

# THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR - MAIN TENDENCIES IN MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR IN ROMANIA

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*“The difference between a good administrator and a bad one is about five heartbeats. Good administrators make immediate choices. [...] They usually can be made to work. A bad administrator, on the other hand, hesitates, diddles around, asks for committees, for research and reports. Eventually, he acts in ways which create serious problems. [...] “A bad administrator is more concerned with reports than with decisions. He wants the hard record which he can display as an excuse for his errors.*

**Frank Herbert**, *God Emperor of Dune*

## Abstract

*The public administrator (city manager) has to be a professional in mastering the science of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. He must be equipped to research issues and offer solutions, draft proposals for legislation and regulations, prepare statements and presentations for testimony, conduct negotiations, build coalitions, and advocate client positions to legislators, other elected/appointed officials, and their staffs. Public administrator must provide representation at the state and other levels of government for businesses, associations, individuals, and non-profit organizations. Having as a role model the good politics from the other European Union member states, the institution of public administrator has proven its utility in Romania due to full initiative of several mayors and presidents of county councils.*

**Keywords:** *Public Administrator, city manager, capabilities, planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting, research issues, solutions.*

## 1. Introduction

There are various roles that are played by the Public Administrator. It must be important that the role of the administrator is not to be confused with his or her job, although, the role of the administrator may be defined by his or her job. For example, an administrator may have a job where he or she compiles data gathered from subordinates and analyzes the data to develop effective solutions to a problem in the form of policies. This may be his or her job, and the job may be titled Assistant Administrative Analyst, but this may not necessarily be his or her role. Given the description of duties, one may infer that the role of this administrator may be that of a problem Solver. This study distinguishes between various roles of the public administrator.

## 2.A brief review about public administrator terms of evolution, various roles and bureaucracy.

In a study of democracy and Public Administration, John P. Burke focused on the tension between democracy and bureaucracy. It is here that the role of the Administrator is defined as a guide that is responsible for taking the efficient

bureaucratic organization through the moral aspects of a responsive democracy. Burke does not go into detail on how the administrator guides the organization but his next depiction shows how the organization may have an affect on the role of the administrator. Burke addresses the dilemmas faced by officials on a daily basis. Officials have their morals tested and are expected to follow organizational protocols impartial to what their personal beliefs may entail. Burke gives administrators the role of actors because they have their personal beliefs and agendas in their private lives, but once they come into the work place, they are expected to act accordingly to the demands of an efficient and effective organization. Some may feel sorry for administrators but as Burke points out, “Administrators, in choosing careers in public service, are often well aware of the moral pitfalls”<sup>1</sup>. They are analogous to the stunt persons who are aware of the dangers the stunt may do to their bodies in an attempt to perform a spectacular act for the enjoyment of the moviegoers (clients/citizens) in exchange for the appropriate pay. They have come undercontract and have agreed to perform such duties even at the possibilities of such risks.

In another study conducted by Pamela B. Teaster, the term Guardian was used to describe the

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<sup>1</sup> John P. Burcke, “Reconciling public administration and Democracy: The role of the responsible administrator”, Public Administration Review, pp 181, 1989.

role of the Public Administrator. This study focuses on care given to the indigent, the senior citizens, the people with diseases, and the children who are neglected and have insufficient care. The term "Parens Patriae" is used and is defined as "the duty of the sovereign to care for its citizens who cannot care for themselves"<sup>2</sup>.

This has vast implications in that it means that the role of Public Administrators come with the responsibility of providing medicine, shelter, clothing, and food to those in need. Being that there may be an enormous population of people who need these services, developing methods for effectively and efficiently distributing these services may become intricately burdensome. After all, how is one to define and measure the criteria for who should get what services, when, where, how much, and for how long? In addition, because resources may be scarcely limited and not everyone may be able to receive services, where should the lines of priority be drawn? It may fall into the jurisdiction of the Public Administrator to make such decision, which is another problem in its own: discretion. This discretion is the administrator's ability to make decisions when it may not be clearly defined or described in their agencies contract or manual or when there may be multiple options on various steps that may be taken concerning a certain situation.

Teaster, when describing the responsibility given to administrators concerning wards of the state, labels administrators as Surrogate Decision Makers. Some of these decisions, according to Teaster, "included medication and other medical decisions, habilitation decisions, financial decisions, and care and quality-of-life decisions"<sup>3</sup>. These decisions are not necessarily made according to a schedule or some seasonal activity but may spontaneously arise in the event of new wards entering into the system, wards becoming ill, or other factors that may submerge. The administrators must be aware of what procedures they may take, where available resources are located, and have the proper funding and planning available in the event of contingencies. If the administrators are not prepared in the event of catastrophes, the affected parties may file litigation against the agencies responsible for rendering these services.

Another author focuses on the actor role of Public Administrators the Theatre Metaphor used by many to portray officials and administrators in different lights. Larry D. Terry has discussed how in the Reagan era, administrators were portrayed as villains and in defense of that categorization,

supporters of Public Administrators attempted to cast the role of hero on these officials. Sometimes it is not necessarily the administrator that attempts to assume these roles, but most of the time they are type cast for these roles. For example, when a person attempts to get a straight answer from a bureaucratic organization and is transferred from one administrator to another without completely having his or her concern addressed, the administrators may have the role of villain attributed to them. When the disaster resulting from Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, Louisiana, and FEMA was slow to respond to the needs of the people, their administrators also received the role of playing the villain. On the other hand, when administrators develop effective programs that address the concerns of a specific population, the role of Hero is attributed to them. Even though the overall role may be that of an actor, the individual roles are given favorable or detestable attention depending on the outcomes resulting from the actions or inaction of various administrators. Terry points out that both of these roles may be problematic because when administrators are depicted as villains, government is given less credibility and is seen as "an evil force that must be conquered and destroyed"<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the depiction of the administrator as a hero may be problematic because this gives the officials an unrealistic level of expectations to which that may not be able to meet. Some problems may be wicked and unsolvable, and deeming administrators as heroes may be setting them up for failure.

For the purpose of this discussion, one final role will be included. Not that there are not more than the roles listed here, but it would serve to keep the attention of the viewer focused on the issue at hand by listing more than one role so that he or she may know that there are various roles taken on by Public Administrators. The final role discussed here was described with due recognition by Charles T. Goodsell; Goodsell described the role of the Public Administrator as that of an Artisan. In his own words, Goodsell states, "*It is, rather, to argue that the carrying out of common professional duties by public administrators can, with considerable payoff for both administrator and citizen, be viewed as the execution of an applied or practical art... it embodies a specialized skill that is capable of creating results that are both usable and pleasing to behold. Specific objects are created and tasks performed, yet in ways and with consequences that establish in the minds of both creator and audience a sense of intrinsic satisfaction, above and beyond the utilitarian purpose at hand.*"<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Pamela B. Teaster, "When the State Takes Over a Life: The Public Guardian as Public Administrator", *Public Administration Review*, pp 397, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, pp 399.

<sup>4</sup> Larry D. Terry, "Legitimacy, history and logic: public administration and the constitution", *Public Administration Review*, pp 58, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Charles T. Goodsell, "The Case for Bureaucracy: A Public Administration Polemic", 4th Edition, CQ Press, pp 247, 2003.

The specialized skill here may be analyzing data, evaluating data, conducting research using various methods of polling and surveying constituents. These tasks performed may bring about plans, policies, and legislation which may be the objects referred to by Goodsell. When these "objects" bring about social services that provide shelter to the homeless, food stamps to those in hunger, clothing to those without, and even jobs for the disenfranchised, the intrinsic satisfactions becomes salient. Using the term science alone to describe what administrators do seems to take away the human creativity that is put into the tasks performed by administrators. The depiction of the administrators as artisans denotes that the work done by them is a work of beauty in its most precious form.

There may be hundreds of roles fulfilled by Public Administrators. This discussion has presented a few of the roles that are most often seen among people who come into contact with various agencies and their officials. These roles include guides that lead the organization on a path that serves the people, actors who are to put personal issues aside for the sake of performance, guardians who care for and act on behalf of the helpless, surrogate decision makers who utilize discretion concerning issues that affect the lives of the disenfranchised, villains when things go wrong, heroes when things go right, and artisans who utilize artistic talents and craft objects that bring forth satisfaction. These roles give the field of Public Policy and Administration romanticized features that most would not recognize when thinking about bureaucracy. Administrators can be seen as daring, compassionate individuals who take on the difficult task of being the problem solvers in society. Some may see it as a dirty job, but someone has to do it.

### 3. The European experience in practicing public administrator (city manager)<sup>6</sup> position

The quality of public administration is important for Europe's competitiveness. Modern, innovative and efficient public administrations is essential to sustaining the recovery and unlocking Europe's growth potential. The growth-friendly public administration scoreboard was published as part of the Member States' Competitiveness Report in September 2014.

The scoreboard is the first EU-wide exercise to analyse how "fit for purpose" the Member States' public administrations are, as regards promoting growth and competitiveness. It analyses a number of features important for competitiveness, so as to

encourage improvements in government and public administrations.

The scoreboard delivers mixed results:

- Overall, government effectiveness has not improved for the EU over the past five years;
- Member States' budgetary, regulatory and implementation capacities vary;
- Red tape and high compliance burdens are negatively impacting on those wishing start a company and obtaining licences, pay taxes, participate in public procurement, export goods and services, or settle legal disputes.

Political and administrative organizations of local authorities in European Union countries have a number of basic characteristics in common. First, the political bodies in each municipality representative, is the result of democratic elections. In almost all municipal entities there is a political leader, recognized as such, whether the function of such person is mentioned or not. This leader can be elected directly by citizens or by the governing board members or appointed by the central government. Political and executive powers of the people can vary greatly.

Also, in most municipalities have at least one person whose role is to:

- manage, coordinate and supervise the organization of government;
- to provide advice to politicians;
- to ensure rational use of public resources, efficiently and in accordance with law.

These three features reflect the principles governing the organization of local government. Two decades ago, City Manager was usually a senior civil servant (age than in the organization), with a basic training in financial and legal. Experience in local government was seen as the most important requirement to fill such a post. This experience was gained through specialized training programs in public administration training institutes in their respective countries.

As regards public administration, legislation in European countries has not institutionalized a stable space professionalized management that can be separated from politics. The legislature has often opted for a president of local government, leaving the option of delegation of management tasks. The political dimension as prevail in the executive or management functions, the administrative expense of the organization<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, in recent years, European governments have chosen to modify some parameters bureaucratic organization for flexible management methods, with emphasis on the economic side and individual performance. Attitude

<sup>6</sup> City Manager – institution which has its origins in anglo-saxon administrative system that has inspired also the establishment of romanian public administrator.

<sup>7</sup> J.I. Soto, „Los secretarios de administración local entre la gestión y el control. Un rol en evolución”, in *Revista de Estudios Locales*, julio 2003, p. 163.

in the City Manager has changed as a result of awareness that managerial skills are more important than specialized training. Effective management of public institutions realizes that an organization requires management skills and specific knowledge on effective use of human resources. Currently, among the decisive factors for the appointment of a City Manager holds the largest share of the management skills, combined with experience in local government.

"Professionalization" management has its sources in the need to differentiate the role of elected officials from that of technical professionals in other words; policy must be distinguished from the implementation<sup>8</sup>.

Among European countries now applying a model of coordination of local public services by a person other than the Mayor, City Manager shall include: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, United Kingdom, Netherlands and Sweden. Given the strategic position they occupy City Manager, it is preferable to have higher education.

Expertise is less important because the management team, City Manager working with department heads, who have specialized training. Implementation of effective management in public administration has its origins in the United States and Western European countries (especially Anglo Saxon), where community services are organized based on specific mechanisms of the private sector, in coordination with City Manager / Executive Director.

Such notice the existence of the following items from the U.S. literature the role of City Manager is defined and explained so well (Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory): "Many times the city manager faces an important issue that influences political existence. According to this article, which has as its main subject study investigating the mechanisms that lead officials elected to postpone work to develop policy manager, city manager faces a number of factors such as experience, professionalism, relationship with Council members, which is the main reason of failure. Data from this study show that city managers leading image detrimental earn their administrative authority through their ability to manage and develop policies to achieve objectives. Thus, managers must reconcile the inherent tension between responsibility and respect. "In other words the content of this journal of public administration refers to the City Managers ability to impose its political influence in their activities, to achieving the targets. Such notice, the influence of a City Manager gets stronger at the expense of their administrative authority.

The definition of the City Manager in foreign literature we find in Elgie McFayden Jr.'s conception, in his "City Managers: Impact on Citizen Participation in Local Government", that the objective side of this concept: "A city manager is a administrative officer, who is usually appointed to serve as chief administrative officer within the Board. A city manager is clearly responsible for the City Council, but is much less likely that the image of responsible dethrone a strong mayor. To be held accountable for their decisions often unpopular fiscal policy they should respond to voters. Another fact to consider is that it is difficult for voters to hold board members responsible for inadequate social and fiscal policies, because power is decentralized; city manager is appointed and usually has a contract with well established tasks legal point showing their performance in some time. This paper analyzes the impact of the Government Board on the relationship between citizens and local Administrative. The objective of this paper is to determine whether a current city manager has a negative peace on the level of interaction between citizens and local government and if it decreases the influence of citizens in social and fiscal policies

On the other hand as "The International Conference on Business and Commerce" on the topic "The city manager: from the U.S. experience to Romanian reality" city manager is seen as an entrepreneur, a bureaucratic set in contrast with the political entrepreneur is relatively more prudent in the proposed policy and more likely to support new ideas that have been "verified" their associated professionals. The literature offers another perspective on the city manager. This route to success is their move to larger cities and better paid, but there are still a few city managers who enjoy office in small towns, poorly developed.

#### **4. The actual stage of public administrator evolution in Romania**

Having as a role model the other E.U. states know-how and good politics, the institution of public administrator has begun to prove its utility also in Romania, through the initiatives of certain mayors and county councils presidents. The main tendencies in developing public administrator's function are aiming for implementation and also research and evaluation above the influence of those measures in reforming local public administration system. All these efforts were synthesized in the project called "*Public administrator – a key for a successful local management*", financed from Social European Funds and having as a purpose developing public administrator institution by increasing the level of

<sup>8</sup> C. Ramió, „Desenvolupament organitzatiu de l'ajuntament gerencial”, in *Diputació de Barcelona: L'ajuntament gerencial: reflexions i propostes per gerencialitzar*, Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona, 1999, p. 53.

informations regarding the employment of public administrators and supporting the creation of a functional operational network in this case.

In Romania, public administrator function was regulated by Law no.286/2006 amending and supplementing Law no. 215/2001 local government. One of the innovations introduced by Law no.286/2006 is the introduction of public administrator, creating the legal framework for delegating certain tasks to the mayor / chairman of the county public administrator.

The legislative framework provided by this law allows mayors / presidents of county councils to engage, under a management contract, a public administrator responsible for coordinating specialized device or public service at local / county. By delegation, he may exercise the chief quality officer. Public administrator may be employed on a proposal Mayor / Chairperson of the county, with approval of the local / county as a result of competition, the maximum number of posts approved. Appointment and dismissal of public administrator are made by the mayor / chairman of the county on the basis of procedures and specific tasks approved by the local / county.

Also, intercommunity development associations may decide to appoint a public administrator for management services of general interest subject association.

Recruitment, appointment and dismissal of public administrator intercommunity development associations are made according by Law.286/2006 amending and supplementing Law no.215/2001 on local public administration, republished, based on specific procedures by their boards of directors and approved by decisions of local and county councils concerned. (Law no.215/2001 on local public administration republished, Chapter VIII, Art.114).

Institution as a public administrator is bottom up initiative of local government in an attempt mayors and presidents of county councils to delegate a multitude of their duties. Romanian public administrator has increasingly become a reality in communities inspired model City Manager. Its presence has emerged as a viable solution for local officials in the separation of attributes specific management representative and current activities. Public administrator function comes as an alternative local Romanian, was introduced into law in mid 2006. Local realities require a change in system performance by redistributing tasks locally by primary and / or presidents of county councils, to streamline administrative act.

Although the institutions of public administrator work in some administrative units, it was not yet introduced a bill. No local government law.215/2001 does not restrict the adoption of local development policies, but does not specify the nature of these initiatives, which required an amendment.

The main duties of public administrators in Romania are: exercise main credit quality, coordination of various public services (Service Management and Community Public Service and Fire Emergency, Community Police Service, security and order of services for social assistance, Department of Population, education, health service, sports, culture, public service for local public finance, local taxes), direct relations with the public (audience, addressing petitions), media relations, relationship with non governmental organizations, writing extra budgetary funded projects. Note that these duties are not distributed uniformly in terms of public administrator job description, at the county councils and / or municipalities (of city, town or village). Not all public administrators have the same powers, but they differ from one political subdivision to another. For example, not all public administrators have been delegated the task of authorizing officer. Others were delegated this authority, limited to a certain level or not.

Justifying its delegation to the mayor, it may concern different aspects, some referring to the trust and loyalty capabilities.

On the status of public administrator, it is not a public official in the mayor's specialized unit, but has the quality of contract staff, as reflected in the law which states a contract of management between primary and under which the administrator will accomplished latter duties. Moreover, this is strengthened because the not specifying text Law 188/1994 or within Law 286/2006 of any references that we could conclude that the public administrator would be considered a public official.

Quality staff and not official contract implies a lower wage regulating public administrator, which increases the primary instruments available to motivate his subordinate, or to reward their merits. Thus, according to O.G. 10/2007, salary of a public administrator will fall within certain "limits, with the minimum basic salary of secretary

administrative unit and the maximum salary of the mayor, president of the county or the mayor of Bucharest, as appropriate" (Government Ordinance no.10/2007).

### Conclusions

With national policy-making gaining in complexity and becoming increasingly exposed to international and European coordination, as is the case in all EU Member States, there is an even greater need for public administrators to have a broad perspective and the ability to coordinate their work with national, European and international institutions. In this regard, the EU context and development of multi-cultural skills should be emphasised and included more in the competency frameworks and the training and development

activities for top public managers. New ways of developing public administrators in a more structured way have to be found, taking into account their responsibilities and time restrictions. Given the importance of the European environment of public administration, more emphasis should be placed on this dimension in the future. The development of leadership skills is still important in many Member States in order to add long-term strategic thinking and team and people management to the management competencies. To lead permanent change, public administrators have to develop into top public leaders. Long working hours are still the norm for top management positions, whilst telework or flexible working Latest trends in Top Public Management in the European Union Top public managers (TPM) should perform as leaders instead of only as managers, while being able to bring movement and change to the organisation in a way that encourages most of the employees to want to be part of the movement. time arrangements are still rare. Consequently, establishing flexible working arrangements that help reconcile professional and private life should be allowed also in higher and top management positions so as to enable more women

to take up top positions. Another valuable stimulus is a well-designed parental leave system. In the countries with a long-established leave system, it is generally not part of the organisational culture to allow public managers to benefit from these working conditions. The main problem continues to exist, because women or men who are taking care of a child or family often thereby limit their chances of promotion or career development. This is one of the elements that will have to be considered throughout the EU. Political support for changes in this area is essential.

Regarding the presence of a public administrator in administrative units in Romania, the benefits are undeniable. Such advantages are to improve the efficiency of the administrative record, following the introduction of this feature. Streamline flow of documents and information are other arguments in support of the model adopted by other local government units, as a guarantee of professionalization of Romanian modern public management. In these circumstances, an administrator could then support duties Mayor / Chairperson of the county and could secure a more efficient administrative system.

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