

Leadership Style in the Romanian Public Institutions – the Case of City Halls

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Abstract

In the public sector in Romania, leadership development has been addressed only rarely and briefly. Currently, Romania is unable to mobilize a large number of leaders because it has started gradual reform. The image or reputation of the organization and organizational culture must be assessed, controlled and directed towards achieving goals.

In Romania, the future public leaders must first be identified, so public institutions should consider the leadership skills and recruit future leaders from among university graduates in the field.

This paper aims to examine and show the meaningful aspects of a leader in the public administration. So, this research will show aspects of the influence of leadership and performance in public administration in Romania as well as the practice of the leadership function in a public institution, such as a city hall.

Keywords: *leader, leadership, public administration, public management, new public management.*

JEL classification: H83

Introduction

The public administration needs an approach to leadership and management which would lead to efficiency and performance to promote a common language through which the leaders of public institutions to work and act together in order to solve problems of any kind, related to their activities. This involves a new system of organizational behavior through which those involved can control, through a common language, the principles needed for a competent situational climate. Leadership is one of the most important elements that contribute to the goals of all organizations, including public administration institutions.

In order to try and highlight the existing management style in local government, we undertook a survey on the employees of four City Halls in Romania.

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1. New Public Management

We will approach leadership in public administration in the context of New Public Management. The term "New Public Management" (NMP) was used for the first time by Christopher Hood in 1990, when he compared the changes in management styles of public institutions in OECD countries in the 80s. Hood noted a substantial number of changes that took place and highlighted the similarities between them, which have determined him to piece them together in one concept, although he noted that the analyzed countries have reformed their administration in different ways. Although there were many similarities, NMP is not a coherent and consistent model of reform, so it was often presented as "a group of ideas, variations of a theme or a conglomeration of ideas" (Kerstin, 2003).

NMP integrates values moving the focus from traditional public administration to public management (Christensen & Laegreid, 2001). This concept has been the subject of clashes and ambiguities. As regards to this definition, Dunleavy recently said: "Currently there is a real industrial sector in terms of how NMP should be conceptualized and that is its evolution over time" (Dunleavy et al., 2006).

A careful analysis of the published work on this issue suggests that NMP is not a homogenous whole, but would rather unite a series of elements, which often overlap, representing trends of reform in the public management of OECD countries². However, in the sense of Nicolescu E., Verboncu I. and Profiroiu M. (2011), the phrase "public management" can be used in at least three basic ways: the activity carried out by civil servants and politicians, executive structures and processes; systematic study or activities, or of structures and processes." Currently, it aims: to promote new public management with its five dimensions: economic, social, cultural, educational, behavioral and operational (Dumitrescu, 2005) and to provide professionalism to new public managers (Nicolescu & Burdus, 1993). NMP integrates a number of essential principles and values needed to determine the production of performance management in the private sector model (Berna, 2006): the application of the principle of managerial accountability, focusing on the culture of public administration, managerial and financial autonomy, concern for respecting "the 4C" rule: Consistency, Courage, Clarity, Account.

2. Leadership in Public Administration

The concept of leadership in public administration is neither new nor alien and has been discussed frequently in the literature on business management. The importance of leadership depends on the state of society, the structure of public institutions and the type of reforms adopted. So, in a diverse society, leadership development is more important than in a homogeneous society, because leaders are required to submit in new values, to mediate conflicts and create coalitions to support reform.

² An international economic organisation of 34 countries founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

While public leadership clearly includes central administration leaders, in the future leadership approach tends to be wider. This includes leaders as change agents spread in public organizations in order to continue the reform process. The leader integrates in his professional environment, trying to use his behavior visibility in order to transmit messages which are being inspired by the organization's reality (Petrescu, 2010). The leaders prove to be effective leaders through their ability to persuade, motivate public servants and to direct their efforts for a common cause.

In this context, in order to deploy the survey we considered four Municipalities: Timisoara, Satu-Mare, Iasi, Constanta. The formed sample is comprised of 120 respondents (35,83% men and 64,17% women), 30 respondents from each of the four Municipalities in the study. A first instrument used was the Globe Leadership questionnaire and a second instrument was a questionnaire with 15 questions specially designed to highlight the role of leaders in achieving performance in public administration. The questionnaires were applied to respondents, employees who worked in the town halls surveyed.

In the research we pursued the significant aspects of a leader in public administration. The research has highlighted issues such as the leadership influence and performance in public administration and exercising leadership in a public institution. The research's main topics were: the leader in public administration institutions and specific items related to the performance of a public institution, organization in relation to similar institutions / organizations; the management style; organizational culture in the institutions studied and the management style of the Mayor and its compatibility with the assigned function.

In the research, the people orientation of management team dimension represents the orientation of the members of the management team towards the employees of the institution. An orientation towards people represents an important factor to make people more performant at work (Covey, 2001) in public institutions. In the studied sample, Timisoara City Hall has obtained an average higher than the other studied Municipalities.

We made a statistical analysis of the data, using SPSS, in order to observe the trend of the results:

- the employees consider that the management style adopted by the direct boss is efficient, being directly perceived as taking place at an average level - 35% and with a trend towards "small level" at a rate of 31.68%:

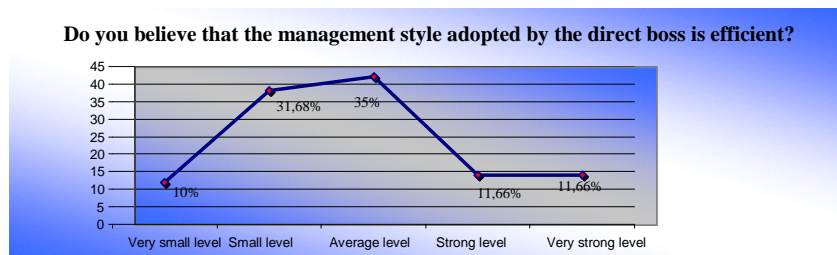


Figure 1. Question 1: Do you believe the management style adopted by the direct boss is efficient?

- the employees believe that the management team demonstrates an efficient management style, which shows the percentage of 27.5% obtained on the

response scale "average level", and "strong level" with a rate of 26.67%. The results to this question show that the survey participants consider to be led by an efficient team:

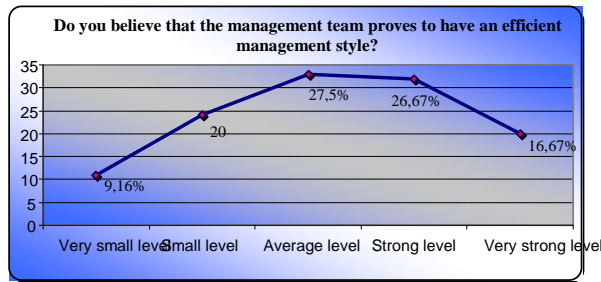


Figure 2. Question 2: Do you believe that the management team proves to have an efficient management style?

➤ at the question "do you think your boss is a person of authority?" a percentage of 27.5% of respondents answered "strong level" and a number of 25.84% of people answered "average level" which shows that the members of the institution perceive the leader as being a person of authority:

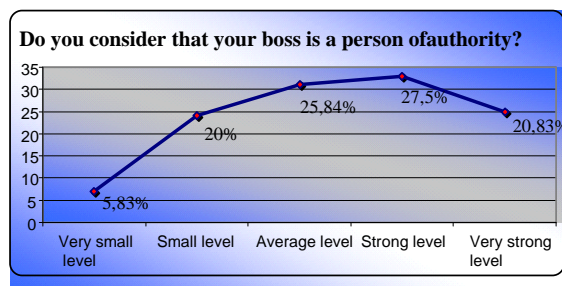


Figure 3. Question 3: Do you consider that your boss is a person of authority?

➤ when employees were asked if the boss takes account of their suggestions, they said, at a rate of 34.17% "strong level", which shows that working group members are encouraged to express their ideas and personal opinions in front of their manager:

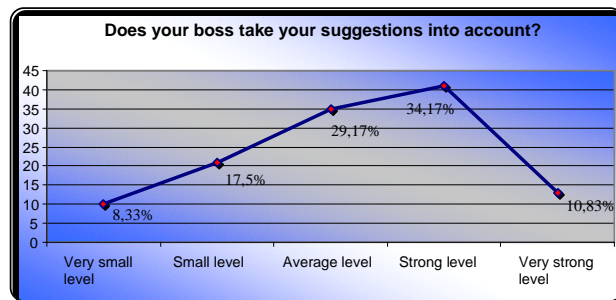


Figure 4. Question 4: Does your boss take your suggestions into account?

➤ the employees consider that their boss encourages them at a small (29,17%) and an average level (35%) which means that there clearly is a communication problem in the department:

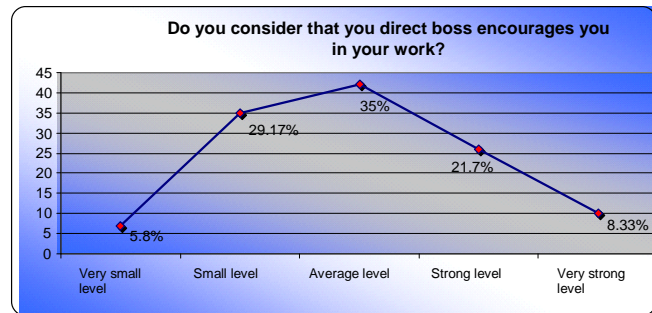


Figure 5. Question 5: Do you consider that your direct boss encourages you in your work?

➤ the respondents consider, at a rate of 35% “average level”, that their boss is always impartial. The practical aspects of a leader’s activity are revealed by their impartial decisions which affect the team’s activity:

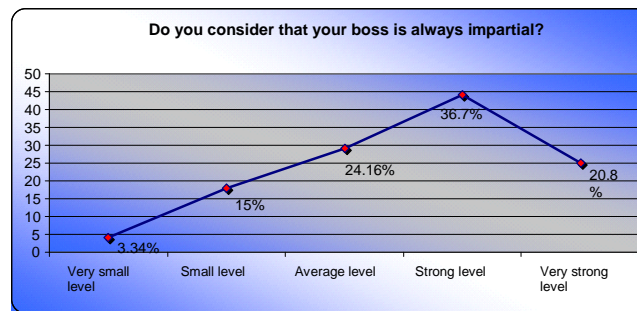


Figure 6. Question 6: Do you consider that your boss is always impartial?

➤ when asked if they always agree with their boss’s decisions, 29,16% of the employees responded that they agree with his decisions at an average level:

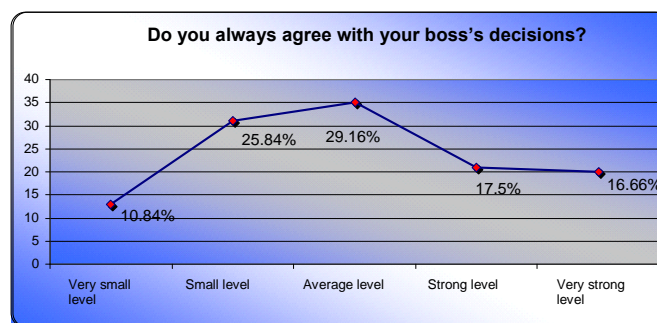


Figure 7. Question 7: Do you always agree with your boss's decisions?

Reported at the age of employees, we found that people aged between 26 and 46 years believe that the Mayor, who is considered the leader of the institution he leads, encourages and supports the work within the institution, has an effective and direct leadership style and that management team has an effective style that enhance the development of performance in the institution.

Conclusions

Major changes in the socio-political environment of each country, need diversity and complexity of problems arising in various areas results in an acute requirement of promoting leadership in public administration, so that they focus their attention on modern methods and techniques tailored to management, creation and development of systems and mechanisms, flexible enough, able to carry out the mission of public institutions and state administration authorities.

At a beginner level, shy even, but very important for the modernization of institutions, accessibility for citizens, satisfaction of their interests, it can be stated that the application of leadership in public administration in Romania has begun. The good news is that a part of managers wants and manages slowly to adapt, becoming more flexible, more sympathetic and listening to the problems and suggestions from subordinates. Consequently, their subordinates' job satisfaction is growing and they follow their leaders not only because of fear or because they are paid. The leader leads his staff through facts and not by authority. Of course, this transition takes time.

Data from the research showed that the leader is a person of authority oriented towards performance and that performance comes from the fact that they made some good decisions, they know how to highlight the people they work with and the whole institutional process is well controlled. In this sense, the leader is an entrepreneurial person, someone who leaves nothing to chance and is actively involved in all activities of the institution. People surrounding the Mayor (the leader of the institution) are servants of the institution. The organization is of the hierarchy type. All members of the institution work after a good set of rules and procedures stipulated by laws and regulations. At the Timisoara City Hall level, we are dealing with an organizational culture of hierarchy type.

The data we have gathered and type of institution calls that the type of organizational culture be clear and transparent.

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