



Original Contribution

**SOME CURRENT PROBLEMS OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN
BULGARIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: The article has as a main purpose to show the need of solving some current problems of Human Resources Management in Bulgarian administration. **METHODS:** Observation of the work and the documents in public administration in last years. **RESULTS:** There are some important problems to solve in public administration including in Human Resources Management area in contemporary society. **CONCLUSION:** The article underlines the importance of Human Resources Management as the central priority in modern government management. We can see that the process of modernization of the administrative activities requires concerted efforts to create conditions for professional and career development of government officials in public administration and establishment of new administrative culture oriented to the citizens of Bulgarian society.

Key words: management, government, administration, modernization, human resources, administrative capacity.

INTRODUCTION

During the period of Bulgarian democratic development a new kind of society has been developed, in the foundation of which is the formation of civil society and conditions for a democratic public government. This process requires contemporary research in the social sciences and respectively, adequate practical application. The key to understanding and implementing the processes of state and local government is in establishment of such social conditions in which people are free and equal and the social principles are the moral imperative, on the one hand and the state as a hierarchical social structure is managed competently in the interest of citizens, on the other hand. This aspect is very important factor improving the quality of Human Resources management in the state and local government and modernization of management methods, enhancing the personnel capacity in them.

The achievement of European standards in Bulgaria is connected with the economic

increasing and the rising of modern state management: successful public management, human capital development to create a professional government officials Corps also. This process of „social management” is defined in Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sociology as a „slow, painful process that is going through crises and conflicts, but bounding a trend to strengthen democracy in the country and making democratic forms and mechanisms common values”(1). Therefore the construction of contemporary modern government system in Bulgaria is related to the application of democratic principles in any organization and functioning of the administration and the formation of professional government management. An important priority in modern management is the development of information and communication technologies and their direct use for the administration purposes.

The modern conditions include strengthening the competitive position of the administration by improving not only quantitative but qualitative, primarily - improving management in all areas. One of the main directions of this work is improving Human Resources

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Management as a necessary element of the administration management.

EXPOSE

The improvement of the Bulgarian executive authority activities (state and local government) is impossible without solving the problems related to the modernization and strengthening the capacity of administration, Human Resources development and innovative practices application. The development of a modern state system in Bulgaria is associated with the introduction of democratic principles in the administration functioning.

It is important to emphasize that there are some contemporary Acts of last years: "Administration Act", "The Law of government officials", "The Law of Electronic Document and Electronic Signature" etc.

Because of the significance of the development of information and communication technologies in the modern management and their direct use for the administration purposes, as a result, there are some new Acts: „E-government”, „E-regions’ authorities”, „E-municipalities” etc.

The modern administration is impossible without presence of the administrative culture in it. The administrative culture is the standard of implementation of modern policies in the administrative structures, an administrative "creed". The administrative culture gives strength of tactics and strategy of the structure functioning, affixing of mission, goal setting, planning and controlling it. In contemporary society it is a way of understanding and application the value system in the specified structure equating it with the image of the structure and its management. The administration strategy is perspective when it is emotionally supported by the staff. So today in the centre of administration management should be the attention to Human Resources Management, the attention to people taken as a whole.

One of the substantial elements of the modern government is the participation of civil structures in the public consultation and discussions, in adoption of legislation acts. Thereby, citizens should be able to express their active position, to offer alternative solutions, to make recommendations to the institutions. Their opinion should be heard and used in real communicative situations with administration. Officials of all administrative

levels have to consider decisions with the public interests.

The process of modernization of the administrative activities requires concerted efforts to create conditions for the implementation of the proposed in legislation professional and career development of staff in the administration and creation of new administrative culture and behavior oriented towards the need of the Bulgarian citizens and Bulgarian society.

Today Bulgarian administration is faced with the challenges of country's membership of European Union and the requirements of effective interaction with the European institutions and Member State administrations. The most important element for implementation of modern management policies in development of human resources in the administration is the System of continuous development of the professional skills and qualifications of administration staff .

European aspect of human capital development in the administration lies in the adoption and enforcement of modern models of organization and functioning of the administration in accordance with the best practices in European Union and the world at large. It means building confidence in the capacity and application of the principles and practices of modern administration, as well as:

- increasing the level of staff skills and qualification;
- professional development of staff;
- building of staff administrative culture; active involvement of administration staff in the change processes by:
 - Implementation of practices for informing and consulting employees about the opportunities for professional and career development;
 - Equal opportunities for access to public service, professional and career development;
 - Application of modern assessment of training needs – achievement of matching the learning and practical application of its results;
 - Introducing rules to provide financial resources for the development of professional skills and qualification of the administrative staff.

The key sections of the Strategy of modernization of public administration are:

1. Strengthening the capacity of the civil service in the following fields of activities:

- Streamlined administrative structures - legal, organizational and functional;
- The abilities for strategic planning and policies development;
- Improvement of the mechanisms for consultation with stakeholders regarding the development of policies and the resulting rulemaking;
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- Establishment of appropriate administrative environment to prevent and combat corruption;
- Development of measures for the integration of minorities and disadvantaged social groups;
- Synchronizing of the state administration work with the processes of global governance.

2. Strengthening the administrative capacity to implement the obligations of European Union membership, with emphasis on adequate administrative structures, their functions, features and specific professional skills of the staff of these structures.

3. Strengthening administrative capacity for Bulgarian participation in the European Structural Funds in the following aspects:

- Macro-economic;
- Financial and co-financing opportunities;
- Administrative;
- Adequate human resources management (2).

The key components of the Strategy of modernized public administration are:

- Funding for training - annually from the state budget;
- Personal career plans of employees in administration;
- Mandatory training of managerial officials and employees in administration in first year of their appointment.

The training of staff is one of the most important methods and tools for strengthening and capacity building of administration. In Bulgaria it is mainly realized by Institute for public administration and European integration, established according to Act of

state official and supported by European Commission under the PHARE program. Trainings are held under EU programs - PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD and TEMPUS and under cross-border cooperation bilateral agreements and regional programs.

In Bulgarian administration are implemented following Acts:

- Strategy of Human Resources Management;
- Model of Human Resources Management;
- Integrated Information System of Human Resources Management.

The creation of Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform developed good prerequisites for the systematic and planned implementation of programs and activities in all aspects of the modernization and strengthening of public administration capacity in Bulgaria. Unfortunately Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform was closed in 2009.

The analysis of the situation in Bulgarian administration today includes some essential problems:

- There is resistant bureaucracy style in many institutions of Bulgarian government. It means "Ineffective state institutional machine, dysfunctional realizing of managerial or clerical functions; formalism in administrative activities. The work style is characterized by office-paper method of implementing of the duties, with the intention for anonymity, moral conformity and escape from responsibility"(1).
- In the area of quality of state and local governments at all levels there are serious impediment in the development of state institutions and obstacles in the performance of the functions of the current system of government.

There are some disadvantages we have to emphasize:

- The lack of interest of public officials of any rank in the implementation of public and state interests, replacing them with personal and political groups' interests.
- There is a coalescence of parts of the state structures with commercial structures, and they publicly delegate their representatives to the administrative structures. As a result, a significant part of state officials are

- unable to embody the idea of "public service". This part of the state staff fully bind their fate with material prosperity, a regime of bureaucratic sharing all sorts of resources, rights and privileges and it plays the role of opposition to democratic reforms in Bulgaria. „Officials replacement” of a significant part of people in public positions in Bulgaria, but in positions of the highest level of the state hierarchy also, does not allow to build perspectives and strategies of state institutions, it creates a climate of toadyism.
- The absolute priority rule upon an appointment in administration is the „personal” and „political” loyalty, group economic interests also but not conditions and considerations of “professional and qualification matching”. These principles are applied not only to the recruitment of managers at highest public administrative levels, but to the lower levels also (regional and municipality). Sometimes it leads to the fact that the administrative structures do not carry out their functions.
 - There is "identification" of the political and institutional interests, a redistribution of credentials of the executive, as their status changes depending on the political party at the heads of their "politically appointed" persons.
 - Unlike developed countries, where after changing the head the institution continues to perform its functions in the previous capacity, in Bulgaria with the change of leadership the functions and the organizational structure of the institution seriously alter. On the other hand, the political and personal interests of the newly appointed leaders are presented as state interests. Personal responsibility for decisions to be taken lack in the executive institution (national, regional, local). In fact in recent years exists the system of collegial decision of transfer of "sensitive issues on the deputies of the leaders and in the cases of obvious absurdity and error, seeking a „fall guy” among the low levels staff.
 - Criticizing heads of administrative institutions and departments in the media is completely devalued because of the changed nature of the society’s attitude towards the media and the absence of any feedback from critics and specific consequences.
- The high level of corruption among public officials is paradoxically combined with their social helplessness and "official oppression". The payment level set by official sources of funding, contrary to the actual consumer standards, that are cultivated in administrations any types, and creates atmosphere of official deception and hypocrisy.
 - On the other hand, the state officials do not have the opportunity to appeal the decisions of their superiors. The problems related to retirement and dismissal of employed state officials have not solved as for the "officials" as for the "political appointments". Therefore, a significant part of the most initiative, qualified and socially mobile workers prefer not to work in public administration or leave after a few years of work. On the other hand, the fixed remuneration of state officials, regardless of their results, attracted to government jobs impersonal and governable workers with low qualifications. This leads to a reduction in occupational, educational and cultural level of managerial personnel, a reduction of organizational culture and quality of service for citizens, companies and NGOs.
 - There is no a common system for selection and training of state officials at all levels, there are no rules of their rotation and rising in the administrative hierarchy.
 - There is no a system of preliminary selection of young people for positions of leading specialists and forming personnel reserve for the main groups positions.
 - The functions of departments „Human Resources” are limited to keeping personal records and operational paperwork.
 - In practice, Human Resources Management workers are deprived of the opportunity to conduct independent work with staff. They are strictly subordinated to agency authority, that defines all staff appointments.
 - There are substantial disadvantages of the mechanism of legal regulating the state officials work and the main one is the "slowness". Despite the considerable amount of current legislation documents, they do not solve the most important problems of the legal regulation.
 - The basic principle of organization of the state administration - the principle of „service to the state” is not developed.

- The lack of competences and professionalism.
- The relationship between two types of administration (government and municipality administrations) is not correct and adequate.
- The legal and socio-economic guarantees for state officials are not established.

The characteristics of the contemporary goals are:

- Bulgarian administration needs achieving high level of modern public Human Resources Management in order to create a highly professional group of public officials. This goal includes:
- Implementation of the principles of "personal competences and responsibility";
- Define the general principles of the professional responsibility of state officials;
- Democratization of access to public positions (recruitment and staff promotion in the hierarchy must be based on transparency competition and objective procedures).
- Enhancing social protection of state officials and developing conditions of great protection from political dismissals.
- Overcoming the total corruption and unification of the terms of remuneration of employees of the same rank in state administration and local administration.
- Increasing the gravity of expert opinion in making management decisions.

The author considers that the personnel management principles are formed on the basic ideas, laws, and rules of work of the authorities to implement their functions. The basic principles are connected with the optimal combination of centralization and decentralization and delegation rights for decisions at the different levels, the application of scientific methods and approaches, planning: setting frameworks, objectives and plans of the administration in the long term, staff motivation, providing a system of rewards and punishments, effective programs to encourage people to work for the achievement of the administration goals.

The process of improving the quality of the personnel in state and local government and their professional skills and knowledge can not be momentary or single action.

We know it is not possible to improve radically the state management at once, because we do not have the necessary human, financial and organizational resources yet.

What is need is to demonstrate the continued political will to achieve a new quality of human capital in government on which to form a system matrix of requirements (standards) for state officials in key positions groups.

Through gradual selection (which includes natural personnel movement) of the available human resources and nomination of new qualitative officials the composition of public officials will increasingly meet the standards, which in turn can be adjusted to raising.

Moreover, it is necessary to take a number of routine organizational measures, some of which, if there is political will, can bring new content to management activities.

To increase the current level of competences of officials in government administration and raising the level of democratization in personnel policy the state authority should:

- change opportunities for political appointments and dismissals of state officials who are neutral according to Law of government officials;
- prepare a unified national system of administrative positions with the characteristics of the respective positions;
- ensure publicity of decisions to uplift and dismissals the officials (through the work of evaluation committees);
- establish a legal way of dismissal or retirement state officials and other reasons (it must be different for career officials and political appointed officials);

To form a reserve personnel of government officials capable of adequate adaptation to the constantly increasing demands, it is necessary:

- The system of training and qualification of managerial staff to be removed from institutional subordination;
- To organize specialized professional training of personnel working in „Human Resources” departments of administration (in higher education system);
- To develop a system of state procurement of training for government officials in higher education.

An effective system for the assessment of staff capacity should perform the following important functions:

- To be the foundation for fair remuneration;
- To allow for comparability of the quantity and quality of labor;
- To adjust the level of professional development;
- To monitor the quality of human potential positions in groups;
- To prevent destructive conflicts in the administration;
- To form a favorable psychological climate in the administration.
- The concept of Human Resource Management is based on the fact that the main forms of wealth are materialized in human knowledge, his ability to work well, the general level of development and ability for lifelong learning and development of skills for teamwork;

To assess the personal characteristics of the administrative staff should be taken into attention:

- The opportunities for self-organization of work;
- The impact of assessments and judgments of the colleagues in different situations;
- The ability to evaluate, summarize and make decisions based on comparing the information with measurable, verifiable criteria;
- The ability to express own feelings, perceptions and ideas;
- The precise observation of legal framework (laws, regulations, rules).

Administrative culture in Human Resources Management is a structural part of the essential characteristics of the social culture of management at different levels.

The administration can be represented as a social unit, possessing certain capabilities for:

1. Development of personal potential of state officials;
2. Improving the forms of socio-cultural relations and activities in the administration;
3. Extending the communication conditions for effective relationship within the administration and in the external environment;
4. Achieving and increasing the level of professional experience, training and career development of employees in the administration;

5. The adoption and the implementation methods of teamwork and team management.

These aspects of the realization of human potential in the administration receive some form of objectification in developed organizational conditions (the level of administrative and managerial culture) (3).

The necessary conditions and prerequisites are generated by the successful operation and management of the administration, namely on the basis of the existing administrative culture in it.

Therefore, it is the main factor that determines the direction and nature of the effective administrative activities.

The main Principles of administrative culture are:

- Creating effective and efficient communication between the units of public administration;
- Creating effective communication between them and the citizens businesses and NGOs. Opportunities for "feedback";
- Providing quality, cost-effective and accessible public services;
- Achieving transparency of the public procedures and reduction of corruption pressure.
- The focus is on the people, businesses, and NGOs that represent them and their real needs;
- Identification, security and data protection in administration;

The challenges for effective Human Resources Management mainly consist of:

- a/ political will for continuity and build on the achievements;
- b/ preservation and use of the traditions and good practices inherited from the previous ruling authorities.

Strengthening and improving the capacity of human resources in the administration is possible to achieve by permanent and systematic officials training in the following areas:

- Positive mindset and attitude towards reform in administration;
- Development of attitudes and skills to work in a team and independently, including skills to manage teams;

- Updating and upgrading professional knowledge and skills;
- Updating of specialized knowledge and skills in terms of e-government.
- Active exchange of experience and information on national, regional and local scale.
- Adequate system of material and moral incentives and motivation of staff.
- Adequate working conditions.
- Existence and use of resources - financial, human and material and their effective spending over time;
- Management administration reform in all aspects - legal, organizational, technological, cultural;
- Development a unified national information and communication infrastructure;
- Creating conditions for integration between national registers and information systems;
- Introducing standards and unification of technology of service and documentation in administration;
- Application unified standards /criteria/ in the interpretation the regulations and decisions in all administrative structures.

These are some of the main challenges connected with the values, expectations and principles according to which Bulgarian administration should work to reach its goals correctly.

The highlights, which are focused particularly, are the conceptual competences, which are related to the creation and implementation of the concept, the development of these concepts and ideas that intersect with the main success factors, the analysis of the factors that may influence the development of a system of administration. The most important professional competence in administration is the competence in the field of Human Resources Management.

In the view of the author, Human Resources specialists should be engaged in the formation of „organizational authenticity” that is, establishment of accordance between internal appearance and external image of

administration which gives advantages in its work.

Installing a set of rules for nomination, remuneration and placement of the staff according to the administration values allows to create an „authentic administration”, namely the administration that everybody can trust.

Thus, the functions of management authority provide social identity of the administration, develop, maintain and change the patterns required standards (in documents, regulations, acts, official instructions). This is the responsibility for ensuring that personnel profile of the administration must be „authentic”, particularly in relation to citizens. It must create and maintain a positive image of the administration in society.

So, if each subject of interaction in the area of Human Resources Management knows its responsibility for the inherent social functions and enforces them, we believe, Bulgarian administration will work organically and synergistically, as exists any highly developed social structure.

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