

## CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

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**ABSTRACT:** The Romanian public administration has undergone, over the last few decades, significant reforms. The traditional model of public management was replaced with new models of public management designed in order to increase its efficiency and quality of all public services. The objective of the research paper is to investigate the significant changes that occurred within the public management, highlighting the factors that play a important role in development of the modern management in public administration. The empirical part of the article is underpinned by an analysis conducted at the public administration institutions from Brasov County, Romania. For this study primary data was collected through questionnaire method. We have investigated a representative sample of civil servants regarding their perceptions about the significant changes and challenges in the management of public administration institutions. On the basis of the analysis were drawn the conclusions on the role of the public management in development of good practice for quality public services.

**KEYWORDS:** *change, challenge, management, public administration institution, public service, Brasov County*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it seems like the most often used concept is the change, but is very complicated to say what will be tomorrow. Our society is strongly characterized and influenced by the concept of „change”, by the constant search of ideas, models and better solutions. In last years many changes have been implemented in the public sector reform in many countries and “the challenge of the new era is to discover the moral and political principles that correspond with the transformations suffered by the public sector” [1]. Consequently, theoretician and practitioner experts are searching adequate answers for these challenges.

The modification of the labour conditions, the development of communications and new technologies, the reducing of the hierarchical structures, the rapid disappearance of many traditional barriers request other form of public administration. The traditional model of public management is replaced with new models of public management designed in order to increase its efficiency and quality of all public services. These new models refer to the managerial, organizational and structural changes, which have an important role in the efficiency, effectiveness and performances of public institutions. The preoccupation to change is neither simple nor easy. According to the specialists’ opinions, the changes that must be made in public administration institutions should take place on different levels: strategic, considering the state measures, legal framework provided by well-defined laws; organizational, considering the internal changes and cultural, considering values, mindsets, communities [2]. The change in the public administration must be conceived and made as a creation act oriented towards the improvement of the organizational structures and of the flexibility of the managerial acts, by permanently training the managerial team and the public servants. It implies a huge volume of work, learning the new managerial principles, methods and practices, taking risks in adapting them at the specific features of every authority, as well as of every process of change. A competitive public management model has to be focused on the values of transparency, effectiveness, responsibility and commitment to the public good. These values are common for efficient European models of government.

Based on the aspects highlighted above, this research provides a broad view on the characteristics of the management in public administration at the local level. The scope of research covers the public management at the level of the public administration institutions from Brasov County. For this reason we investigated the civil servants opinion about the

significant changes that occurred within the management of public institutions and about the challenges ahead. Seen from this perspective, we consider that the study has implications in the managerial sector of the local public administration institutions and supports the adoption of good practice for development of the quality public services.

## **2. THE CHANGES WHICH OCCURRED WITHIN THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

The challenges imposed to the society by the profound, numerous and rapid modifications in a relatively short period are the challenges which also the public sector must face. In most of the countries in the world, the systems of public administration are severely criticised, being reproached especially their immobility and resistance to the change. The organizational flexibility, manifested in the ability to respond to environment challenges, is an essential requirement for the public administration institutions. These must be able to adapt to the economic and social realities of the community they serve and to promptly meet its needs. Such situation requires new answers, both theoretically and practically, from the science of management in general and of the management of public administration in particular.

Radical changes in the management systems specific to the public administration have appeared in last years. Because the needs of public administration become more and more complex, the traditional model of organizing and delivering the public services, based on the principles of the bureaucratic hierarchy, planning, centralization and direct control has been replaced by a management of the public services based on the market rules and called the new public management [3]. The new public management is a reform model of the public sector, which refers to the managerial, organizational and structural changes in order to modernize and increase its efficiency by the government. The transition of public management forms from “old” bureaucracy to new models of public management involves changes to of techniques and methods of management used within public administration imported from the private sector.

Many researchers have made an important contribution to the development of the concept of the new public management. From the point of view of C. Pollitt and G. Bouckaert [4], new public management reform represents “deliberate changes to structures and processes of public sector organisations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better”. According to O’Flynn, [5] the new public management is a competitive government type of public management, focused on ensure economy and responsiveness to costumers through achieving agreed performance targets. This means that:

- The Government must improve the quality of all their services and to be entrepreneurial;
- The Government must appreciate the performances with measurable results;
- The Government must collaborate with the other key actors in order to reach their purposes;
- The Government must improve responsibility toward the public interest;
- The Government must give common powers to the citizens and to the public employees.

The system of new public management is based on a set of fundamental characteristics, such as: efficiency and effectiveness, organizational restructuring, decentralized management within the public services, interest for performance and client. Christopher Hood [6] distinguishes more features of new public management: hands-on and entrepreneurial management; explicit standards and measures of performance; output controls; desegregation and decentralization; competition in the provision of public services; stress on private-sector styles of management; and discipline and parsimony in resource allocation. Other characteristics, such as separating political decision-making from direct management and community governance, are often added to this list [7]. In opinion of Moore, Stewart and Haddock, “the main characteristic of the new public management consists in the attempt of introducing within the public services, which are not yet private, the motivation in accordance with the

performances and the disciplines specific to the market”[8]. The specialists consider that a key characteristic of the New Public Management is decentralization and disaggregating the public sector into autonomous agencies and competing public. On the whole, it seems like the most often used characteristics of the new public management are: efficiency and effectiveness, flexibility and performance, transparency, public prompt services, improved public value. All these aspects taken into account lead to greater clarity and simplicity in the public sector.

### **3. AN OVERVIEW ON THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT OF ROMANIAN ADMINISTRATION INSTITUTIONS**

In the last decades, the public administration of Romania has undergone profound changes as regards the public management. The challenges which the public administration institutions must face nowadays have determined an intense concern for the transformation of public management. The adopting the new models of the public management has required changes in the social, economical, political and cultural environment. The disaggregation and decentralisation processes, the transfer of competencies from central to local level have played an essential role in these transformations. In Romania, territorial administrative decentralization is based on a community of “public interests” of the citizens belonging to a territorial-administrative unit, “recognizing the local community and the right to solve its problems” and technical and financial decentralization of the public services, namely transferring the services from the “center” to the local communities, aimed to meet social needs” [9].

At the present, Romania makes the transition from bureaucracy to the new models of public management. The characteristics of public management in Romania must be approached in their interdependence, starting from the assumption that what determines the content of the public management is exactly the synergistic effect resulting from their optimal combination [10]. The fundamental objective of public management within the public administration structures in Romania is to increase the quality of the public services and the satisfaction of the interests of the citizens.

At local level, management of the public administration institutions is the element which supports the community development. The local administration institutions are closer to the citizen and must be more responsive to his needs for to provide the quality public services. This involves the use of effective solutions tailored to the realities of local public administration structures. The interest to the good of the community and the responsibility towards the citizen are values of a culture developed at institutional level, which should be deemed valid and accepted as the correct model of organizational conduct. Adopting the standards of good managerial practices for quality public services requires changes in the organizational structure, the fund of values, attitudes and behaviours of public servants [11]. For this, developing their competences is necessary, especially the harmonious and consistent blending of the professional competence with the social one. The civil servants must understand that the fulfilment of requirements and needs of citizen is the essential element of their activity. In this context, practicing a professional management is, assuredly, a major challenge in public administration in the next years. In addition to issues related to human factor, a key factor within the reforms from the Romanian public sector is represented by the increasing the quality of public services. There are still many useless bureaucracy that reduces the efficiency of the public institutions activity. Bringing information technology into public administration leads to eliminating bureaucracy and increasing the quality of public services [12]. Because the needs of public management become more and more complex, the modernization process of the public sector needs the development of e-governance platform for public services. In fact, it is necessary a more independence of local authorities that will raise efficiency and transparency in decision-making and will offer better access to public services.

## **4. ANALYSIS REGARDING THE CHANGES WITHIN THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LOCAL ADMINISTRATION**

### 4.1 The domain of research

The quality of the public services provided to the citizens depends to the quality of the managerial process in the public institutions. The area of research covers the management of public administration institutions at local level. The study was designed to explore the perceptions of the civil servants about the significant changes that occurred within the management of public institutions and about the major challenges which the public local administration must face as regards the public management.

### 4.2 Purpose of the paper

The purpose of the study was to investigate the changes and the challenges within the management of public administration institutions from Brasov County, Romania. of the major changes and challenges in the management of public administration institutions.

### 4.3 Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To investigate the changes that play a important role in the modernization of public management.
2. To find which are the qualities of an efficient public manager.
3. To ascertain the values of the competitive public management.
4. To find the challenges which confront the management of public administration institutions at local level.

### 4.4. Methodology

This study investigated the changes within the public management in public administration institutions from Brasov County. The sample for the study was limited to 67 respondents. All respondents work in the public administration institutions. Of these were 37 male and 30 female. Both primary data and secondary data were used in the study. Primary data was collected from the field survey by using a questionnaire. The questions were addressed and formulated online, as not to induce subjective responses.

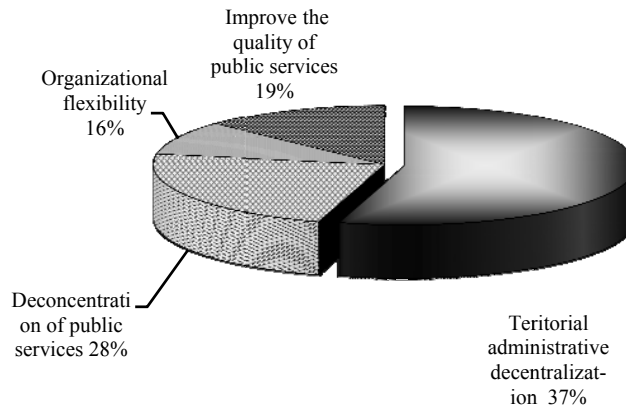
### 4.5. Data analysis

Based on above stated objectives the collected data have been analyzed in appropriate chapters.

#### *4.3.1 Significant changes to the modernization of the public management*

The respondents believed that the most significant changes that played a important role in the modernization of public management relate to:

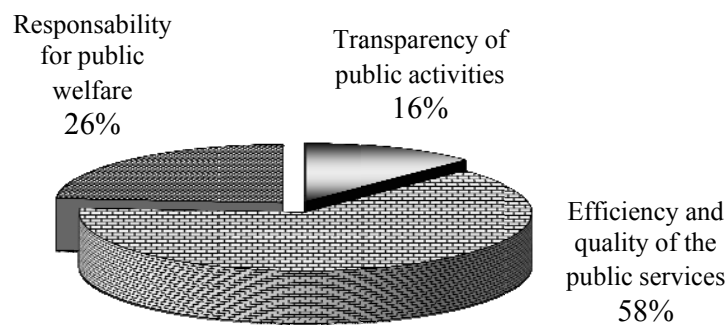
- territorial administrative decentralization;
- the process of deconcentration of public services;
- improve the quality of public services;
- organizational flexibility.



**Figure 1.** Opinion on the significant changes to the modernization of the public management

The result of the investigation show that the 65% of the respondents believe that the territorial administrative decentralization and the process of deconcentration of public services are most significant changes to the modernization of the public management (fig.1). These processes were aimed to transfer of competencies from central level to the local level to meet needs of the community. Another aspect mentioned is improve the quality of public services (19%). The organizational flexibility, manifested in the ability to respond to environment challenges, is an essential change for 16% of respondents.

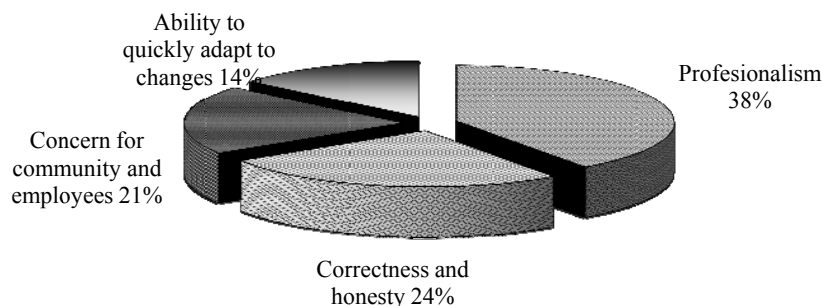
#### 4.3.2 The values of the competitive public management



**Figure 2.** Opinion on the values of the competitive public management

The dates show that 58% of the respondents consider the efficiency and quality of the public services is a significant value for the competitive public management (fig.2). Next came, in the order of their importance, the segment of those for whom the responsibility for public welfare is an essential value (26%). A third aspect mentioned is the transparency of public activities (16%).

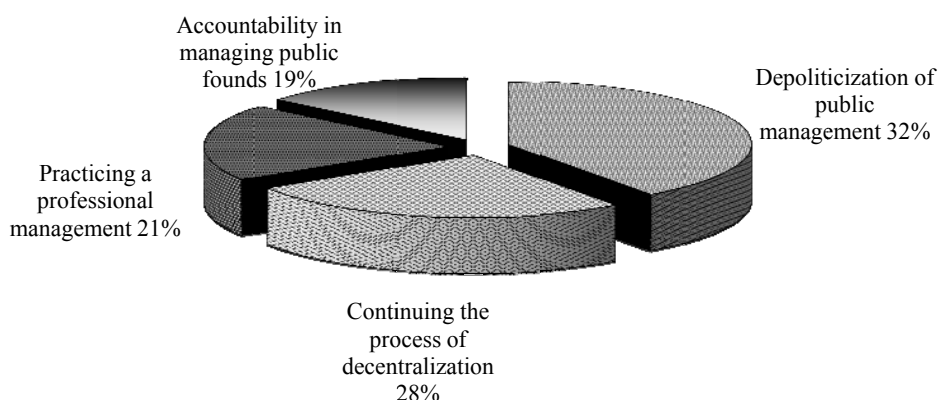
#### 4.3.3 Qualities of a efficient public manager



**Figure 3.** Opinion on the qualities of a public manager

Within the framework of the research, 38% of respondents considered that professionalism and competence are the main qualities of a successful manager (fig.3). It should be noted, that 24% of civil servants believed that the correctness is an essential quality. A third aspect mentioned is the concern for community and employees (21%). On the other hand, the ability to quickly adapt to changes is a important quality for 14% of respondents.

#### 4.3.4 Major challenges in public administration and management at the local level



**Figure 4.** Opinion on the challenges in public administration and management at the local level

In this section we investigated the civil servants opinion about the significant challenges which the public local administration must face as regards the public management. The data reveals that the depoliticization of public management is a major challenge to the modernization of the public management (fig.4). This is confirmed by the large number of respondents (32%). Practicing a professional management was mentioned by 23,11% of respondents. Continuing the process of decentralization and deconcentration of public services is perceived as a challenge by 13,02% of respondents.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper provides an overview of the major changes and challenges in the management of public administration institutions. The study has implications in the managerial sector of the local public administration institutions and supports the adoption of good practice for development of the quality public services. The research reveals that the shift from bureaucracy to the new models of public management in Romania requires still time and resources. Seen from this perspective, public management has to be able to develop pro-active strategies oriented towards improving organizational structures, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of government acts, accentuating the transparency in public administration system and increasing responsibility for the public good.

The results of the investigation show that the most significant changes that played a important role in the modernization of public management relate to: territorial administrative decentralization; the process of deconcentration of public services; improve the quality of public services; organizational flexibility. A competitive public management model has to be focused on the values of transparency, effectiveness, responsibility and commitment to the public good. These values are confirmed by the a large number of respondents. Within the public institutions the orientation towards the modern values of the public management prevails in the appreciation of a good manager's qualities. These values are centered on professionalism, correctness and honesty, concern for community and the ability to quickly adapt to changes. The recorded data indicate that the majority of respondents appreciated this characteristics as significant qualities of a efficient public manager.

The challenges which the public sector organization must face nowadays determine an intense concern for the transformation of public management. The recorded data indicate that the most important challenges relate to: depoliticization of public management; continuing the process of decentralization and deconcentration of public services; practicing a professional management; accountability in managing public funds. It should be noted that most of the respondents agreed that the depoliticization of public management is a major challenge to the modernization of the public management.

On the whole, the results of the research have led us to a series of recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at:

- Enhancing the quality of the public services provided to the citizens;
- Continuing the process of decentralization and deconcentration of public services and increasing local autonomy,
- Correctly informing citizens and enhancing transparency in decision-making and in public spending;
- The reduction of bureaucracy;
- Training programs for public managers for to practice a professional management;

With all the aspects taken into account, we conclude that the reform in the Romanian public administration has provided a series of changes at local institutions level, but there are still many challenges for next years.

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