Loránd Cziprián Kovács

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL STRUCTURE IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Within the managerial system of every public institution, human resources occupy a very important place. Even though the former totalitarian societies in Eastern Europe neglected this aspect, the new public administrations in this area discovered that they must apply a rational model in human resource development. Therefore, special attention has to be given to every important aspect in this field, from selection to personnel organization and training.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL- RECRUITMENT

One may generally say that the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization is proportional to the quality of its hired personnel. Personnel, in its turn, are influenced by personnel policy and the type of hiring performed, namely by the recruitment process.

From here on, asserting that recruitment and selection of personnel is paramount comes as the next logical step. There is also an added difficulty. All over the world, the public sector is less favored when it comes to recruitment and selection than the private sector. This is caused, on the one hand, by those institutions which make no profit and thus do not need innovation and highly specialized personnel and, on the other hand, by the inertia of the slow and tedious system which does not allow for the easy and rapid advancement of its personnel. Routine, which gives the system stability, is a killer for recruitment and selection.

Practically, recruitment is handled through the external and formal method, since the internal method is, on the one hand, contrary to the principle of equity and equality of all citizens, while the administrative system must formally be open to all social classes. On the other hand, informal external recruitment that involves looking for qualified personnel for a certain position is not permitted since it is more likely to draw accusations of clientelism and nepotism than in the private field.

1 Dodu-Tripon, Managementul resurselor umane în administrația publică, Civitas, 2000, Cluj-Napoca, p. 34-50.
Administrative institutions are thus reduced to recruiting through the external method of advertising. Unfortunately, this type of recruitment has the greatest rates of personnel fluctuation, an unwanted phenomenon which is increasingly found in public institutions, mainly in those exposed to political control and interventionism.

The recruitment sphere in local administration is very large. It encompasses all professions and social categories since Law 188 set no restrictions in this matter. Regardless of the basic profession and the social category, all Romanian citizens may enter the public servants corps, which means total equity, but is counterproductive. Through its very spirit, the law establishing the status of the public servants puts no price on the professional administrative training of public servants.

This explains why almost two thirds of all public servants are high school graduates, and almost half of university-educated public servants are graduates of engineering and natural sciences faculties.

Moreover, data about the former workplaces of current public servants gives more body to this negative image. Our research has shown that more than half (57.8%) of the current public servants activating in local administration are former employees of private or state-owned institutions. Even worse, just 22.63% of these have worked in public administration before, while 71.28% were involved in completely different types of activities.

The reason for this overrepresentation of engineers and other individuals from production environments may be found in Romania’s macroeconomics state.

The first enterprises unable to function on an open competition market were the industry behemoths built during the years of socialist “glory”. As these institutions went bankrupt, the first people to leave were those who, in the absence of other viable options inside the socialist system, had graduated from a technical school. These individuals (engineers, mostly female) were the first to look for work in the private field after 1990 and thus found “refuge” in administration.

The second wave of specialists in natural and engineering sciences entered public administration after the economic shock of 1997 finally eroded the private enterprises set up immediately after 1989.

This was positive for unemployment and other indicators of the work market, but not for public administration. Absorbing technical specialists in places where they were not needed solved unemployment, but did not help the professionalism of public administration. Engineers do not and should not have social sciences backgrounds.
While this lack in itself is not a problem, its consequences are. Social sciences students, even if otherwise inclined, are forced to consider man and society during their university years. Mathematical and technical thinking, on the other hand, does not result in any pro-society thinking or aptitudes. Technical assemblies do not require thinking, but rigid calculations. This rigidity entered public administration with no regard to the fact that people and society do not act according to the same rules as technical assemblies.

The above-mentioned phenomenon did not really de-humanize public administration, as much as it engendered the excessive bureaucracy and inertia of the post-1989 administrative system.

To counterbalance this, administrative institutions try to organize selection on the basis of specialized knowledge. In most cases, selection uses law texts that are mandatory for the position to be filled. Practically, the bibliography is almost entirely based on administrative legislation and- rarely- on requirements regarding the candidates’ abilities to work on a computer.

Selection usually has two or three stages, depending on the use of the computer examination. The first stage is usually written, and has two or three open questions related to legal texts. It was just recently that administrative institutions have started to design tests with more questions, among which closed or semi-closed ones.

There are more reasons for this situation: creating multiple questions tests takes time and people and it also reduces the subjectivity of open questions with descriptive answers. This form of examination is used mostly in internal recruitment for promotions, that we are going to describe in the following chapter.

Another problem is the one-dimensionality of this type of test- it only tests legal knowledge, leaving other important issues entirely out, such as: aptitudes (intelligence, memory, perceptiveness, communication aptitudes, attention), attitudes (social and professional) and the character of the candidate.

The lack of social and professional attitudes assessment is, in our opinion, the worst problem, because it allows irresponsible individuals or individuals with seriously deviant attitudes toward society and community inside the system.

The recruitment process has no means to assess the candidates’ motivation to enter public service, which is, we think, the only way to discover their feelings and responsibility toward the community.
2. PROMOTION OF PERSONNEL

Promotions inside local public administration institutions are forbidden by law. The law does not *ad textuam* prohibit promotion, but it states that all vacancies are to be made public through advertisements in local and/or central dailies. In practice, promotion resembles very much recruitment- since it can only take place with the participation of all individuals interested, it is open to all without discrimination and must be public.

Our research found that vacancies in the management positions of local administrative institutions have been covered both by externals (people from outside the institution) and internals (people from inside the institution).

Given that externals qualify for recruitment, and only internals can actually be defined as promotions, we shall concentrate on the latter.

As we have shown above, Law 188 forbids promotions inside the public system, thus forcing public institutions to find other means to promote personnel.

The most used technique is *over-demanding* or *excessive bibliography*. The person to be promoted is appointed on the (vacant) position until the examination, which is allowed by law. During this provisory situation, the person gets around in the new environment and acquires the knowledge associated with the position. After the period(s) of provisory nomination\(^3\) end, the position is made public. During the selection process the bibliography for the examination contains the entire legislation for that field of activity\(^4\).

The potential candidates have to familiarize themselves with and assimilate the entire legislation of the field in less than two weeks, while the internal already knows the detailed legislation, thus has an unbeatable advantage over any other candidate.

Another promotion method is the *inverted personal requirements method*. This is the inverting of the requirements of the position and the knowledge and aptitudes of the candidate. The position is legally made public but with supplementary requirements which “just happen” to be identical to the knowledge and aptitudes of

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\(^3\) The applicable legislation states that this period cannot be longer than 6 months. However, after six months the person may be reappointed for 6 more months in the same provisory capacity and this may continue forever.

\(^4\) A real case, that of the nomination of the general manager of county X’s Prefect Office is symptomatic of this. The position was legally made public but with a bibliography of no less than 157 laws whose titles by themselves covered 12 pages. The supposed candidates for the position had to read...
the internal. This infinitely reduces the possibility that anyone else will show up for the examination.

3. PERSONNEL TRAINING

Like recruitment and promotion, personnel training has no legal constraints. Most E.U. states have constraints about the basic profession and the training of the public servant. In most cases, public servants with no administrative background must follow training courses and then pass examinations. The second stage, specializing, is not compulsory and contains other courses and examinations.

There is no such requirement in the Romanian law establishing the status of the public servant. Training and specializing courses are facultative and the legislation only puts forward the possibility of taking such courses in state institutions especially organized for such purposes.

The results of this policy are predictable. 43.75% of public servants interviewed during our research never took a training or specialization course, 25.20% took just one course and only 29% of all public servants completed two or more specialization courses.

Worse, most of the courses are in informatics, namely PC usage—with very few of the courses actually pursuing administrative specialization.

There are two primary causes for this phenomenon. The first is intimately linked to the limited financial resources of the local authorities. Although through the Law 215 of 2001 of local public administration, local authorities must allocate through their own budgets sums for the training of personnel, these sums are too small to cover all related expenses. Since institutions which offer training courses have a quasi-monopoly on this field they try to get as much money as possible from the local authorities. The prices for specialization courses are very high—such as $150 to $250 for a 5-day-course, apart from transportation, bed and board and other expenses. The total expenses for a person taking such a course would be the triple of the sole training sum, namely around $400-500/week. This is exaggerated, given the small budgets of local authorities.

The second cause is the mindset of local authorities’ managers, who do not train personnel unless they are forced to. The law sets no sanctions for the non-
completion of such obligations, thus participating in training and specialization courses is not a priority.

This indifference toward specialization courses coupled with the lack of financial resources led to a strange phenomenon. Increasingly, specialization courses are seen by both management and employees as a recognition for the best or the most appreciated employees.

Both sides win. Since specialization classes are not taken seriously by either side, public servants see them as updates on the latest developments in the field and do not expect any serious examination at the end. Thus, public servants get a well-deserved vacation in another town, all expenses covered by their mother-institution and the managers are happy to have given recognition to a good member of the staff without having to further reduce the small wages fund.

4. PUBLIC SERVANTS ATTRIBUTIONS AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Webber theory on bureaucracy puts forward the exact establishment of the public servants’ attributions based on their results. To determine the exact attributions of a position, one uses a job description. This is the formal expression of Webber’s principle that all bureaucracies have a complex set of rules which guide their activity and is converted in rights and obligations for each bureaucratic position.

The existence of this description is decisive about setting the public servants’ attributions, in order to both insure the good functioning of the institution and establish certain criteria about the assessment of activity of public servants.

Job descriptions normally include the detailed description of those activities that the individual who occupies a certain position must perform.

These are:

A- The description of all position related activities
   (the objective and goal of the position, procedures and processes)

B- Employee-related activities
   (behavior models)

C- Tools and equipment needed for the position’s activities

D- The position’s relational elements

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5 Government Decision 572 of 1998 setting up territorial centers for the specialization of individuals elected and appointed in the local authorities.
There must be at least two copies for each job description, one for the person holding the job and at least another for his or her assessors.

Unfortunately, a great part (41.41%) of those interviewed during our research were unable to produce a copy of the job description. They knew such “papers” existed, but they had seen them only once- when they had signed them- or never.

In most institutions we have seen, job descriptions are kept in the Human Resources Office, where only those who occupy the position are allowed to see their own description, since they are considered professional secrets!

The almost general existence of just one copy was motivated by a lack of resources (paper and consumables).

In other institutions, the job description is still in one copy but this is kept by the person who occupies the position! In these fairly frequent cases, the Human Resources Office left to the public servant the task to write down his or her own work attributions after appointment on the job and verbal notice of the attributions.

In these latter cases there were many instances where the two job descriptions (the employee’s and the Human Resources Office’s) were completely dissimilar. The differences came from the fact that the Human Resources Office’s job description had been written by the previous occupant of the position.

Another problem is that 27.93% of the public servants interviewed could not even enumerate their main work attributions. This figure is similar to that of public servants unaware whether the phrase “executes the decisions and orders of their hierarchical superiors”, usually the last of the attributions, is listed or not in their job description (27.34%).

A feature common to all researched job descriptions in public administration institutions in four counties and at all levels is the mention that all work attributions are “in compliance with the law”. This refers to the fact that most actual work attributions are copied from different paragraphs of laws, regulations, government decisions, orders and department memos. The work attributions were simply an exhaustive copy of all applicable legislation, regardless of the actual demands of the position.

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Informal communication of work attributions is somewhat counter-balancing this incorrect practice. In our research, 90% of those interviewed had been verbally communicated their work attributions when they took up their new position.

In most cases, there was no mention of “Tools and equipment needed for position’s activities”. These were communicated to the person during activity, socialization and familiarization with the position- which is common practice in most bureaucratic systems7.

We cannot say the same about the models of behavior chapter. This was nowhere to be found in the job descriptions we have seen.

On the other hand, the relation elements were lavishly described, communicating to the holder of the position who his or her direct superiors and collaborators were. The second part of this chapter was invariably about what to do when the permanent holder of the position was absent or incapacitated.

These were all the details we could find in the job descriptions we researched. There were no descriptions of the routine relational elements of the position: what documents must be completed, at what time intervals and for whom. Our supposition that we might encounter these elements in the regulation of organization and functioning was proven wrong. Either there were no such regulations or they were so old they had become irrelevant. In this somber statistics, Commune and Town Halls come first, but we did not find many regulations in City Halls either. Only one of the researched institutions (the Covasna City Council) adopted in 2001, after 11 years of functioning, a regulation of functioning, but this only describes the ways of elaboration and adoption of their own laws!

A common feature of administrative institutions is the brevity of the relation elements in the job description. Generally, they are a matter of 4-5 lines, one paragraph at most. In most instances, they simply stated how to handle situations of absence and who the hierarchical superior is.

Limiting the relation description to one paragraph in the job description is strange, given that all the administrative institutions we have seen had no regulations of organization and functioning- which establish the relation between the different organizational levels and positions.

The two issues we have described above led to the so-called phenomenon of unionized responsibility.

In the given circumstances of incomplete job descriptions and lack of regulations, those responsible for failure are almost impossible to find. If scrutinized for failure, public servants tend to transfer responsibility around, based on small failures not mentioned anywhere in the regulation of functioning. Often, these small yet cumulated failures- caused by a lack of attention- lead to total failures of the administrative and political process with no responsible person(s) to identify.

5. ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCES OF PUBLIC SERVANTS

According to the definition, assessing individual performances represents the appreciation of the degree to which the public servant accomplishes his or her tasks, as required by the position.

There are certain criteria for this assessment, which should be communicated through job descriptions, both theoretically and legally. Unfortunately, in Romania only international corporations have a set of criteria for assessing their employees.

In public service, this lack is very concrete in form. Most job descriptions in public institutions contain the phrase “executes the decisions and orders of their hierarchical superiors” or something similar. This work attribution has some serious consequences.

In our research, we have found that 56.25% of the interviewed public servants were aware of the phrase. Its main problem is the large interpretation of the work attributions, whose subjective assessment is the only one possible. Decisions and orders of a hierarchical superior may be conflicting or even contrary to the work attributions in the job description. Thus, the public servant is caught in the middle. The result is an over-demand from the public servant that he or she can or cannot handle. Moreover, this gives the superior authoritarian power with no possibility of control, since most orders are verbal.

The total subservience of the public servant to his or her hierarchical superiors is the final effect of this measure.

The phenomenon is worsened by the fact that the job descriptions only had vague or general mentions of the assessment criteria, which include social and

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economic factors outside the employee’s skills and aptitudes. There are countless examples of this. PR personnel- as per job description- are assessed according to the number of acts issued, irrespective (no mention in the job description) of the number of people who received these acts. In another instance, the control institutions assess personnel according to the sanction (!!!) an individual applies and not the frequency of controls.

General formulations in assessment criteria have been shown to lead to highly subjective assessments.

We have noticed to subservience phenomenon first-hand in the four counties we have researched. A percentage of:

- 90.23% of the individuals said that they obey orders with no comment;
- 78.32% of the managers are tough when assessing subordinates’ work;
- 61% think hierarchical superiors like giving orders.

These percentages, coupled with the issues we have discussed before and the lack of objective assessment criteria, lead to a somber conclusion: public servants are subservient to their hierarchical superior without any control or possibility thereof.

6. PUBLIC SERVANTS MOTIVATION

The phrase “he or she doesn’t work because there’s no motivation for him/her” has become widely used after 1989, and most often heard from or said about public servants.

Let us see the origin of this mindset, a close relative of the popular saying during the communist regime “we’re pretending to work, they’re pretending to pay us”. The common sense explanation that Romania has no work culture is a partial justification for this. There must be some sort of work culture as a moral value, but there has been no empirical research in Romania so far. Yet, the lack of a positive attitude toward work as a moral value is based, we think, on a wrong perception of the motivational structure of Romanian employees in general and public employees in particular.

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9 Dodu-Tripon, Managementul resurselor umane în administrația publică, Civitas, 2000, Cluj-Napoca, p. 42.
The most eloquent expression of this misperception is the governmental theory according to which poverty is a factor of productivity growth since poor people are likely to work more in order to earn more\textsuperscript{10}.

This somewhat cynical assertion is contradicted by both motivational theories and practice. According to this theory, developing and underdeveloped countries should be the most economically efficient, which is obviously not the case. Quite the opposite, poverty can be one of the most important de-motivational factors.

According to Maslow’s theory of needs, all humans try to satisfy personal needs in a certain order. The five types of needs are organized in a pyramid where the lowest level corresponds to the basic human needs that are satisfied first, while the more elaborate needs are to be satisfied as soon as the immediately inferior need was entirely or partially satisfied. In this sense, the most important human needs are physiological needs (water and food for survival), closely followed by physical and social security needs (shelter from harsh environment). Social and association needs are on the third level and the need for esteem, social recognition, self-actualization and self-affirmation are at the very top and will be satisfied last.

Theorists have developed Maslow’s theory, and some of new ideas have been confirmed in practice and intimately linked to the motivation phenomenon.

Herzberg establishes two categories of factors of the motivational process: extrinsic factors—work conditions, remuneration and inter-personal relations and intrinsic factors: responsibility, advancement, work per se, recognition for the work done and self-actualization. He went on to prove that extrinsic factors may cause extreme dissatisfaction (strong de-motivational factors) and intrinsic factors may cause maximum satisfaction (strong motivational factors).

At first, Atkinson defined motivational factors as activities and/or reactions which cause satisfaction and pleasure\textsuperscript{11}. Afterwards, during research of motivation and de-motivation of management personnel, he established three factors that bring satisfaction. These are: belonging to a group (1); recognition of performed work, professional success (2); and not least, authority and power of decision (3)\textsuperscript{12}.

\textsuperscript{10} Dan Ioan Popescu’s declaration on the requirements of the European Union regarding the social policy and economic efficiency in Romania.

\textsuperscript{11} Atkinson et all, Hilgard’s Introduction to Psychology, Harcout Brace, College, Forth Worth, 1996, p. 289-313.

The greatest similitude between the three theories is given by the convertible character of motivational factors. Extrinsic factors may be converted into money or other units of economic value, intrinsic factors cannot.

Moreover, both Maslow and Herzberg show that extrinsic factors, those that can be converted economically, may become the strongest de-motivational factors.

The Romanian public servant’s motivational structure cannot differ very much from these models verified worldwide. In these conditions, one may ask whether the life and work conditions of the Romanian public servant are motivational factors or not.

The National Statistics Commission’s data is relevant in this sense: in a family, 80-85% of the revenue is spent for basic needs - food and drink, medicines, clothing and home-related expenses. The remaining 15% is spent on transportation and telecommunications, culture, art and others.

In consequence, it is safe to say that the Romanian worker works to live. The monthly average net wages are barely enough to live on. If we apply the above-mentioned theories, we can see wages are a strong de-motivational factor. If so, can the Romanian worker’s wages be a motivational factor? Of course there is only one answer to this: no.

There is, therefore, a strong de-motivational factor on the entire bureaucratic scale: public servants have low wages.

**Table 4. Money expenses structure of homes vs. the entire money expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home expenses</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing and footwear</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home and possessions</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs and medical care</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and telecommunications</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, education</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other personal expenses</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations based on data from the Statistical Yearbook of Romania 1998

One could also suppose that the level of the public servants’ wages is larger than those of other social categories. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The monthly average net wages are not very different from the monthly average net wages per
national economy. The one percent difference is insignificant. The differences from other types of employees are not. Banking employees have wages 100% larger than those of public servants, transport and warehouses employees 20% larger and post office employees 17%.

The differences are not very significant, but in time, they cumulate to deteriorate the general material state of the public servants, a situation similar to that of education and health employees.

Table 5. Monthly average net revenue of economy branches vs. average revenue/economy (percentages)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Financial/ banking activities</td>
<td>148,76</td>
<td>146,20</td>
<td>165,02</td>
<td>182,39</td>
<td>203,92</td>
<td>225,65</td>
<td>178,66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Transport and warehouses</td>
<td>126,01</td>
<td>122,24</td>
<td>117,32</td>
<td>118,62</td>
<td>123,04</td>
<td>117,61</td>
<td>120,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Post Office and telecommunications</td>
<td>97,84</td>
<td>111,84</td>
<td>114,53</td>
<td>124,49</td>
<td>119,39</td>
<td>137,76</td>
<td>117,64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Constructions</td>
<td>107,07</td>
<td>109,67</td>
<td>116,18</td>
<td>105,28</td>
<td>102,75</td>
<td>93,90</td>
<td>105,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Industry</td>
<td>102,43</td>
<td>106,59</td>
<td>103,54</td>
<td>106,51</td>
<td>108,30</td>
<td>105,52</td>
<td>105,48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Real estate transactions and other services</td>
<td>105,14</td>
<td>101,14</td>
<td>97,67</td>
<td>105,95</td>
<td>105,33</td>
<td>103,77</td>
<td>103,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Public Administration</td>
<td>104,75</td>
<td>107,06</td>
<td>105,57</td>
<td>105,78</td>
<td>94,26</td>
<td>92,62</td>
<td>101,67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Education</td>
<td>93,57</td>
<td>92,84</td>
<td>93,23</td>
<td>91,20</td>
<td>85,27</td>
<td>82,16</td>
<td>89,71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Forestry</td>
<td>92,65</td>
<td>85,71</td>
<td>81,95</td>
<td>83,96</td>
<td>85,73</td>
<td>87,25</td>
<td>86,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Health and social assistance</td>
<td>98,69</td>
<td>94,08</td>
<td>88,88</td>
<td>75,50</td>
<td>71,08</td>
<td>70,52</td>
<td>83,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Trade</td>
<td>90,28</td>
<td>90,13</td>
<td>87,36</td>
<td>79,03</td>
<td>77,44</td>
<td>69,92</td>
<td>82,36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Agriculture</td>
<td>85,66</td>
<td>83,81</td>
<td>79,53</td>
<td>80,14</td>
<td>78,65</td>
<td>71,47</td>
<td>79,88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Other economic activities</td>
<td>73,43</td>
<td>76,90</td>
<td>80,15</td>
<td>73,06</td>
<td>77,86</td>
<td>79,12</td>
<td>76,75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Hotels and restaurants</td>
<td>73,77</td>
<td>71,80</td>
<td>69,08</td>
<td>68,08</td>
<td>66,98</td>
<td>62,74</td>
<td>68,74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations based on data from the Statistical Yearbook of Romania 1998

Public servants inevitably become aware of the wages’ level of their foreign counterparts and the comparison is devastating. A Romanian public servant earns around $1000/ year, while his or her European counterparts make around 20-24 times more. The difference is enormous and the comparison valid although seen as invalid and non-functional by some.

Differences do count. Had people not guide themselves on this differences there would be no economic migration and the communist system would not have
collapsed. One of the theories on why communism collapsed is based on the idea that communism could be instated because it created an economic legitimacy comparable to that of capitalist states\(^\text{13}\). Immediately after WWII, communist states had an economic growth and an increase in the life quality for large masses of population. This development in itself was no cause for legitimacy, yet in Central and Eastern Europe reconstruction was over, while western states were just starting it with the Marshall Plan, so the quality of life was considerably better in the communist block. Who would protest a regime where life is better than on the opposing side?

The comparison gives reasons to worry because the same situation led to the collapse of communism. Western states recuperated the handicap because of an open competition economy which favored both growth and quality of life. The communist system’s legitimacy slowly disappeared, leaving only terror and restrictions in its wake.

\textbf{Table 6.} Real monthly average net revenue calculated based on the ROL/USD parity for branches of national economy

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Financial/ banking activities</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Transport and warehouses</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Post Office and telecommunications</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
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<td>75</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>111</td>
<td>108</td>
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<td>6 Real estate transactions and other services</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>84</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>93</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 \textbf{Public Administration}</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>112</td>
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<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Education</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>76</td>
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</tr>
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<td>9 Forestry</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Health and social assistance</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>11 Trade</td>
<td>66</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>81</td>
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<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Agriculture</td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>69</td>
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<td>82</td>
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<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Other economic activities</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Hotels and restaurants</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>62</td>
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\(^{13}\) Schöpflin, George: \textit{Why Communism Collapsed} in Internațional Affairs nr 66, p.3-17.
Source: Calculations based on data from the Statistical Yearbook of Romania 1998

The situation of the Romanian administrative, health and education systems is similar to that presented above. In theory, there is freedom of action, no one is forced to stay inside the system, but the unemployment rate is too high for work to be easily available.

The above-mentioned situation was confirmed by a research on public servants’ methods to solve conflicts inside and outside their institutions and the leadership styles of the same institutions. To correlate revenues of leaders with their leadership styles, one question referred to how satisfied public servants are with their wages. The overwhelming majority said that wages are low and very low (75.87%) and only 17.48% said that they are sufficient, while only 2.09% said that wages are good and there was no answer for “very good”.

The personal-subjective evaluation of the local public servants’ wages as compared to those of the employees of other branches of the national economy was more balanced. The same respondents said that their wages are at the same level as those of other employees (55.59%), 27.27% said that they are lower and 10.48% that they are higher.

The lack of money motivation was reduced by the fact that, during 1997-1998, most public servants also had additional revenue, from counseling to private companies and informal assistance inside the bureaucratic apparatus. This is also a reason for absenteeism from work.

7. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION INSTITUTIONS

Each administrative institution has its own organizational culture. This culture can be individuated because it is caused by several factors.

The first group of factors is linked to the macrostructure of the society where the institution exists. National culture, historical traditions and social and economical conditions of this society are all such factors.

The second group of factors is organized around the microstructure conditions, under which the organization operates: the political climate (local and national), the

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medium and long-term strategy of the institution (local and central goals), formal organization and the history and traditions of the institution.

The third group of factors is made up of the needs and particular short term goals of the institution. Hofstede’s organizational theory tries, on the other hand, to analyze the interpersonal rapports inside an institution based on four factors:

- decisional distance,
- the collective or individual character of interpersonal relations,
- the feminine or masculine character,
- the regularity or predictability character of the individual actions.

These factors are, according to Hofstede’s research group, the determinants of organizational culture.

7.1 Decisional distance

According to Hofstede, decisional distance concerns the social and hierarchical status distance between the decision-makers and those who implement the decisions in an organization. It applies to the ability and willingness of subordinates to debate a decision in front of their superiors, or at the superiors’ request. If subordinates feel free to express such opinions and do so often and if superiors often consult their subordinates about the decisions that they make, then the decisional distance is small. If the opposite is true, then there is a large decisional distance.

The research we did in four counties on a sample of 512 local public servants invalidated one of the hypotheses on decisional distance of the research, namely that decisional distance in Romanian public administration is large.

13 questions were used to determine decisional distance. Just 6 of these showed a clear tendency about an increasing decisional distance between superiors and subordinates. Among these, 4 questions are categorical about it:

1. the manager asks subordinates to execute orders (a 82.25 index on a −100 to + 100 scale)
2. managers’ toughness about subordinates evaluations (62.02)


3. managers like to give orders (30.27)
4. managers do not intervene in subordinates work problems (36.13)

The answers to 2 questions, although with positive values, have no relevance because of their value:
5. direct superiors are just obeying orders (6.7) and
6. managers are distant with subordinates (10.80)

The answers to the other 7 questions, although affirmative, indicate a negative value about decisional distance:
1. managers help subordinates solve extra-curricular problems (-53.91)
2. managers are good pals (-67.06)
3. managers are tolerated (-70.14)
4. managers are lenient (-74.55)
5. managers take subordinates’ opinions into consideration (-24.48)
6. managers are friendly (-82.29)

Only the answers to one of the questions have some relevance, although the index is negative in value:
7. subordinates socialize with managers outside working hours (-6.47)

The general decisional distance index- given all the above- is of only – 11.59 on a scale of –100 > x < +100, where –100 means no decisional distance whatsoever (decisions taken by group) and +100 is maximum distance, total authoritarianism where one person makes all the decisions and subordinates only execute them.

The negative value contradicts the general perception that Romanian administrative employees are generally excluded from the decision-making process, like mere puppets in the system.

In our research, we have tried to find the reasons for the origin of this small decisional distance by formulating a few questions about the relationship between superiors and subordinates in local administration.

The answers of the respondents were vague. To the question: “Do you believe your superior has a longer tenure in the field (than you)?” 64.39 % answered yes and 35.61 % no. Similar answers were given to the questions: “Do you think your superior is better trained (than you)?” and “Do you think your superior has greater professional experience (than you)?” the respondents said “yes” 69.41 %, 65.07 % respectively and “no” 30.59 % and 34.93 % respectively.
The general belief is that superiors are better trained, have longer tenure and greater experience than subordinates, which are positive values and justly place them higher in the hierarchy.

The ambiguity we mentioned earlier comes from the fact that, despite the above, subordinates also think (86.21%) they could run things the same way or better than their superiors!

This ambiguity confirms the findings about a small decisional distance, yet justly makes us wonder where this mindset comes from.

We think there are two causes for this phenomenon. The first is intimately linked to the public servants’ experience during communism, when training and experience counted less than fidelity to the official party line and mostly the informal links in this process. One could easily notice that, despite the lack of professionalism and competence, the system ran perfectly. Given this, one can be easily led to think that, to manage an organization, one needs no professional knowledge, but informal links with the power.

On the other hand, the communist propaganda of equality generated the feeling that any of the employees was equal in knowledge and abilities with any of the management team.

The second cause can be encountered in the fragile “original democracy” of post-1989 Romania. The new democratic system contributed to the continuation of the above-mentioned mindset by not making clear that democracy does not necessarily equal professionalism. Just the opposite, democracy ends at the border separating the inalienable personal rights from it and at its border with professionalism. In the first case, democracy does not give the majority absolute power on the minority and the individual and in the second, it does not imply that all individuals have or could have identical mental aptitudes.

In this sense, the belief that anyone could “run things just like the manager or better” is based on the democratic-egalitarian principle and not on professionalism.

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18 This type of socialization can be summarized in the often-used, both jokingly and not, phrase “If the party gives you a position, it’s going to give you a brain too”.
19 See the institution of “worker-managers” in the 1950s and 1960s, the latent conflict between workers and auxiliary personnel during communism and the slogans of the workers’ protest meetings during the 90s “We are working, not thinking!”.
By failing to separate democracy and professionalism, public servants fail to see the professional side of a moral value.

7.2 Individualism or collectivism?

The collective or individual character of an institution is based on the value that management gives to the individual and the group. If an individual is promoted with absolute disregard for the group efforts that contributed to his or her success, the culture of that institution can be called individualistic. In the opposite case, is an individual from a group works harder than his or her colleagues, yet receives no promotion, the culture tends toward the collective.

During the same research we mentioned earlier, we found that the general tendency of Romanian public administration is toward the collective. The answers to the nine questions of this section were all of positive value.

Most public servants think their colleagues are good pals (an index of 88.02 – 100 < x > + 100 scale), are proud of their colleagues’ results as individuals (871), are proud of the results of the group they belong to (869), are proud of their manager’s results as an individual (73.09), the manager is a good pal (608), are proud to be working in that particular institution (65.82), think group interests are important (22.69) and think that individual interests are important (20.86).

Given the above the value of the general index for collectivism was set at 62.99 on a –100 < x > + 100 scale, where – 100 means extreme individualism and + 100, general collectivism.

The common sense perception that “everyone for himself” is true of the public servants was proved false. There is a strong group feeling among public servants, toward their own group and “trade”. Given the small decisional distance, this collectivism is hardly surprising.

7.3 Is a rule a rule or just a desired state?

Regularity and predictability are one of the most important characters of an institution and refer to the respect given to rules. They measure to what extent the behavior of the institution’s employees is regulated. If most activities are regulated by internal order regulations, than the institution is highly regulated.

Regularity and predictability are narrowly linked. The more personal behavior and actions are profoundly determined by existing regulations (as attributions on the job description) the better one can establish sanctioning measures for them. For every activity there is a set sanctioning measure- positive or negative.
According to the answers provided by the 512 public servants we interviewed, regularity and predictability are not seen as the strong points of local public administration in Romania. The general index for regularity-predictability is even lower than the general index for decisional distance- 0.106 on a unitary scale where 0 means total irregularity and minimal predictability and unitary value where every activity of the employee is prescribed by the regulations and its effects are known before-hand and can be assessed precisely.

The answers to the 11 questions of this section indicate a small degree of regularity in the functioning of local public institutions. Although the index for the existence of work meetings- indicating stability and regularity in functioning- has a positive value, this value is rather small (5.31 on a –100 to + 100 scale) and the index for the regularity of these meetings has a large negative value - 50.20.

This was also noticed regarding work attributions- the index for job descriptions- where one can find each employee’s and job’s attributions- has a small positive value (14.52), while the index for the conclusive formulation of work attributions has a large negative value (-54.84).

This small index partially explains the tendency toward collectivism. A well formulated regulation of internal order and the clear description of the public servants’ attributions- namely a regularity and predictability of a high nominal value- would cause organizational culture to shift toward individualism.

7.4 Femininity or masculinity?

The feminine or masculine orientation of an organization is difficult to pinpoint as it not only describes the proportion of the two sexes inside the organization, but also its goals which may be – culturally- masculine (toughness, force) or feminine (understanding, forgiveness, assistance, etc.)

Therefore, an organizational culture may be feminine if there is a large number of female employees, but also if its goals are seen as feminine such as those of hospitals associated with care, kindergartens associated with protection and education- all features that western culture links to femininity.

Our research showed that in local administration most public servants are female (67.19 %), making up half the positions of command. The same data seems to suggest a feminine orientation for the organizational culture of local administrative institutions, although the Mayors (at the head of the hierarchy) tend to be mostly male.
Based on this data, we cannot, however, clearly state that Romanian local administration has a feminine culture; there must be a clear tendency as to the goals of these institutions, which should have the above-mentioned feminine features.

Local electoral campaigns in Romania tend to use slogans focused on the same idea (concern for the citizen), without any programs dedicated to this. Given that no public institution is seen by citizens as clearly designed to protect the citizen, this slogan is just an easy (and empty) vehicle toward public life.

Although elected officials have a short memory about election promises and slogans, they are aware of the economic situation of Romanians and clearly know that they cannot fulfill their electoral promises because of financial and legislative restrictions. However, in order to hold viable chances for re-election, they must also show benevolence and an honest desire to help (at least, in the limits of the law) with the citizens’ problems.

Because of this attitude, administrative personnel are encouraged to use manipulation tactics in order to juggle the different demands thrown at them, some bordering on the illegal. But, surprisingly, most demands, not involving massive publicity exposure, large sums of money or a conflict of interests with the management, are eventually solved, if slowly. This is the only benefit of the electoral slogans.

Personnel policies show the same benevolence. Delegating, terminating contract and transfers are caused primarily by financial constraints, rather than work assessments. In other words, individuals with poor material conditions or severe social handicaps have more chances to hold their jobs than individuals with stable income. The poorer the person and the bigger the problem, the more likely elected officials are to do something about it.

This supporting mentality, in what regards both citizens and administrative personnel is typical for underdeveloped countries, where the administrative system is one of the hidden social assistance systems20.

However, one can safely say that this supporting mentality (except when it involves large sums of money, management interests or publicity exposure) is a feminine feature, and therefore the Romanian local administration has a feminine organizational culture rather than a masculine one.

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