

# Recent Approaches in International Public Management and the Need to Apply Them on Romanian Public Administration

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## *Abstract*

*Change is not something new; it is a feature of human existence itself. We all know that without change there is no life and the people's desires to improve their living conditions involve adapting to change. Today's organizations operate in a constantly changing environment, the ability to adapt to environmental changes becoming a prerequisite for the success of the organization.*

*The main objective of this paper is to emphasize the importance of organizational change in today's society and the need for public administration reform in Romania.*

*This paper is a theoretical framework that combines elements from the topic of new public management regarding the implementation and mission in the area of Romania's public institutions' delicate situation and the urgent need to change the whole system. The first part of the article addresses the issue of change and innovation in public organizations and the second one presents the government's strategy to adopt public administration reform.*

**Keywords:** *public service organizations, organizational change, new public management, innovation, strategy, reform*

**JEL classification:** H83, M10.

## **Introduction**

Organizational change is a reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The forces for change are external, but also internal to the organizations. The external ones are coming from increased demands brought by customers, suppliers, competitors, markets, government regulations and the advent of new technologies. The internal motivators are: dissatisfaction of the performance when compared to established objectives; the increasing expectations of people, the need to implement and gain the full benefit of new technologies, new demands from the workforce and the force of shared values that guide the organization's desired relationships with customers, employees, and the community.

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The ability of organizations to manage and survive change is becoming increasingly important in an environment where competition and globalization of markets are growing. Through the middle of the 20th century, there had been increased attempts to apply theories of organizational change to the analysis of human organizations. The first attempt, which applied concepts of systems theory, was mainly concerned with equilibrium and stability, and their maintenance through control of negative feedback.

The systems concept views organizations as constantly interacting with their environment. The organizational environment is comprised of a set of relationships between agents or stakeholders and other factors that may be beyond the control of the organization. With the ever-increasing complexity of the organizational environment, the systems concepts no longer seem adequate in dealing with complex phenomena. This shortcoming, among others, has led to the emergence of complexity theory which focuses on the use of such terms as entropy, non-equilibrium, instability, and the emergence of new patterns and structures. In the complexity paradigm, systems are usually considered to be evolving or self-organizing into something new.

Over time, Romania has passed through multiple changes. The Romanian political system suffered profound changes from the initiation of the reform process, in 1990. The economy continues to be in a transition period through the market economy, transition that has as a result severe constraints on the activities from the whole public sector and on the central administrative system.

Starting with 1990, the setting up of a modern and efficient system for the public administration was considered as a priority for the Romanian Government. But, with all these, it was not possible to mobilize the resources required for the creation of the needed legislative and institutional framework for the local and central public administration and, especially, for the efficient implementing of the reform measures.

At the beginning, the Government was almost obliged to concentrate on the economic reforms problems but, later, it became obvious that their application was impossible without a public administration reform, which explains the delays and distortions produced in the economic reform application.

### **1. Change and innovation in public services and in public service organizations**

*Change* is the gradual improvement and/or development of the existing services provided by a PSO or their organizational context. It represents continuity with the past (Osborne & Brown, 2005).

*Innovation* is the introduction of new elements into a public service– in the form of new knowledge, a new organization, and/or new management or process skills. It represents discontinuity with the past (Osborne & Brown, 2005).

For much of the last century, public service organizations (PSOs) were the embodiment of stability. These organizations were classical hierarchical

bureaucracies. The organizational emphasis was upon incremental growth and development and upon a planned approach to the administration of public services. However, as the twentieth century drew to a close, this picture began to change.

These classical public service bureaucracies had been well suited to a stable and slow-changing environment. A range of factors in the late 20th century conspired to change this environment. The key changes included:

- global economic changes which meant that PSOs could no longer rely upon steady incremental growth, and had instead to focus on the efficient and effective use of increasingly scarce resources;
- a consequent growth of a managerial, rather than administrative, approach to the provision of public services, often called the New Public Management, or NPM (McLaughlin, et al. 2002);
- demographic changes, particularly the ageing of the population in most countries;
- changes in expectations as citizens became more sophisticated, requiring greater focus on choice and quality in the provision of public services;
- political changes, which marked a paradigmatic change against the hegemony of the state in meeting expressed public needs and towards more complex approaches which increasingly required the governance of multiple relationships between service providers.

These factors led to a change in nature of public services provision. Far from this role being the assumed priority of the state, it became increasingly a task under-taken by a range of organizations in what has become known as the plural state. This comprises a range of PSOs from the government, non-profit and business sectors that need to collaborate in the provision of public services.

## **2. Implementing change in public service organizations**

Public sector changes are different than those in private sector. Change is not simply an exercise in convincing the various stakeholders to get on side, it is an exercise in negotiation and compromise.

Doing what is “right” in government is a matter of responding to conflicts and negotiating with various interests much more than it is for a corporate executive trying to implement a strategy. In 1970, Stan Herman introduced the idea of the Organizational Iceberg to depict the strength of the informal and hidden elements in organization life (Herman, 1970). He represented the formal organization as the buildings, equipment, and people working in a common area, a relatively small part of the iceberg above the water line. The informal, hidden organization was represented by values, norms, attitudes, and expectations of people who work within an organization. The strength of the iceberg analogy is that it illustrates the relative importance and size of the informal part of an organization. The difficulty with the iceberg analogy is it suggests the under-the-water mass is similar in all organizations.

In other areas of the public service, it is possible to find equally strong cultural values and norms. Prison systems, post offices and departments of motor

vehicles may be dominated by long service employees with deeply entrenched behavioral culture, which may either facilitate or impede change. Military organizations can quickly adapt to a wide variety of challenges from fighting forest fires to fighting wars. The change in direction is rapid and dramatic and is reinforced by the organizational culture. Other agencies, like the central service agencies of government, may be more fluid and transient and have less powerful cultures. Understanding both the strength of the cultural norms and the degree to which they are aligned with the proposed change is essential.

There are several principles, which provide a holistic framework for introducing change (Gilbert & Bower, 2002; Kaplan & Norton, 2006; Ulrich, 1998, Kotter, 2007). These principles are: forming a guiding coalition, recognizing and responding to people who might be resistant to the change, establishing a need for change, articulating envisioned outcomes, establishing a process to implement the plan, focusing on continuous improvement rather than objective rightness of measurement, developing a commitment plan, managing by walking around, changing structures and HR systems.

The decision making and action in public service organizations was concerned with deciding policy and programme outcomes in terms of conflicting or partially conflicting values. In this way, public service activities could not be considered to have emanated from rational, consistent and methodical decision-making processes. The competition for particular policy and programme outcomes then, are not necessarily reliant on rational decision-making processes, but political negotiation and limited or incomplete knowledge.

According to this model, change in public services is argued to operate by moving incrementally through small-scale alterations to existing policy and programmes rather than developing completely new models that transformed the character and operation of public services. Lindblom (1959) suggests that policies created by small study comparisons of competing policy options and adopting incremental changes is a process of creating "policy chains". These chains are argued to be important mechanisms to understand the trajectory of change which may appear to others as non-rational, and are an integral part of the process of creating change by "muddling through" (Lindblom 1959).

### **3. The Public manager in Romania- an important role in the process of administrative changes**

The public manager must become a change agent and bring a new mentality in the Romanian public administration. He must represent a particular category of civil servants that contribute to ensuring efficiency and continuity to the reform in the public administration from the strategic levels to the operational ones.

The profile of the new public manager includes a series of characteristics that are essentially important from the NPM perspective. Therefore, he has to be a change agent that is results oriented through planning and prioritization, solutions finding and implementation oriented, with an important capacity of evaluating

risks, adaptable, creative, a pro-active character, with leadership abilities and high ethical and moral standards. Henceforth, its role is to support the reforming policies that are meant to accelerate the modernisation of the administration and public services. He manages and coordinates or assists the coordination of certain activities that imply a general perspective that is a specific ability, if compared to the ordinary civil servants.

The public managers are recruited from the young people having remarkable results in their academic activities and a special intellectual potential that enable them to accomplish the established objectives. They are trained within the values and principles of the New Public Management in one of the two components of the training scheme: one lasting for a year and one lasting for two years. At the end of their training, they are appointed in public institutions on positions assimilated to management ones.

In the meantime, the civil servants on management positions that do not belong to the public managers category, benefit from a series of specialised trainings at the National Institute of Administration such an example is The Specialised Training Programme for Management Civil Servants. These programmes intend to customise the civil servants on management positions with the modern systems of public administration like NPM, their effectiveness within the administrative reform from Romania and their efficient implementation means.

#### **4. The Romanian government's strategy concerning the acceleration of public administration reform**

##### ***4.1 The necessity of the reform***

The globalisation tendency together with the dynamic development of the social systems, place the national states in a totally new position in which the institutions and administrative systems must also adapt to. Any interventions in the area of the public administration reform involve modifications of the major components, including central administration, local autonomy and public services.

On the other side, the democracy developments claim for introducing of a new relation between the citizens and administration, increasing and strengthening of the local powers role and the reconsideration of the partnership with the civil society.

There are many reasons for the structural and functional modernization of the public administration in Romania, starting from the necessity of a more efficient functioning of the governmental institutions onto the aspiration to become a member of the European Union.

The existing conditions in the Romanian society at present, requires that the administration to be involved in an changing process on 4 plans: strategic, legal, organisational and cultural.

The reform process in Romanian Public Administration's start from: increasing the public administration's strategic competence to choose between various projects while being in charge of defining its priorities; articulating on a

long-and medium term unitary vision the transformations that the romanian public administration must undergo; the need of a better representation of the citizens' interest in the decision-making process; insuring the management by objectives; consolidating the organisational infrastructure for the strategic management in the economic as well as in the social area; the need of augmenting the administration's counselling and monitoring duties; formulating concrete and quantifiable objectives.

Concurrent with the development of the information society, introducing the communication and the information technology raises new challenges for the public administration and, at the same time, it offers the opportunity for an activity both efficient and closer to the citizen than before. Augmenting the administrative capacity results in Romania's better defence of its national interest at European and world levels.

#### ***4.2. The founding principles for the elaboration of the reform strategy in public administration***

In order to achieve the Governance Programme objectives it is important that the public administration's institutional and legislative reform to be accelerated.

During the process of elaborating the public administration reform strategy must be considered the following principles:

- the political and administrative functions separation principle;
- the principle of creating and consolidating professional and politically neutral civil servants;
- the principle of clearly defining the role, responsibilities and the relationship between institutions;
- the principle of fair and legitimate;
- the subsidiarity principle so that the decisions to be taken by and in the citizens' interest;
- the principle of decision-making autonomy;
- the transparency of the administrative and governance action;
- the principle of simplifying procedures and normative acts;
- the respect for the citizen principle;
- the principle of channelling the interest for results in terms of efficiency, efficacy and the quality of services;
- the principle of protecting individual rights.

These principles form the basis for the proposed restructuring and they require both modern methods of public management as well as new forms of institutional organisation.

Therefore, the reform process is multifaceted, all-inclusive which changes the way of approaching the main problems facing the Romanian public administration.

### ***4.3 The strategy's aim and general objectives***

*The aim* of the reform is to determine the nature of existing problems in various areas, recommend the best solutions and describe the principles to implement them.

*The main objectives* include a profound restructuring of the central and local public administration, a change of the relationship between the administration and the citizen, decentralizing public services and consolidating the administrative and the financial local autonomy; stopping the bureaucracy in public administration; applying rational local and urban development and modernisation policies; strengthening the authority and responsibilities of the state.

### ***4.4 Some of the reform priorities***

We present below some of the short-term priorities for public administration reform in Romania:

#### ***1. Setting up a professional and apolitical civil servants body***

Strengthening the public administration capacity in elaborating and implementing the economic and social reform measures, strongly depend on the setting up of a unitary civil servants body, compatible with similar structures from other UE member states, measure which will be realized by implementing the Law regarding the civil servants status.

In order to create, in a short time, a professional body of young civil servants in Romania, competitive in managing and administrating the public sector, appointed on apolitical and professional criteria, capable to face problems arising in the main areas related to the communitarian acquis implementation, a general mechanism for civil servants recruiting and professional training will be created. This general mechanism will be based on the principles of professionalism and open competition.

#### ***2. Strengthening the Civil Servants National Agency capacity, central unit for the setting up and the development of the civil servants body***

The regulations regarding the civil servants body (the law on the civil servants status) require the setting up of a central unit for the public function and civil servants management, destined to organize the coordination of the selection, evaluation, payment and record of the civil servants, in a professional way.

#### ***3. Strengthening the Ministry of Public Administration institutional capacity***

The Ministry of Public Administration, as synthesis ministry, assure the application of the strategy and Governmental Program in the local public administration area and monitories, on behalf of the Government, the elaboration and application of reform programs by the others ministries and central public administration authorities. The strengthening of the MPA capacity, especially through offering assistance for the elaboration of the regulations and policies in the public administration area, is highly important for the public administration reform.

#### *4. Citizens participation in the decision making process*

The Law on local public administration and the Law regarding the organization of the referendum provide the citizens right and possibility to participate in the most important decisions regarding the using and management of the financial and patrimonial resources of the local communities. The local authorities, by association or cooperation with non-governmental organizations, can determine the citizens' participation in the public life, allocating for this all the requested financial and patrimonial resources. In this respect, methods of active citizens participation to the public life will be promoted, especially by periodical meetings and forming initiatives groups destined to represent the citizens interests face to the local public administration.

#### *5. Gradual demilitarization of certain community services*

In order to develop the efficiency and the quality of the services and to strengthen the personal safety measures, guard and security for each citizen, the Government adopted acts in order to create the conditions for transferring certain community services to the local public authorities, according to the developed states standards—such as: population record and its organization as community service by the city halls or county councils, transferring the passports record to the subordination of the prefectures by organizing a specialized public council service, organizing certain community services for emergency, setting up at each administrative-territorial unit level—commune, town, city-of the community police for maintaining the public order.

#### *6. Development of the management of the local public services*

The aim of this objective is to improve the standards of the local public services, especially those activities concerning the water supply and sewerage. Therefore it will be taken into consideration both the establishing of a legal base for the legal substantiation of the local services, based on EU directives regarding these services, and the development of the perfecting possibilities and counseling the implication of the private sector in these activities.

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### **Conclusions**

This paper attempts to describe the complex, dynamic and unpredictable process of organizational transformation, using theories of organizational change. Organizational change activities can be successfully examined from complexity and systems theories framework. Systems and complexity models can offer more promising avenues from which organizational leaders can appreciate and address complex organizational dilemmas.



Knowledge of the influences that change has had on social effectiveness is a matter for further implementation of change. Managers who initiate such a complex process know very well that the change may involve a period of time before the results start to emerge. The team of experts dealing with implementation of change can produce partial evaluations, regular employees to reinforce the belief that the mode of action is good, but the implementation process is complex and time-response to these requirements was shaped the second generation organizational development, organizational transformation known, differs substantially from the previous.

To create a productive working environment in public institutions, managers must not only focus on the needs of the public but also on the needs of each individual employee and in establishing structures which will motivate employees to work towards attainment of organizational goals.

Calling the present situation from Romania with its institutional and legislative changes, a well known approach can be used. The multi-speed development demonstrates that in certain states the history runs faster or starts earlier. The implications of this approach are supported by another argument: the disparities between the developing countries and the developed ones could hinder the effective introduction of New Public Management or its proper mechanism functioning. In spite of all these, NPM can become a leaping spring-board for skipping some chronological stages or an engine for accelerated development.

Adopting the NPM principles and values in a country like Romania has to be preceded by a systematic process of preparation and adjustment of the public administration. Only a few reforms could be adjusted to the developing countries if preceded by preparative actions that would adapt them to the social, economical, political and cultural environment.

From the NPM perspective, the changing process in the Romanian public administration is quite complex, of long standing and requires a public management exercised by true professionals that are results oriented and motivated to analyze, plan and implement the fundamental NPM values and principles in a coordinated effort towards meeting the expectancies of the public administration stakeholders.

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