

THE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL AUTONOMY ON THE LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES

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Abstract: *Relevant aspects of the local autonomy are analysed, as well as the public services traits within the City Hall, by using longitude methods, starting the study at hand with a retrospective and contextual analysis of how this evolution took place both nationally and internationally. The paper at hand treats fundamental issues that exercise analysis means regarding the local autonomy influence on all public services. The issues that are treated are of real interest in theoretical and practical approach when underlining the sociology issues regarding public administration.*

Keywords: local autonomy, public services, public organisation management

1. Defining elements of local autonomy

The administrative system represents an ensemble of administrative facts interacting, taken on a certain period of time and that reflect the aspect of an objective reality of the every day social life¹.

Through administration and public services activities control, anti-productive pressures are exercised or certain abuse is favoured from the activity and autonomy of those services, then the institutions involved can no longer exercise their attributions according to the social expectations².

The public administration within the territorial administrative units is organised and functions based on the principles of local autonomy, of de-centralising of public services, the eligibility of local public administration authorities, on its legality, and on consulting the citizens in resolving local interest issues³.

The principle of de-centralising the public services is essential to the local autonomy and consists of organising, functioning, control and termination of the public services by the local administration authorities.

Reality underlines that we are facing an essential change of the role public administration plays for society, from executor of the legal rules, to that of main funder of public works and an important public services provider.

Thus it is absolutely necessary that the public administration modernises its methods and working procedures, perfects its human resources, etc. so that it assures their performances.

Public organisation management must find its base in the private organisations management.

We consider that reevaluation of the state's functions, of the central governments, at the same time with autonomising and decentralising the public services and attributions towards the local administration are means that can create the premises for local collectivities progress, as well as raising the level of social individualisation.

The public management studies the management processes and relations that are formed within the public sector in general and the public administration in particular, with the goal of identifying perfecting and rationalising solutions of the public services. For this to be materialised, public management must function within every public organisation, every public service.

The diversity character specific to public management finds its explanation and determination in the diversity of organisations that constitute a component of the public sector and automatically in the diversity of public services it organises or offers, as the case rises⁴.

In conclusion, services management has a goal to get to know the management processes and relations within the public administration.

Next to the aspects earlier mentioned, public services management also aims at providing efficient services that correspond to the social needs and public interest, thus argumenting the statement of specialist Peter Duker: „effectiveness is the key to an organisation's success”. The public managers in Romania are oriented towards strategic thinking, as a component of the public manager's profile, by broadening their horizon with the goal of „putting things into perspective”⁵.

The current Romanian administrative system holds a small budget, and the quality and quantity of services depends on these restraints, but the new public management is based on results, mainly the quality and quantity of the necessary services offered⁶.

¹ Matei A., *Analiza sistemelor administrației publice*, Editura Economică, București, 2003, pag. 81 și urm

² Stanciu Mariana și colaboratori, *Accesul populației la serviciile publice*, Editura Centrul de Informare și Documentare Economică, București, 2006, pag. 7 și urm.

³ Legea administrației publice locale nr.215/22 aprilie 2001, art.2, în M.Of.nr.204/23 aprilie 2001.

⁴ Iordan Nicola, *Managementul serviciilor publice locale*, ediția a-II-a, Ed. C. H. Bech, București, 2010, pag. 15-20.

⁵ Bărbulescu C., *Pilotajul performant al întreprinderii: proiectare și funcționare*, București, Ed. Economică, 2000, pag. 41-49.

⁶ Gâf-Deac I. Ioan, *Știința administrației și managementul public modern*, Ed. Infomin, Petroșani, 2010, pag. 52-61.

Modernising the public sector and improving the public services quality represents an essential element to the public sector reforming programme.

According to specialised writings it is noticed that the public administration develops every day, a permanent growth of public services being registered⁷.

In conclusion, it is noticed that a good functioning of the public administration and the public services has become a peaceful aspect, taking to account the flawed functioning of the public services owed to political crisis and popular riots.

Ergo, the priority objective of the strategic public management aims at obtaining positive effects and an utility of the services provided to the citizens.

- **PEST analysis of the public management in Romania**

PEST analysis of the Romanian public management implies an analysis instrument of the external factors in which an institution operates: political, economical, social and technological⁸. Both the impact and the general factors tendencies are shown, but also the major stimulators of change.

The political factor materialises by:

- legal framework where the institution functions, the politics, the governmental strategies and the governmental programmes;
- weak political stability within the public institutions and lack of a clear belonging to a certain political doctrine of the public system managers.

The economical factor means a variable component which includes:

- business and investments environment;
- financing programmes;
- certain fiscal strategies at a local level;
- micro and macro-economical politics.

In order to create programmes capable to attract structural funds and using those that already exist lead to a growth of the economical performance of the local public administration.

The social factor is about the sum of all demographic values, attitudes, types and characteristics that provide a tone of specificity to the external environment. The occupation degree of the working force, unemployment, social protection, all influence the activity of the institution that assumes the interface of the Government in the public sectorial politics area.

The quality of the services provided to the population sets some attitudes, politics and reactions, by developing a „friendly” environment in order to conduct the activity. We should not leave out the contribution of the civil society in the decisional processes, which is elaborated on participation and transparency with a goal to lead the administrative act towards the satisfaction of social needs⁹.

Technological factors imply those technological forces that can influence more or less the main activities of the public institutions, based on IT developments, which reduce the costs of the institutions by implementing certain technologies, and modern software solutions used in administration that lead to a growth of the services supply and demand.

- **Elaborating a global diagnostic analysis and S.W.O.T. for a service of public interest**

The public institutions evaluate the weak points and the strong points specific to the internal environment, but also the opportunities and risks of the external environment of the local communities. An analysis of the marketing environment is targeted, also known as S.W.O.T.¹⁰ analysis, which aims at highlighting the internal and external environment aspects of the institution where it functions. After a detailed analysis of the internal environment specific to public institutions certain strong points and weak points are concluded.

The analysis of the external environment supplies information on the opportunities and threats or risks. Ergo, the S.W.O.T. analysis means:

- means to identify strong points, weak points, opportunities and threats which influence the activity of the administrative institution;
- an opportunity to analyse the existing situation and to elaborate tactics and strategies that are called for;
- evaluating the essential capacities and competences of the organisation;
- an operation that supplies arguments and suggests ways to change.

The S.W.O.T. analysis is useful when the public authority analyses or plans the activity of an institution.

The public institution should be submitted constantly at a diagnostic analysis that evaluates the strong points and those that can be improved to establish whether it holds that competence necessary to value the opportunities.

⁷Cârciumaru Adriana, Spătaru Steluța, Burcea Cătălina, Istrate Claudiu, Niculescu Ana-Maria, Inovație și calitate în sectorul public, Ghid de bune practici, București, Noiembrie 2011.

⁸Bărbulescu C., Pilotajul performant al întreprinderii, op. cit., 2000, pag. 52-55.

⁹Gâf-Deac I. Ioan, Știința administrației și managementul public modern, op.cit., pag. 88-97.

¹⁰Nedelea Alexandru Mircea, Marketing în administrația publică, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 2006, pag. 70-73. Analiza SWOT (acronim compus din (S) „strengths” – puncte tari, (W) „weaknesses” – puncte slabe, (O) „opportunities” – oportunități și (T) „threats” - amenințări)

The managers evaluate competence for the following activities: accounting, marketing, human resources and acquisitions, when necessary.

A weak point can cause a disadvantage, thus identifying these is not an opportunity to defame the organisation, but to correctly evaluate the current situation.

The main weak points of a public institution are:

- lack of flexibility;
- diminished degree of computerization of the organisation;
- high usage of the means of transportation;
- lack of orientation or marketing of the public workers;
- insufficient financial resources;
- bad communication channels between the institution and the citizens;
- negative picturing of the citizens in regard to the bureaucracy;
- public institutions management insufficiently trained and motivated, or unexperienced;
- insufficient delegation of the attributions;
- diminished percentage of the higher education personnel;
- employee absenteeism;
- new, unexperienced personnel;
- lack of general strategies;
- lack of synchronizing between departments and workers.

The strong points represent the high qualifications of public employees within the public institutions, and the weak points are generated by the employees and include the skills and experience of the public employees, working environment, training programmes, etc.

2. External environment analysis

This analysis is oriented towards investigating and analysing the marketing micro-environment that characterises the public institution and the tendencies of the marketing macro-environment: mainly the demographic, economical, natural, technological, legal and political, social-cultural environment.

The process allows the identification of opportunities and threats to the external environment on a short, medium and long term¹¹.

The main strong points that characterize the external environment of the public administration are:

- highlighting the quality of the human resources by the large number of highly educated personnel in the public institutions;
- using efficient methods to motivate and keep loyal employees and permanently orienting them towards innovation and perfection;
- high capacity to adapt to functional human resources and structures specific to reforms implemented in Romania;
- adapting to the changes in the legal framework and the diversities of the job tasks;
- trust, respect and loyalty for the managers in the public institution;
- the authority of the institution and expanding the IT&C sector¹².

The main weak points that characterize the external environment of the public administration are:

- difficulty in applying the management functions and not applying total quality management;
- lack of indicators or evaluation criteria, of specialised personnel, of an organisational culture, marketing strategy, paperwork management systems that provide complex information in real time or with delays of up to 7 days, but also a lack of strategy of local or regional development and the institutions capable to elaborate them;
- insufficient promoting of the public institutions, of the human resources compared to the workload, the resources allocate do solving community issues;
- insufficient funding for professional training and concentrating towards resolving irrelevant activities that are great time consumers and obtaining results rather than the process itself;
- incapacity of the institution to create systems that attract capital from alternative sources and the priority of personal problems rather than community problems;
- internal communication difficulty that means a high resistance to change;
- low usage efficiency of the allocated resources, the advanced technologies and not fulfilling the eligibility criteria to request financing programmes projects;
- inadequate infrastructure, low development of the informational systems, low standard of living compared to other European member states.

The main opportunities characteristic to the external environment of the public administration are:

- integration of Romania into the European Union with benefits oriented towards creating an efficient modern administration;
- implementing community acquis and developing public-private partnerships;

¹¹ Bărbulescu C., Pilotajul performant al întreprinderii op.cit., 2000, pag. 61-67.

¹² Burciu A., Introducere în management, Editura Economică, București, 2008, pag. 88-91.

- accelerating the institutional reforms and applying quality and management standards to public administration;
- flexibility of the legal framework, free circulation of services and people and the existence of European funds destined to institutional development;
- the existence of programmes and projects regarding the administration reform;
- cooperating with other countries to form public administration personnel by establishing partnerships and acces of the public managers and workers to obtain government scholarships abroad.

Main threats that characterize the external environment of the public administration are: high level of public workers migration towards other sectors, resistance to change, limitation of public politics being applied, instability of the law, implication of politics in administration and different level of development of certain economical rural/urban regions¹³.

3. The importance of public services within the public administration

The transition to market economy has determined huge mutations in the social areas and the public sector.

From a content point of view, the public management consists of the theoretical and practical support necessary to implement changes in public institutions.

Restructuring the public sector, mostly the administrative system, has raised the necessity of a high professionalism, mainly the existence of public workers that are highly trained in public management. Thus the tendency towards professional public workers is more and more present on the economical market, which means a real mutation, an exact knowledge of the public management content.¹⁴

Specialised writing has oriented its attention towards the Romanian public services area, which is used is public management and administrative law.

The public service represents the sum of organised and authorised activities by the public administration, with a goal to satisfy the social needs in public interest. Unlimited and different needs reported to geographical, economical, cultural, civilisation, age criteria, etc.

Public management represents an area through which these needs are resolved, which up to a point particularize a public interest, by determining a value of the political power and setting some legal coordinates.

In economical theory and specialised literature, public services can be regarded as „occupations” specific to some persons, „functions”, „actions” or „work done in someone’s favour”, „organisms” or sub-divisions that are part of an economical or administrative ensemble.

In conclusion, the public service defined in a simple manner, underlines the legal nature specific to the service provider which is: public person, the state, local community or some other public institution.

The necessity to implement a client-oriented public service is concluded¹⁵. A few countries have set the services standards that name directly the quality of services that are expected and that are evaluating the performances upon, this practice being needed to be applied on a larger scale.

Orientation towards the public or the public services user implies the usage of these services’ quality. The services’ quality constitutes an important aspect of the performance of any organisation within the public sector.¹⁶

Public services system performance is realised by optimizing the report of supply and demand for that particular public service.

In conclusion, any public services system constitutes a waiting system in which each consumer benefits of the requested service by following certain rules and in a specific order.

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¹³ Burciu A., Introducere în management, op.cit., pag. 88-91.

¹⁴ Solomia Andreș, Managementul serviciilor publice, Reșița, 2005, pag. 7-8.

¹⁵ Verboncu I., Management public, Editura Universitară, București, 2005, pag. 147 și urm.

¹⁶ Profiroiu M., Managementul organizațiilor publice, Editura Economică, 2001, București, pag. 77 și urm.