

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT:

The last two decades carry with them substantial changes in terms of society. The public sector is not without transformations, and public administration, implicitly, in order to keep up with the needs of the population, adapts to what is called the New Public Management. Public administration is, among other things, the activity of organizing a state. In fact, public administration makes possible the dialogue between the political scene and society. Thus, on the one hand, the political decisions materialized in laws, decisions, ordinances are implemented and, on the other hand, the administration represents the "spokesperson" of the requests, desires and needs of the members of the society.

KEYWORDS: *public, sector, management, reform.*

INTRODUCTION

Being a social organization, the state needs leadership, otherwise the world would be characterized by chaos. The management of the society was done for hundreds of years through "administration" or "government", both terms being specific to public institutions.

„The administration characterizes the macrosocial level: it belongs to the state; it is the administration of state property and affairs and must therefore be loyal to its interests. The state represents everyone equally and no one in part. He represents the nation, the whole social body”. (Păunescu, 2010, p. 10).

Given the idea of public sector reform, it is necessary to refer to public management, which "represents the concern for the quality of public service provided, but also for citizen satisfaction and, in this capacity, transcends government boundaries, including private sector organizations seeking public purposes. This implies the productive allocation of resources - human resources, public money and endowments - where they give the best return, but in parallel with the observance of the procedures meant to ensure equity in the supply of public goods”(Păunescu, 2010, pp. 10-11).

Public management is recognized as a dynamic, flexible system, through which the general and specific public interests of society members are realized (Androniceanu, 2008, p. 14). Starting from these definitions, we arrive at the approaches that shape public management. Thus, in short, there are five approaches, namely: the traditionalist-bureaucratic approach; rationalist approach; political approach; legislative approach; scientific management approach; the approach of the new public management. Each of these approaches has a special importance because it significantly marks in time the evolution of the science of public management and also represents premises of the reforms in the public administration.

1. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats in the Romanian public sector

Turning to the subject of bureaucracy - a subject "mandatory present" in the context of the public sector - the most representative author in this regard is the German sociologist Max Weber who is recognized for the most comprehensive formulation of the characteristics and values of bureaucracy, namely: public service provided by professionals, recruitment and appointment based on merits, political neutrality, stability in positions (Androniceanu, 2008, p. 9). The influence of the communist period is still felt in Romania, especially in the administrative system, at the bureaucracy level or regarding the mentality of civil servants or even citizens, but the new changes at the political level, as well as the integration in the European Union since 2007, bring new capabilities and trends to substantiate changing the level of mentalities, attitudes and successful behaviors in public administration by implementing a high-performance public management system, adapted to the realities of our country.

Today, more and more often, we hear about the imposition of the principle of subsidiarity, by achieving decentralization and regionalization. I believe that the direction of action for the benefit of the public sector reform can be this bottom-up implementation of measures, because in this way a segmentation of decisions can be achieved which will lead to increased efficiency as well as debureaucratization, a simplification of the administrative procedures.

When we refer to public organizations, we inevitably speak of public, central, local administrations, economic, political or legal institutions. "Public organizations aim at the common good / collective good as opposed to private organizations which pursue private interests - profit" (Mora, 2009, p.15).

Not only the economic crisis of the 1980s justified public sector reform but also other factors such as: globalization, digitalization, liberalization of capital and labor flows, public administration mechanisms that are slowly proving to be ineffective. Under these conditions, the new public management emerged, as a response to the financial crises and the need for the state to become more efficient, as well as the pluralistic government, which was imposed in the 1990s as a result of social, demographic and technological changes.

Thus, the new public management (NMP) is encountered in some specialized authors under the name of "managerialism" (Pollitt, 1990), "market-oriented public administration", "entrepreneurial governance" (Osborne i Gaebler, 1992 apud. Mora, 2011, p.14)

Hood, who gave this paradigm the name *New Public Management*, provided a relevant and complex definition of the model, describing it as an ideological system based on values attracted from the private sector to be implemented in public sector organizations (apud Androniceanu, 2008, p. 52). According to Pollitt, NMP is perceived as "a general theory or doctrine of improving the public sector by importing business concepts, techniques and values" (Pollitt, 2007, p. 8).

Following the above definitions, the idea that is outlined is that the NMP is based on the transfer of practices from the private to the public sector, taking into account the values and principles that guide the private sector. It is also noted that NMP emphasizes the characteristics of the market and is more concerned with results (outputs) as opposed to focusing on inputs as in the modern bureaucracy.

The '90s marked the turning point in public administration and also brought with them the adoption of reform measures that coincided with a new theoretical orientation, implemented in practice, of the New Public Management. The United Kingdom and the United States were the initiators of the change of public administration. The Thatcher administrations in the United Kingdom and the Reagan administration in the United States imposed a new vision on the public sector that later spread to many other European countries.

The main features (Mora, 2011, p. 8) of the New Public Management which outlines these innovative approaches are the following:

- efficiency, flexibility and adaptability in the administration of resources for public administration and the quality of services provided to be in line with the needs of the clients, of the citizens;
- decentralization of public services, which consists in the transfer of administrative capacity from the central level to the local level, put into practice in autonomy regarding decision-making, in other words, the principle of subsidiarity;
- bureaucratic reduction, which includes actions for internal administration, in terms of departmental structure, personal recruitment;
- the privatization of public services for which the state can no longer ensure optimal conditions for private sector activities;
- the public-private partnership, the way in which the public authority can keep a part of their authority in order to ensure the subcontracting service or the provision of a public-private partnership.
- the citizens which become 'customers' of the public administrations, so their needs become the main objective in providing public administration services.
- reward and sanctions system granted for civil servants, depending on individual performance;
- competition in the public sector, which can lead to the provision of quality services.

2. New Public Management perspectives for Romania

From the analysis of the characteristics of NMP, I highlight the fact that Romania is in a continuous process of reform, even if today we are no longer talking about the classic or modern moment of administrations, but about the transition to postmodernity. In fact, I believe that our administrative system is still in the phase of transition from the pre-bureaucratic system to the post-bureaucratic system, which focuses on changes based on the characteristics of the new public management. For this reason, in addition to the international implications, Romania is "hurried from behind" by the fact that it is a member of the EU, and thus a positive thing is the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy, which reveals Romania's implications for governing and managing public services.

Romania, in the Europe 2020 context (Europe 2020 Strategy), as a member of the EU, adopts the five key objectives of the strategy, which cover the following areas: employment, education, research and innovation, social inclusion and poverty reduction, energy and climate change. In fact, I believe that through the 7 emblematic initiatives of the strategy: innovation, digital economy, employment, youth, industrial policy, combating poverty and energy efficiency, Romania embraces change and begins to go through a process of modernization that ultimately will result in performance.

If we refer to Romania, after the fall of the communist regime, the public administration is going through a series of reforms and it's in a full development process. In fact, I consider that we cannot speak of a New Public Management in it's true sense of its characteristics in the Romanian administrations, but I believe that starting with the 1990s and later due to the constraints for EU accession, a series of actions were designed to bring change and make possible the transition from a classical administration to a system with strong accents of New Public Management.

The process of reform in Romania is ongoing, and the New Public Management brings innovation to traditional public management by taking good practices from the private sector and adapting them to each country and each system of government. In order to move forward, public organizations need transformation, major lasting changes in order to meet the needs of a society that is constantly evolving.

The orientation towards results refers to the establishment of objectives and to their measurement, as well as the attention to the “client” citizen, whose needs and requirements are placed at the center of all the activities of the public administration bodies. In this regard, in his "Reinventing Government" strategy, Vice President Al Gore said that "a government works best when it focuses on results and shows enough flexibility to put citizens at the center of its concerns" (Reinventing government, 1993).

CONCLUSIONS

The continuity of the state and its performance are closely linked to the mechanism of operation of the administrative system. Therefore, public administration reform in Romania is a complex and long-term process, which involves reforming the system of administrative institutions.

Public sector reform is a broad concept, but it must start from a common point, and this point is represented by citizens, so that afterwards can reach all aspects of organizing a system, from the institutional level (central, county, local) to administrative capacity, results, public sector performance, transparency and efficiency in the government process. Also, Romania, conditioned by the need to rally to European standards, is obliged to adapt its system periodically, taking into account its own characteristics and socio-economic and political realities. An important element in order to achieve the public sector reform in Romania will consist in increasing the degree of trust in public authorities, which can be achieved by strengthening the social dialogue, consultations and active participation in the decision-making process by/for the citizens.

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