

# **ASPECTS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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## ***ABSTRACT***

*It can be said that at present, the operation of a modern, flexible and effective public administration is a prerequisite for the structural transformation of Romanian society, undertaking a profound reform in all areas of social-economic life, increasing the role of citizens in the making of decisions. However, the implementation of these changes need to register on the coordinates imposed by the European Union, which requires the achievement of operating standards comparable to those of the Member States, on clearly defined terms. This is possible only if the organizations from within the public administration have an organizational culture oriented towards quality, the management of the respective organizations is permanently preoccupied with the satisfaction of the clients' demands and needs. The quality of public services will have to represent the most efficient method of global needs satisfaction. In the present paper we have proposed to analyse several aspects regarding the implementation of quality systems, of quality management systems at the level of the public administration organizations because they*

*represent an essential element of the performing character of the European public administration, of the Romanian public administration.*

**Keywords:** Quality management, Public administration, Public services, Clients satisfaction.

## **1. Introduction**

The problematic of quality management is a fairly complex one even for material production, but even more complicated and important when it comes to services.

The notion of *quality* increases in size every year. Now, at the beginning of the third millennium, the word *quality* is associated with all the activities which are linked with *quality management, quality insurance, standardization, certification, accreditation, metrology, trials* etc. One cannot talk about a policy of the organization without talking about the policy in the field of quality, elaborated by the top leadership of the respective organization.

For companies, whether they are from the public or private sector, from the sector of production or service providers, the movement towards quality requires larger investments in the training and implication of the entire personnel in the quality chain; for consumers, quality means the satisfaction of all needs through the achievement of an optimum quality/price ratio.

Currently, an extremely discussed and analysed notion is that of reforming the management of the public administration, which is based on principles well established on the Romanian reality and on the development requirements in conformity with the process of European integration, in conformity with the state of European Union member.

The functioning of a modern, flexible and efficient public administration constitutes an essential condition of the structural transformation of Romanian society, of the achievement of a profound reform on all the fields of social-economic life, of increasing the role of the citizen in the taking of decisions.

It can be said the development of public activities on criteria of efficiency and effectiveness imposes the expansion of the quality management instruments on the public sector. Moreover, the improvement of the services' quality at the level of the public administration constitutes one of the key elements of institutional development in Romania, as in any of the countries member of the European Union. Thus, the creation of instruments and methodologies which contribute to the implementation of quality management systems in the public administration has become one of the priorities of the European states.

In the present paper we have proposed to present several of the particularities of implementing the quality management system at the level of the Romanian public administration.

## **2. Aspects Regarding Public Administration Services**

Referring to the concept of *public administration*, we can say that the specialists in the field have not reached a common denominator for a clear, comprehensive definition. This situation probably derives from the fact that the public administration holds a series of very specific and different functions, and the given definitions are close linked with these functions, unable to be formulated through the lens of all the functions it holds.

In the specialty literature we can frequently encounter the notions of: administration, state administration, public administration and, less often, the concept of public management.

Prof. Paul Negulescu defines *public administration* as “being a complex institution which reunites all the public services destined to satisfy certain general, regional or communal interests” (Oprean et. al., 2001).

Referring to public management, in one of his papers, Professor Armenia Androniceanu states that “it studies processes and management relations between public institutions and existing administrative authorities in the purpose of discovering principles and regularities, methods and techniques for the improvement of the prediction, organization and coordination, resource administration and control-assessment of the activities in the purpose of increasing the degree of satisfaction of the public interest” (Androniceanu, 2005).

In the purpose of knowing in a high degree of the administrative phenomenon it is necessary to research the public administration in conjunction with the social environment, environment which exercises a considerable influence on the structures, phenomena and contents of the activities of the administration’s organs, on the individual and collective psychology and behaviour of the administration’s personnel, as well as on the feeling of satisfaction of the citizens and, last but not least, on the community in which it activates.

In the contents of the current public administration we find the Central public administration, Territorial public administration and, respectively, Local public administration.

We cannot talk about public administration without talking about the services in this sector, or, as they are known, public services. Professor Mircea Preda defined the public service as being “an organizational structure established through law, or based on it, by the state, county, municipal, town and village, or by private entities, equipped

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with certain attributions (powers), fitted with specialty personnel which exercises these attributions gifted with material and financial means in the purpose of continuously and permanently satisfying interests which are common to a collective” (Dragan, 2011).

Within the framework of public services there exist the so-called public functions, which are defined as being “the ensemble of attributions and responsibilities, established on the basis of the law, in the purpose of realising the public power prerogatives by the central public administration, local public administration and autonomous administrative authorities” (Law 188/1999).

The functioning of the public service must be realised through the respecting of the following principles, which are found as public function principles, in Romanian law, as well as in the standards of the European Union (Law 188/1999; Matei & Lazar, 2011):

- Legality, correctness, impartiality and objectivity;
- Openness and transparency;
- Efficiency and effectiveness;
- Reliability and predictability;
- Responsibility, in conformity with legal specifications;
- Orientation towards the citizen;
- Established in the exercising of the public function;
- Hierarchical subordination;
- Confidentiality;
- The selection of public functionaries based exclusively on competence;
- The equality of the chances of public functionaries for entering and advancement within the public service framework.

To talk about a functional management system in the public administration, its functions and attributions must be transformed into clearly defined processes in order to realise a functional management system.

From the analysis of the strategic documents elaborated on a national and European level we find out that some of the objectives regarding the modernization of public administration refer to (Government Strategy, 2001):

- ✓ Improving the public services’ quality;
- ✓ The transparency of the public administration sector activity;
- ✓ The removing of the political character of the public administration structures and the elimination of political patronage;
- ✓ The intensification of the preoccupations regarding the fight against corruption;
- ✓ The development of electronic governance;
- ✓
- ✓

- ✓ The improvement of the cooperation between the structures of the public administration, respectively between the public administration structures and the citizen/organization;
- ✓ The administrative act coherence;
  
- ✓ The perfecting of the administration management;
- ✓ The improvement of interregional cooperation;
- ✓ The harmonization of the legislative framework with the regulations of the European Union.

### **3. Particularities of the Quality Management in the Public Administration**

The implementation of quality management in the public administration requires, firstly, the meeting of specific objectives, such as:

- The modernization of the institution structures from the public administration;
- The development of citizen-oriented public administration;
- The supplying of public services characterized by a high level of quality, by a high degree of professionalism;
- The substantial reduction of bureaucracy;
- The elimination of corruption.

Following the analysis carried out by numerous specialists, organizations/organisms, it can be said that in what regards the quality management at the level of the public administration, most often we called upon the implementation of the ISO 9000 series requirements, in our country, as well as the other European countries.

Another instrument used in the purpose of modernization and respectively of the reforming of the public administration *Auto-assessment framework for the functioning mode of the public administration institutions* (CAF). This structure is inspired by the model of the European Quality Prize (the EFQM model – European Foundation for Quality Management).

An important element of the EFQM approach is the promotion of auto-assessment, process which allows the organization to clearly identify its strengths and the fields it has to improve. The EFQM model presents itself as a 9 criteria system which covers the essential fields of an organization in terms of factors and results from which the CAF is inspired. In this sense, CAF is considered by the EFQM as the initiation level for the public service. In 1996, an adaptation of the EFQM for the public sector appeared (The Quality System Guide, 1998).

CAF was created as an instrument at the disposal of the public organizations of Europe, to help them assume the TQM techniques (Total Quality Management) and improve their performance.

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CAF provide a simple and easy to use framework, which allows the self-assessment of the public sector organizations, however it is compatible with other organizations models used in the private sector.

Among the main objectives of CAF we also find (Engel & Fitzpatrick, 2003):

- Identify the characteristics specific to the public sector organizations;
- Is a diagnostic instrument for the “administrative officials” preoccupied by the improvement of their organization’s performance;
- Is a “bridge” between the different models used in the management through quality;
- Facilitates the comparative study of performance (benchmarking) between the public sector organizations.

CAF was conceived to be used in all the public sector fields, as well as on the levels (national/federal, regional or local). It is, before everything else, an instrument which allows for an organization’s self-assessment, thus, setting a diagnostic. Starting from this diagnostic, there are actions which can be carried out for the improvement of the activity and/or organization of public administration. The use of CAF supplies the organization with an important reference frame for the initiation of a continuous improvement programme.

Among the advantages of using CAF we mention (Dragan, 2011):

- It is an assessment based on concrete exhibits, evidence;
- It offers the possibility to reach to a certain coherence of the directions to take and a consensus over on what must be done for the improvement of an organization’s activity;
- It is an assessment in conjunction with an ensemble of criteria largely accepted across Europe;
- It helps the promotion of “good practices” between the same kinds of organizations.

The decision regarding the introduction of CAF at the level of the Romanian public administration belonged to the Ministry for Administration and Internal Affairs (MAI), which, in 2004 applied this model in a pilot phase within the framework of two MAI directions and, respectively, National Public Servants Agency. Starting with 2005, CAF has been applied on a national level, in this sense several training sessions for the public workers have been carried out, from the central public administration, as well as the local one.

Moreover, MAI, through the Central Union for Public Administration Reform (UCRAP), has published the paper “CAF Implementation Guide” (it contains CAF Background, CAF structure, noting systems, etc.), as well as the brochures “The easiest way to understand CAF” (it contains a short presentation of CAF: advantages, application method, structure, etc.), “CAF 2002 versus CAF 2006” (the most

important differences between the two versions of CAF are presented), “The best practices”, all these papers having the role of helping the public servants to implement, use the CAF benefits.

At the same time, different events have been organized which had the purpose of training the public servants to apply CAF, as well as training them in the field of quality management. On this direction, the National Public Servants Agency has elaborated a good practice manual for different fields (Matei & Lazar, 2011).

In order to come to the aid of the public administration organizations preoccupied with the implementation of quality management, in the strategic documents emitted in the last years numerous measures have been emitted regarding the improvement of the public services quality, out of which we recall:

- ✓ The elaboration and application of the “Citizen Quality Carta”, with the purpose of introducing several quality standards to monitor the development of the public services, to assess/monitor their quality;
- ✓ The introduction of quality standards with the purpose of monitoring/assessing the professional activities of the public servants;
- ✓ The establishment of the number of public servants for each public service in conformity with the specific quality standards;
- ✓ The establishment of motivational schemes with the purpose of increasing the quality of public services, of stimulating innovation in public administration;
- ✓ The establishment of strategic planning systems specific to the public authorities (in conformity with the offered public services);
- ✓ The development of electronic public services, respectively the increase of their efficiency through public interventions;
- ✓ The elaboration and implementation of an assessment guide for institutional self-assessment in conjunction with CAF.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The application of the ISO 9000 standards for the improvement of the activity and the preparing of the conditions necessary for the insurance of quality, corroborated with a participative manner of the implicated actors, represents in itself an essential element of the performant character of the European public administration.

Through the implementation of the quality management systems in the public administration, the following are desired:

- ✓ The realisation, maintenance and continuous improvement of the public services’ quality;
- ✓ The improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the public administration organizations;
- ✓ The adoption of a client oriented approach (citizen/firm);
- ✓

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- ✓ The simplification and even facilitation of access of the citizens/firms to public administration;
- ✓ The reduction to an increased degree of the public administration bureaucracy;
- ✓ The creation of a result oriented administrative culture.

Based, entirely, on an explicit quality policy in the public administration and on strategic objectives which are clearly defined, the promotion of quality and quality

management instruments in the public administration follows not only the strengthening of the managerial abilities and improving the performance of the public administration (efficiency and effectiveness) and of the quality of the services offered to the consumers, but also a new approach of the role and mission of the public administration and public servants (ethical behaviour, legitimacy and correctness, openness and transparency; contribution to the social and economic development, and a focus towards the citizens and consumers). The declared objectives thus cover the different dimensions of quality and it is assumed that they will answer to all the challenges the reform for the public sector will impose (Dragan, 2011).

In what regards the introduction of CAF together *with* the quality management's organizational systems – EFQM, we can say that the Romanian public administration has progressed in a certain measure, but, per ensemble, the self-assessment has only just begun to develop; actually, many of the public administration structures are still in the phase of testing and adopting the self-assessment instruments.

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