of the implementation basis of the services of e-government and use of Technology of Computerized Information and the reduction of bureaucracy in relations to the citizens and with the business environment. In this context, we hereby present a SWOT analysis of the public service, highlighting its strong and weak points, but also identifying the opportunities and threats. About the strong points, there can be said that they reflect the success of the reformation programme implemented so far. The weak points constitute arguments for the reformation process in the following period. In what concerns the opportunities and the threats, as component parts of this analysis, they reflect the influence of the external environment on the public service. Thus, if the opportunities are realized in factors of the exterior environment that support the reformation process, the threats can constitute mechanisms of stopping this process. In Table 1 (SWOT analysis) there are the strong and weak points, and also the opportunities and threats, that best define the public service from Romania.

| Strong points                                                                 | Weak points                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| - Implementation of a legal framework appropriate for the actual public function; | - Limited knowledge of personnel management who carry out activities within the public services; |
| - Clarification of the financial management system of the public services;     | - The transfer of competencies with the deficient allocation of the financial resources; |
or Implementation of cost standards, as a method of evaluation of the quality of certain services.

- Lack of monitoring systems (cost standards) of the activity of certain public services of major importance, such as the population records service.

| Opportunities | Threats |
|---------------|---------|
| - The initiative of the European Union for the development of the administrative capacity for the period 2014 – 2020, having as a result economic growth; | - Resistance to change of the main actors involved in the conduct of the activity of the public services; |
| - Possibility of development of public services and implicitly of surpassing their difficulties, through the use of the European funds. | - The still small capacity of absorption of European funds, which leads to a deficient development in the domains in which this aspects is noted; |
|               | - Inferior motivation of the personnel who work in these public services. |

Thus, as a consequence of identification of the remaining non-conformities in the activity carried out, and in accordance with the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Government of Romania, through the specialized ministry, has drawn up a schedule project (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2014). Through this program, there are also supported the investments in view of the efficiency of the public services and which can lead to a good governing.

Still, comparing Romania's program with those of other European states (for example: Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland or Slovakia), under the aspect of the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Committee, 2014), it can be concluded that these states still have problems at this level. Thus, for example, Hungary makes a case for the establishment, at a national level, of a unique network of offices; registration of electronic administrative services or introduction of the model of public career service, while Bulgaria proposes the growth of the administrative efficiency through the application of the e-government strategy, objectified in the supply of administrative services using electronic means. Poland is oriented towards the improvement of the use of the e-administration portal, while Slovakia needs to consolidate the independence of the public sector and to improve the management of human resources in the state administration.

Concluding on the basis of these aspects, there can be said that modernization of the public administration and implicitly of the public services, implies aspects characteristic to each country, some of them bearing a certain degree of similarity.

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