

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF PUBLIC SERVANTS IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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***Abstract.** Society is evolving in an era of speed, where the population is eager for knowledge, especially technology, everything that means digitization and especially artificial intelligence. In the context where E-governance has gained momentum, and the use of artificial intelligence in carrying out usual activities is becoming a common aspect, the public services provided by authorities and public institutions must be correlated to meet the needs of society, citizens and the business environment .*

Considering these aspects, through this paper we propose to explore the need for education on certain topics, the professional training of public servants, but also the particular importance of an effective human resources management.

Adapting the administrative system and public development policies to the global changes taking place and to European standards is vital for national well-being. Implicitly, the professional training of public servants, in order to perfect or acquire the necessary capacity and skills, is imperative.

***Keywords:** vocational training, public servants, innovation, artificial intelligence, reform, public administration.*

Introduction

The architecture of the administrative system is extremely complex, consisting of a coherent set of structures, institutions, legal regulations and human resources, all of them has a well-defined and extremely important role for the optimal functioning of society.

Within the public administration we can identify two distinct directions, namely the implementation of internal and external policy, and secondly the provision of public interest services. Effective governance and also effective public administration is the key factor of the socio-economic level of the country, the well-being of the citizens and the prosperity of the business environment. It is vital that public authorities and institutions have the ability to adapt to changes and align with European standards and practices.

Through this paper, we propose to explore the need for education on certain topics, professional training of public servants, but also the particular importance of an effective human resources management. As a subsidiary, we propose to create a framework for debates, to identify new directions of professional training for the personnel who carry out their activity at the level of authorities and public institutions, so that through the public interest services provided, public institutions meet the current needs of society civil society, citizens and the business environment. The research methodology used in this paper is based on the observation and interpretation of the legislation related to public administration but

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also on the professional training of the staff within the public administration in Romania, national and European legislation and statistical data related to artificial intelligence.

The premises of the research. The impact of human resource management.

Frequently, there have been special situations, in which the Romanian government, but also the governments of other countries, had to face unexpected challenges, reorganize their political agenda, change priorities, take drastic measures and be creative in the solutions adopted or the measures undertaken. The alignment with European standards, Romania's accession to the European acquis and implicitly to the Schengen acquis, in addition to the well-known rights and benefits, the Romanian government also assumed obligations and objectives, which he had to fulfill. At the same time, national political instability, international political differences, wars, the COVID-19 pandemic, cyber attacks on public institutions, were unfortunate situations that represented real tests for all governments, as they were put in unprecedented situations, with major national and international repercussions. As can be observed, the driving force of any authority, institution, in fact of the administrative apparatus itself, is the human resource. The implementation of legislation, of public services that all citizens benefit from, as well as the implementation of public policies for national or local development, directly depends on their capacity and skills. The way in which they fulfill their duties, the determination to achieve their objectives as well as their professional training determines the achievement of the objectives at the institutional level, the socio-economic level of the municipality, the well-being of the community and the prosperity of the business environment at the local level.

Therefore, we can affirm the fact that the management of human resources within public authorities and institutions has a particularly important role in terms of efficiency, the implementation of public policies and the provision of services of public interest; summarily, an effective management of human resources signifies a positive image of the Government, implicitly of public authorities and institutions, citizens satisfied with the services provided and an efficient public administration.

In general, the activity of human resources management involves the activity of staff recruitment and selection, the professional and personal development of staff, administrative activities related to the management of the personnel file and related to payroll (Raymond N., Hollenbeck J., Gerhart. B., 2008). . However, a particular emphasis must be placed on the professional development of all public administration staff, both public servants and contractual ones, because as we could observe, the efficiency of public administration is directly determined by the quality and professional training of the staff from the administrative system. We can draw a **first conclusion**, namely that **an efficient management of human resources means an efficient public administration**, and the implementation of public policies at the central and local level and the provision of services directly depends on the quality and improvement of staff at the level of public authorities and institutions of public interest to meet the needs of citizens. In this way, the quality of public servants is reflected in the public image that public authorities and institutions reflect in society.

The legal framework for the professional development of public administration staff

Administrative Code (G.E.O. no. 57/2019), in Part IV relating to the Statute of public servants, Chapter V: Rights and duties, allocates a section to this aspect, namely Section 4: Professional training of public servants, regulations that facilitate the training and development of public servants at the administration level public. Thus, for public servants, participation in such programs is a right that they can benefit from and, at the same time, it is also their obligation to improve their knowledge in the field in which they operate " *public servants have the right and obligation to continually improve skills and professional training.*" (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.458, paragraph(1)), and "*Public authorities and institutions have the obligation to ensure the participation of every public servant in at least one training and professional development program once every two years*" (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.458, paragraph(2)),.

Moreover, the Administrative Code establishes the obligation of public authorities and institutions to bear the fees and expenses related to the participation of public servants in training and improvement programs (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.458, paragraph(4)),, and at the same time, establishes the obligation of public authorities and institutions to draw up, annually, the Professional Development Plan for public servants (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.459, paragraph(1)),, document that will be communicated to the National Agency of Public Servants (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.459, paragraph(2)),.

Although public servants are the most visible, and they are the first people with whom citizens interact, representing the interface between citizens and the entire administrative apparatus from public authorities and institutions, citizens don't interact only with public servants but also with contractual staff, local elected officials, high level public servants.

The same regulations apply to contractual staff from authorities and public institutions, participation in training programs being a right and also an obligation. The administrative code specifies, as in the case of public servants, the obligation of public authorities and institutions to draw up, annually, the Professional Development Plan for contractual staff, as well as the obligation to provide in the budget the sums necessary for the payment of professional training programs (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.551, paragraph(1)),.

During the mandate, local elected officials have the right participate to professional training programs (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.217, paragraph(1)), as well as covering related taxes and costs (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.217, paragraph(2)),. Unlike public servants or contractual staff, high level public servants are obliged to attend professional training programs annually (G.E.O. no. 57/2019, art.398, paragraph(3)),.

Having an important role in the management of the public function, the following two institutions must be specified: The National Agency of Public Servants is the Romanian public institution of the central administration that ensures the record and the management of the public function and public servants, elaborating the frameworks of competence, policies and strategies, and draft normative acts in the field.

The agency supports the development of a body of professional, well-trained, politically neutral public servants capable of assimilating and acquiring performance standards from the European Union level, in order to make public administration more efficient and improve relations between the administration and its main beneficiaries, the citizens.

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Also, it also promotes values such as:

- ✓ Transparency of the administrative act;
- ✓ Honesty and integrity in the exercise of public office;
- ✓ Respect for the citizen and orientation of the public administration towards his needs;
- ✓ Professionalism and innovation in the exercise of the public function;
- ✓ Quality of public services;
- ✓ Impartiality and objectivity in the activity of public servants;
- ✓ Compliance with the norms of professional ethics and deontology;
- ✓ Flexibility, adaptability and dynamism;
- ✓ Effective inter- and intra-institutional communication (www.anfp.gov.ro).

The second one is the National Institute of Administration, that operates in based on HG no. 645/2020, its role being to implement the Government's strategy in order to improve the public administration through professional training of public servants from central and local level, putting the focus on the digitization process in public administration.(www.ina.gov.ro)

The second conclusion we can draw is the fact that there is a legal framework that regulates the training and development of public administration staff, public servants, contractual staff, local elected officials, high level public servants, as well as public institutions that have a role in public service management and professional training, such as the National Agency of Public Servants and the National Institute of Administration. Moreover, **the government, through the personnel policy highlighted above, encourages professional development.**

New directions for professional training of public servants

The society we live in determines how public policies at central and local government level are designed. Given the fact that legislation, programs, public projects are developed for society and the business environment, the public administration must meet these needs, the needs of citizens, society and the business environment, needs that are constantly updated and evolving. Society is increasingly active, eager for knowledge and all that digitization means.

As a result, in recent years E-Gouvernance has gained momentum, experiencing an unprecedented evolution, and the provision of public interest services through electronic platforms, to the detriment of the classic method, is becoming common. Inter-institutional interaction, from institution-to-institution, institution-citizens, or institution-business environment, which would normally have taken place in physical format, today takes place digitally; two-way communication takes place online. Example: the administrative meetings takes place online, local council meetings, or audiences takes place online, citizens can request online certain public services and public servants can deliver them online, the recruitment and selection of public servants is carried out on electronic platforms, the digitization of databases, portals of open data where institutions publish data of public interest and which are thus available to interested persons, for example www.data.gov.ro, participatory budgeting platforms, and the examples can go on.

In the last decades, new paradigms regarding public administration have gained momentum. The European countries took examples of good practice from their neighbors and implemented them. Thus, concepts and public policies related to E-governance, Open Governance or Corporate Governance were implemented in Romania as well.

Researchers and academics have tried to define E-governance, so even with a simple superficial search we can identify a lot of definitions.

E-governance or electronic governance can be interpreted as a way to reform the administrative system, in view of the fact that it uses digitalization, information and communication technology (I.C.T.) and software, through which the public administration carries out its activity and with the help of which public interest services are provided.

The role and objectives of E-government consist of:

- ✓ carrying out the activity in public institutions through digitization;
- ✓ improving the relationship between public institutions and citizens by shortening the time allocated to accessing services of public interest;
- ✓ simplification of administrative procedures;
- ✓ optimization of resources and time;
- ✓ ensuring easy access to information of public interest;
- ✓ increasing the degree of trust in public institutions.

As we can observe, carrying out any kind of activity in public authorities and institutions would be difficult or even impossible without public servants having a set of minimal or basic knowledge related to digitization, or the use of information and communication technology.

The implementation of legislation specific to public administration, the implementation of public policies and the provision of public interest services in this digital era, requires that the public servants must use specific digital techniques and tools, which implies that they must have specific knowledge of them.

At the same time, the concern of researchers, European decision-makers, the business environment and society towards artificial intelligence is noticeable, an aspect that obviously results from:

- ✓ the European Strategy on Artificial Intelligence from April 2018,
- ✓ The white paper on Artificial Intelligence - A European approach to excellence and trust (2020),
- ✓ the development of the National Strategy in the field of artificial intelligence 2024-2027,
- ✓ the activity of the Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence "Mihai Dragănescu" Romanian Academy,
- ✓ the construction of the Cluj Artificial Intelligence Research Institute 2024,
- ✓ the development of master's degree programs in the field of artificial intelligence.

The concept of Artificial Intelligence is described to be as a device that has the ability to imitate human functions such as reasoning, learning, planning and creativity, the use of software and technical systems that can perceive the environment in which it operates and in the same time solve problems by acting to achieve a certain goal. Also, artificial intelligence

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implies a set of systems that exhibit intelligent behaviors and take measures, all with a certain degree of autonomy.

Artificial intelligence is considered a central element of the digital transformation of society, becoming a priority for most states, as it is already present in our lives.

The European Strategy on Artificial Intelligence developed by the European Commission in 2018 *"includes fundamental objectives related to **the adoption of AI throughout the economy, by the public and private sectors, the preparation of society for the transformations generated by AI and the supervision of the operation of an appropriate ethical and legal framework, which respond to the EU's technology vision and values"*** (National strategy in the field of artificial intelligence, 2024-2027, p.5).

Today, artificial intelligence is frequently encountered in everyday life, for example in virtual assistants that answer questions, translation software, navigation, mobile phones using AI technology, image analysis software, search engines, voice and facial recognition systems.

Artificial intelligence is also used by the private sector, moreover, the private sector is considered to be the promoter of artificial intelligence. In 2023, at the level of the European Union, the average of companies using artificial intelligence is 8%, the highest level being registered in Denmark (15.2%), Finland (15.1%), and the lowest in Romania (1.5%).

At the same time, researchers are studying how artificial intelligence can be used in the field of health, transport, manufacturing, food, agriculture.

The efficiency of the use of artificial intelligence is indisputable, however, we must bear in mind that the benefits come with major risks, which may have consequences that are difficult to fix or irreversible. Thus, aspects such as the protection of personal data, vulnerability to cybernetic attacks, risks such as unauthorized access to sensitive data, excessive reliance on artificial intelligence, technical errors or errors generated by algorithms used by artificial intelligence must be taken into account.

Considering all the specified aspects, correlated with the fact that public administration addresses society, citizens and the business environment, it is easy to understand that public policies, programs, services of public interest must meet their current needs. The public administration, civil society and the business environment must use the same "language". Therefore, there is a very high probability that the administration will also use artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence can be integrated into the activity of public administration, it can be used to analyze a large volume of data, to identify patterns, trends or relevant information based on which it can anticipate events. It can be used to observe traffic trends, the time interval in which traffic fluctuates, traffic jams, the busiest intersections, weather conditions, and based on the information collected, make recommendations to make road traffic more efficient and improve urban mobility.

It can also be used to provide virtual assistance to citizens, or it can be used to automate repetitive and time-consuming activities.

In the third conclusion, we distinguish a new direction of professional training and improvement of public servants, namely in the field of artificial intelligence.

Conclusions

Human resources management has a particularly important role. The professional training of public servants directly influences the activity of public institutions, thus the performance of public servants is reflected in the performance of the public institution.

Legislation and public institutions through the prism of public policies adopted, encourages the professional training of public servants. At the level of the European Union, but also at the national level, we can observe the increase in the degree of use of artificial intelligence, the benefits of using artificial intelligence are obvious, but at the same time we must also take into account the associated risks. With regard to the personnel who carry out their activity in public authorities and institutions, public servants, contractual staff, high level public servants, local elected officials, it is not enough that the training and improvement take place only in regard to the specific field of activity, but it would be useful for them to acquire the necessary skills and capacity to use artificial intelligence, through the lens of the public interest services they provide. The inter-institutional interaction, the interaction between institutions and civil society or the business environment, the provision of public interest services will no longer involve the classic methods, but will involve the use of tools or software that correspond to their current needs.

Currently, considerable efforts are being made to reduce bureaucracy, to shorten the necessary time that citizens spend in order to access a service of public interest, to reduce the number of documents used on script. For example, for this purpose, the use of the electronic signature was regulated, and to eliminate "hardcover folder".

In the near future, public servants should possess basic knowledge and the minimum skills necessary to carry out their work with the help of artificial intelligence, or at least to use the same "language" as civil society and the business environment, but also to avoid becoming the target of malicious persons or even cyber-attacks. Avoiding the use of artificial intelligence will not rule out the possibility of public authorities and institutions becoming possible targets, which underlines the importance of professional training of public servants in the field of artificial intelligence. In the end, we reiterate the special importance of professional training of the personnel from public institutions, and at the same time, we emphasize the need for their training and improvement in the field of artificial intelligence.

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