

## Romanians Civil Servants between New Public Management and Neo Weberian Principles. Some Perspectives

Ana-Maria Bercu<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper aims at outlining the contents of the special issue on Romanian civil servants, making a comparative analyze of the principles applicable: can we discuss about New Public Management (NPM) approaches or, taking into consideration the Romanian civil service reform, we have a Neo Weberian model? The article provides reviews of the scientific literatures in this special issue. The argument is that the work performance of civil servants are based on a set of goals determined by the citizens-clients needs and the market movements, but, in the mean time, it is about the quality of work in terms of citizens satisfaction and the innovative solutions for the administrative problems. The special issue, of which this article provides an overview, make an incursion in the literature providing analyze on the Romanians civil servants based on the steps of actual reform and putting on the questions the managerial and bureaucratic principles. Research limitations include the width of the phenomenon under discussion. We state that the work and performance means not only NPM principles, but have instead chosen to adopt the Neo Weberian approach.

**Keywords:** new reforms; civil service; managerial principles.

**JEL Classification:** M12; M38; H83

### 1. Introduction

Early 2007 meant for Romania's efforts for realization of EU integration. Not easy, difficult, with ups and downs, the process of European integration was the subject of debate for the entire Romanian society. State and its authorities have undergone a long process of transformation and change to meet new socio-political context has been foreshadowed since 1952. An important role of the executive went to the Romanian state, which has established policies and government strategies to meet the requirements of the Union. In this context, public administration is established as the fundamental structure through which to carry out their missions and objectives of state power.

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, PhD, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania, Address: Carol I Blvd., no. 22, Iasi, Romania, tel: +40232 201 102, fax: +40232 201 700, Corresponding author: bercu@uaic.ro.

The current European context required for effective strategic decision making, streamlining and improving work performance of civil servants. Centralism characteristic of socialist Romania was predominantly manifested by flattening of the state administrative structures and authoritarian state building. Administrative decoupling occurred after the Revolution of 1989 marked a new era for the Romanian public administration. Public administration reform in Romania started in 1991 by adopting regulations first by identifying and establishing the principles of organization and operation, local autonomy, decentralization and de-concentration of public services. Public administration reform in Romania meant primarily a review of the institutional, organizational, and especially, of the human structures. Structural and functional changes are its practical purpose if they are correlated with the diversity of the human factor in order to improve efficiency and its professionalization. Specialization and professionalization are strategic objectives of administrative reform in Romania, from the beginning until today. Creating a body of civil servants to demystify the traditional image of public administration, the simple execution of policy decisions and turn it into a new administration, public policy underlying it became an imperative.

The aim of our work is to analyze and provide a perspective on the work performance of civil servants in Romania in terms of management theories and models discussed in the literature (Lynn: 2004, Peters: 2001, Pollitt and Bouckaert: 2011, Brown 1978): New Public Management and Neo Weberian Model. Romanian public administration reform have as central element the transformation of public service and of civil servant by the agent of the state who execute the political decision and a representative of state coercion, of an agent of change who aimed at valuing their work and obtain performance. New Public Management objectives are reflected in measuring public servants work through performance indicators that relate to quality and quantity of work done. It is important to identify whether the principles established by the New Public Management respond to market or better said, are able to meet the needs of the citizen-client and work as civil servants influence on performance? We need a reconsideration of government in Romania, for the purposes of defining the quality of work of civil servant? Neo-Weberian model is able to provide solutions to new problems on work performance of civil servants from redefining the role of state?

## **2. New Public Management and Neo Weberian Principles. A Point of View**

De-bureaucratization, decentralization, market orientation of public administration, public-private partnerships, performance management are just some of the guidelines proposed by New Public Management and civil service reform embraced in Romania.

It is important for our argument to discuss about the emergence and development of the New Public Management (NPM) concept. The New Public Management is a response to changes in the early twentieth century in rural traditional bureaucratic organizations. Concepts are introduced and new roles in public sector actions. Hood (Matei: 2006) summarized the basic principles of new public management:

- a. introducing the performance standards in the business of government, under which work of officials must be appreciated;
- b. control of the results and comparison with quantitative performance indicators;
- c. shift from unified management systems to decentralize public sector organizations;
- d. promotion of professional management and the "freedom in management";
- e. encourages competition in public services;
- f. introduction of management techniques and methods from the private sector;
- g. applying the principles of the 3E: economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The literature discusses a new trend called Neo Weberianism, as current reforms proposed by the new public management. The term Neo-Weberianism was used in political science, sociology and public administration since 70s of last century. Neo Weberian analysis brings into question the interpretation of the classic Weberian model by reconsidering the government machinery in terms of power relations within the administrative system or as an instrumental rationality. Deprecating, Neo-Weberian administration was seen as a threat to liberal democracy. Sociologist Philip Selznick played Neo Weberianism from the organizational perspective. The starting point consisted of "the black organization" that "could be undermined by informal and illegitimate patterns of authority in decision-making" (Hinings and Greenwood: 2002).

Pollitt and Bouckaert considered the Neo-Weberianism as a model centered on the state administration. Elements of "neo" refers to citizens' needs, the external guidance, consultation and cooperation, are achievements of administrative elites and governments. In this sense, Neo Weberianism is an influence of global capitalism and administrative elites, the legal rule itself, as well as supranational entities as the European Union. However, we cannot appreciate the state or supranational authorities are necessarily positive or progressive. Conversely, there are critics who believe that would undermine the democratic principles of governance.

In this context, the old interpretations of administration are replaced by a new flexible form, which redefines the role of government in society. Citizens want government institutions to meet their interests through effective and rational use of public resources, becoming a *leit reason* for public-private partnerships (meeting public interests can be achieved through an agreement between the public and private company). New Public Management principles are different from those of

the bureaucratic model, based on centralization, hierarchy and control. It required the discovery of new methods and techniques to investigate the public sector, other than those used by public and conventional budget process (Lane, 2006), and changing perceptions of public sector employees by enhancing their role and relations with the public.

### **3. Some Discussions Concerning the Work Performance of Romanian Civil Servants**

It is estimated that over-legalization and over-regulation, normally do not offer the efficiency, economy and effectiveness (Nemec, Sagat: 2011), but in states decoupled from a centralized economy, like Romania, it is necessary and appropriate. Improving government performance by adopting additional laws, rules and regulations, without specifying and implementing procedures and practice, without finding correspondence (market-type approaches) there is nothing more than to create an additional task for the environment business and citizens. From this point of view, the performance of Romanian civil servants is done by the regulation and law and could not be demonstrated. The evaluation of work performance of Romanian civil servants is made following a formal procedure based on rules and the results don't show the real situation about the civil servants capabilities. It is more Neo-Weberian model than NPM one.

One of the principles governing public office is the constitutional principle of freedom of access to public office. For the first time this principle was enshrined in Article 6 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Citizen* and settled principle derives from the functioning of modern states, namely equality before law and equal rights. In this context, any person who meets the legal conditions of access to public office can compete for a position in public administration. Civil service reform aimed at from this perspective, flexible access to public office by establishing legal requirements such as citizenship, reading and writing knowledge of Romanian language, the age at which it acquires legal capacity to legal acts (18), moral probity, health certified by a proper examination. These conditions are followed by a series of specifications related to expertise that public officials must prove through tests and interviews, both at entry into the civil service and throughout their work. Performance is the degree to which work tasks, the direct result of official efforts, the perception and understanding of its tasks.

Catalytic role of governments (central or local) (Gaebler and Osborne) explained the need for public services to be provided both through public services, but also NGOs and private services. This guidance is based on the belief that traditional bureaucracies cannot provide sufficient incentives for public officials to perform efficiently and effectively. This is because the central value is based on faith in the virtues of competition. And competition is the key market factor. Therefore,

managers should have greater freedom and flexibility to introduce performance indicators for public servants, such as adaptability, responsibility, ability to solve problems, ability to implement solutions, the ability to self-improvement and recovery experience, analysis and synthesis capability, creativity and leadership, capacity, coordination and control, strategic analysis and planning capacity. Enrolled in this direction and the Law no. 188/1999 on the status of civil servants as an important step in reforming the civil service, followed by the adoption of numerous laws, including those aimed at establishing criteria for individual performance appraisal of civil servants (synthetic mentioned above). We can argue that these capacities are demonstrated by the Romanian civil servants all the time in their activities, but, sometimes, seems to be necessary to create a methodological framework which can be applied in various situations (and not only a formal one offer through the rules).

However, there can be no real marketization of public administration in Romania, as it is not enough without setting performance indicators to identify concrete ways of measuring them. Citizen-customer satisfaction is measured in difficult conditions in the persisting practice of passivity toward the administrative act. Citizen participation should be reconsidered in the new context. It thus creates serious management problems between performance values “and democratic values” concerning participation in the administrative process. It should be noted however that, in this respect, the Romanian legislation is in full compliance with international and European law. It is necessary to find resources management of the citizen-client involvement in the governance, risk arising from marketization approach is that only the organizational activities that can be quantified and can be analyzed and interpreted in terms of performance.

Participation, principle of NPM, is a major issue for public administration reform in Romania and is considered an effective means of motivating civil servants and, therefore, increase work performance. Quality of services is much better if we take into account citizen participation in decision making. However, there is no direct involvement of citizens in the administrative decision making and Romanian public servants work efficiency is strictly determined by the amount of solutions delivered, not quality. The inefficiency in solving citizen problems timely is done by the long term administrative procedures. Public-private partnership, as a more efficient delivery of quality public services, has found the answer until 2011, by adoption of regulating in the matter. Local government and hence, civil servants, were repeatedly blamed inertia in terms of initiating such projects, identified the main reason being the lack of knowledge and skills in planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating such projects.

Flexibility is another principle of NPM evoked like a response to criticisms of traditional rigidity of public administration. "Flexibility refers to the capacity of governments and agencies to make appropriate policy responses to environmental

change" (Peters: 2001). In Romania, civil servants enjoy stability in function, which allows it to follow a career in public office. From this point of view, flexibility implies the ability to adapt the official, but it creates the possibility to pursue their own interests at the expense of achieving state power and authority. From this particular point, the code of behavior in administrative body reclaim the persons with moral and ethical attitude (it is a reality that the corruption is an important problem for the Romanian public administration; it is necessary to increase the control and to implement the sanctions at all levels of government).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Work performance of the Romanian public servants is one of the priorities of governments after December 1989. Although, important steps have been made in reforming the civil service through the adoption of numerous measures concerning the conditions of access to public office, stability and continuity at work, remain methods and tools of centralized administration regarding the evaluation of work and performance of civil servants. Romanian administrative system instability caused by the numerous changes in legislative, political and economic changes (the current global economic crisis led to harsh measures taken at government level by blocking positions and wages, which leads to bad and the dissatisfaction of civil servants, and thus, citizens) need the reinterpretation of its role and functions.

Introduced as performance targets in the civil service reforms, NPM principles find their relevance mainly in theoretical analysis, the reality demonstrating that, often, centralism and formalism which characterized the state and its authority are predominant. What is lacking the human factor in the Romanian administration to be efficient in its activity (within results measurable and quantifiable) is the determination and involvement, followed by motivation. Neo-Weberian principles with focus on organizational structures seem most appropriate based on the authority of the civil animated by the desire to be better, but, constrained by the formalism of power.

Concretism of administrative reality in Romania will provide answers to the problem of future job performance of public officials. Maybe new managerial models will answer theoretical and practical priority of government objectives.

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