

THESIS

**EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION IN ROMANIA
CASE STUDY AT THE LEVEL OF LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Scientific coordinator:

Prof. Dr. Iordan Gheorghe BĂRBULESCU

PhD:

Emanuel RĂUȚĂ

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II. KEYWORDS AND INTRODUCTION

Key words: central public administration, local public administration, New Public Management, reforms, public management, institutionalism, evaluation, strategic planning, performance indicators, administrative capacity

Introduction

The main source of pressure for adopting and implementing performance in administration is generated by the sophistication of actors, beneficiaries of public services, citizens and companies, administration, or non-governmental environment. It was precisely this pressure that pushed the discourse on performance and evaluation on the public agenda. The topic of performance is no longer addressed exclusively by specialists or academics of public administration, but also by citizens, who are becoming more and more aware of their rights, who feel entitled to know how public money are spent, with what results, feeling thus entitled to demand quality for the services they receive.

Another key element emphasizing the importance of performance management in the public sector is the societal evolution and eruptive digitalization in recent years, bringing online access to information and facilitating the implementation of evaluation of performance. Administrative capacity is deeply linked with the ability to communicate online and use technology in administrative processes and the provision of public services.

Performance in public administration is conceptually similar to performance in the private sector, from which it has derived, with the emergence and expansion of the New Public Management (NMP). However, there are several important differences related to the rationale of public management, which is the importance of rules and formal regulation, accommodation of different constitutional demands, the management of public goods and so on, where efficiency is more difficult to measure and instead, greater importance is played by effectiveness responding to the evaluation question if objectives have been achieved. Performance management includes all administrative processes and their coordination through leadership, whilst evaluation and measurement of performance are key, in the absence of measurement, management's efforts

remain unidentified, unrecognized, and difficult to improve. Performance measurement uses evaluation methodologies and techniques, whether we are referring to projects, programs, or policies.

Recently, the topic of evaluation has grown in importance due to the demand for performance. The two elements are closely correlated, being complementary, but also procedurally linked.

In Romania, the normative basis of the reform was laid in the last 20 years. Emphasis was placed on the import of reform models, institutions were built to coordinate reforms, concepts were defined, and many ideological battles were fought on this issue. The concepts of public policy or strategic planning have been on the agenda constantly. Conceptual clarifications have not been fully achieved to this day, but this only indicates that New Public Management tools are difficult to adopt by institutions, especially in the public sector.

There are similarities between the Romanian context today and the 1950's United States of America, where the economic development investments and major national programs of the Great Society of Johnson and Kennedy (Madaus et al., 1989), created the demand to evaluate the effects of these programs, in the context of the need to contain public spending. As an EU member, Romania had been accessing EU financial support and received, since 2007, a generous development funding package over two multi-annual funding periods, one for the period 2007-2013 and the second one for the period 2014-2021. Convergence and cohesion policies of the European Union are doubled by generous financing development programs. The EU financing programs are managed by national institutions, institutions that are required by the EU institutions to follow strict procedural and administrative rules. In order to be able to comply with EU rules, both managing authorities and beneficiaries of EU funds in Romania, had to develop a certain administrative capacity, at central, regional and local levels, to be able to successfully implement development projects and investments aimed at modernizing public administration. These resources have been conditioned by the EU implementation with the adoption of reforms and practices, which can guarantee that the policies and programs will meet the development targets for the country and regions. One of the key commitments was to improve the capacity of public sector to deliver better public services.

Performance management Reforms is a hot topic for the public sector organizations in Romania, which rather focuses activities on legal compliance (Ongaro, 2010), and less on setting and evaluating performance.

Performance evaluation forces institutions to improve institutional transparency, be more inclusive and foster public participation in the decision-making process, learn modern managerial techniques and, most important, exposes them to criticism. These elements are important in the process of using and adopting evaluation practices at the level of public administration. The communication between institutions is also important, and, from this point of view, the thesis is utilizing the principal-agent theory, as well as their impact and other factors on the success of the implementation of evaluation.

The thesis analyzes evaluation in the public sector in Romania in the context of performance management. Evaluation is not analyzed as an independent topic but will in the context of the performance management framework. This includes managerial capacity needed to perform the evaluation and the tools needed to achieve performance: evaluation, indicators, criteria, methodologies.

The thesis analyzes the relationship between institutional performance and the key factors of the performance management framework: strategic planning, indicators, reporting and communicating performance evaluation results, quality and performance tools, all in the context of the administrative capacity of institutions.

These elements of the performance management process are closely linked, in the sense that performance must be planned and then monitored and evaluated. The public policy cycle includes evaluation as a key component of the process.

The topic addressed by this thesis is actual from three perspectives:

- i) the citizens as beneficiary are entitled to know how money are spent and what quality should expect from the public services delivered by the public sector
- ii) public institutions, which have increasing managerial attributions, especially in implementing EU policies and financing programs, which are more complex for the next 2021-2027 programming period
- iii) public local administration, which is the recipient of most of the EU funds and also has the responsibility to deliver more decentralized public services, is challenged to improve its managerial performance

The doctoral thesis consists of two parts:

- i) The first one (chapters 2,3) presents the conceptual framework on performance evaluation and management.
- ii) Performance evaluation and management in Romania which includes a case study on performance evaluation at the level of local public administration in Romania (chapters 4, 5 and 6).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology aims to achieve the general and operational objective by using qualitative and quantitative methods, according to scientific rigor.

This research is positioned in the public sector, in the field of performance management, at the intersection of the fields of evaluation and management, a niche related to the performance of public sector organizations.

THE PROBLEM RESEARCHED

I identified a series of systemic problems, related to the process of adoption and use of strategic management in Romania: the inconsistency of the reform measures,; incomplete reforms, such as planning, where the objective planning which has not yet been completed with the budget component; the lack of clarity of the political coordination of the reform but also of some particular aspects, such as the control on monitoring the performance and quality obligations; lack of administrative capacity and skills.

In response to these problems, the reform should aim at adopting management procedures and processes at the level of institutions, strategic planning and budgeting, the introduction of internal management standards and performance audit, indicator formulation processes, monitoring and evaluation of organizations' performance, services, or staff.

The thesis approaches few key problems:

Problem no. 1: Lack of a common understanding on the administrative concepts in the field of performance management and evaluation.

Problem no. 2: Lack of a performance management framework that integrates the key dimensions that influence performance management adoption and use.

Problem no. 3: Dimensions of performance management: strategic planning, indicators and performance measures, management tools and quality - are not unitary utilized by the public sector in Romania.

Problem no. 4: Administrative capacity is low, affecting both evaluation, performance measurement and performance itself.

Problem no. 5: Except of the evaluation of programs and projects funded by the European Union, public administration does not consistently use the evaluation to measure organizational performance or to inform managers and clients about spending, processes, policies, decisions.

Problem no. 6: Lack of coordination of performance management and unitary strategic framework for performance and evaluation, affecting the administrative capacity and quality of public services

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to the agency theory, the information reported by the local government (agent) could be used by the principal (citizens) to monitor how the former manage public resources. The theory of public choice states that politicians and governments tend to pursue their own interests, rather than the public interest, and considers performance measures as a means of reducing this gap and also identify inefficiencies so that legislators can introduce corrective measures (Jackson, 2011). I use the external pressure analysis model, through the principal-agent theory, to analyze the first hypothesis of this research. I use institutional theory, which offers a new perspective on the role of different determinants on performance. Talbot (pp. 1578), for example, analyzes the impact of regulations on performance management and defines regulation as the activity by which "one institution modifies the activities of another institution", referring here to the development of the New Public Management and the obligations imposed by the Courts of Accounts and other

government control institutions, responsible for inspection, audit, regulation and who have developed performance practices at the level of public administration.

In addition to external pressure and regulation, another performance driving factor in the institutional theory is the ability of institutions to adopt performance, seen either as the adoption of quality and management tools or as the coverage rate of activities by indicators (Van Dooren: 6). In this sense, I use institutional-cultural variables (Johansson and Siverbo, 2009), for determinants of adaptation and use of performance, in order to formulate the research questions. The thesis is placed in the context of the New Public Management, which defines performance as a product of a market, by the existing demand and supply on that market (Talbot, 2008).

The aim of the research is to improve knowledge regarding the evaluation of performance in public administration, by determining key dimensions that influence the process. The general objective is to design a theoretical model of performance management, where evaluation is one of the determining factors.

Based on the general objectives, the following operational objectives were formulated:

- Identification and analysis of relevant literature on institutions, public administration, performance evaluation and management, as well as the relationship between concepts.

Analysis of similarities and the place of performance evaluation in the broader framework of performance management.

- Design a theoretical model of performance management, based on the following factors:

External pressure and role on performance.

The role of strategic planning on performance evaluation.

The role of indicators and tools used in performance evaluation.

The role of reporting and information on evaluation results in performance management.

Analysis of the influence of administrative capacity on performance evaluation.

- Validation, through empirical research, of the adoption of performance management and evaluation at the level of public administration in Romania:

Analysis of performance evaluation at central level.

Analysis of performance evaluation at local level.

The paper aims to clarify the concept of performance, to analyze the regulations, mechanisms and tools used, to outline a methodological framework that can be used in the future, both by academia and by policy makers, officials or practitioners in public administration and other actors interested in analyzing public sector performance.

Research questions:

Research question no. 1: Is a regulatory framework on performance management adopted at the level of public administration in Romania?

Research question no. 2: Does the external pressure, manifested by the conditions imposed regarding the evaluation of European funds and audit activities, influence the evaluation of the performance at the level of the Romanian public administration?

Research question no. 3: Has a coherent performance management system been adopted in the Romanian public administration?

Research question no. 4: Are management systems and performance management tools used so a correlation between these and performance can be observed?

METHODS AND STRATEGY

The thesis uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. The main methods used in the dissertation:

- Analysis of internationally relevant literature on public administration, New Public Management, evaluation, performance management, strategic management and administrative capacity;
- Analysis of the legislation regarding quality, performance, evaluation;
- Comparative analysis of good practices in the field of evaluation of public administration performance at European level;

- Meta analysis to compare and analyze the use of unitary methodologies for program evaluation at central level in Romania;
- The use of secondary data collected through studies, reports, strategies, plans for the analysis of performance evaluation in Romania, at central and local level;
- Use of financial data on measuring administrative capacity of cities;
- Analysis of primary data through quantitative analysis performed through the questionnaire at municipal and city levels;

III. PHD THESIS SUMMARY

The first part of the paper includes chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 "Theoretical foundations of research" is divided into three sections: Institutions and institutionalism, Public Administration and Public Management, Theories and models of evaluation in the public sector. In this chapter, I use the qualitative method for synthesizing relevant studies and literature to highlight the concepts of administration and institutionalism, public management, the New Public Management, performance and performance measurement, performance management and, last but not least, evaluation.

Chapter 3 "Theoretical and procedural framework for performance management" consists of six sections, as follows: Management models and performance evaluation, Variables of the management system of performance evaluation, Performance measures and indicators, Reporting and communication of performance information, Quality management, evaluation and standardization tools, administrative capacity. In this chapter, I define relevant analysis models for the present research based on several dimensions that allow the analysis of the adoption and use of performance in administration and the evaluation of capacity and performance.

In the second part, which includes chapters 4, 5 and 6, based on qualitative and quantitative methods, I apply the theoretical model previously developed regarding the evaluation of performance, to local public administration in Romanian, at urban level.

Chapter 4 "Performance at the level of public administration in Romania" comprises three sections, as follows: Assessing the quality of governance in Romania, Reforms on performance management in Romania and Implementing performance tools in Romania. The chapter covers the

evolution of performance evaluation and management, including performance planning, reporting and evaluation. Meta-Evaluation is utilized to analyze the quality of a panel of ex interim evaluation reports for European funding programs related to the 2014-2020 Cohesion policy programming period in Romania.

Chapter 5 "Performance in local public administration in Romania" has four sections, as follows: Institutional framework, Regulations and strategies on performance in local government, Administrative capacity in local government, Financial performance.

The chapter analyses city performance in Romania, according to the steps in the proposed theoretical model, by using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Financial data is used to design a local performance indicator based on which, administrative capacity in local public administration can be measured. In order to provide a better picture on the utilization of performance evaluation and management, the chapter utilizes performance data collected from a sample of local public authorities, that captures the quality of management process, strategic planning, performance measurement and reporting at local government level.

Complementarily, interviews were conducted with experts in the field of managerial control, performance evaluation in public administration and performance audit, to better understand the role of these systems in the performance management framework.

Chapter 6 "Empirical Research. Analysis of the evaluation capacity at the level of the local public administration in Romania" is divided into two sections, namely: Administrative capacity at the local level and Analysis of the use of the evaluation at the level of the local public administration institutions in Romania. The chapter is developed based on analysis of survey data from a survey applied to Romanian cities and municipalities and focuses on the use of evaluation, level of adoption of performance management planning, indicators and performance measures, systems and standards, transparency, and reporting.

IV. FINAL CONCLUSIONS, OWN CONTRIBUTION, LIMITATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Conclusions

Public administration performance is today a key issue on the public agenda, especially in the context of recent global events. The societal risks such as global warming or epidemics are becoming critical and are increased by the vulnerabilities of the states and public sectors such as the lack of efficiency in managing public policies, programs and budgets. Recent years have brought into attention the question if the public sector is able to respond to these challenges. Thus, institutional capacity has become a key factor in debates evolving around public management. This paper seeks to make a modest contribution in this context, by trying to identify policy and administrative solutions which can help public administration improve performance management, especially by using evaluation and measurement. I have selected urban municipalities as subjects of the case study, in the context of the recent years discussions focusing on decentralization and the need to improve capacity of local public administration authorities to manage existent and new public services that fall under their responsibility.

Romanian Public Administration Consolidation Strategy 2014-2020, an ex-ante conditionality plan for the European 2014-2020 programming established objectives to improve local public administration administrative capacity, by establishing indicators and standards for public services and measuring and evaluating performance of public sector. In the same programming document, Romanian Government has committed to continue decentralization of public services in Romania and transfer more responsibilities from central government to local governments. This has stressed the issue of accountability of local government in managing public funds and focuses on LGAs capacity to plan, measure, monitor, evaluate and report performance.

The main objective of the thesis is to design and test a theoretical model of management and performance measurement for public administration institutions.

The thesis tries to clarify the influence of institutional theories on the development of the public administration. I use institutional theory to identify a framework model and its determinants to understand adoption and use of evaluation and performance. I analyzed the relationship between the administrative traditions and openness to adopt performance management in public

administration institutions and also the literature of principal-agent, focusing on the impact of political or institutional-cultural determinants on the success of adopting performance management.

I defined evaluation as an integral component of performance management framework in public administration, as a tool for research and analyzing performance and as an element of pressure for changing and improving the organizational culture. The thesis analyses all major evaluation schools, starting with the American evaluation school and continuing with the European evaluation system, capturing the role of the European Union evaluation system and its influence on the development of an evaluation culture in Romania.

The thesis looks at the differences between evaluation and performance measurement systems at the level of public organizations, such as performance audit, to provide a better understanding of the integrated components of the performance measurement system and the relationship between them.

Starting from institutional theories, a theoretical framework on performance management is proposed, its main variables were described, to test the use of the application of evaluation and performance in public administration in Romania. Variables are: external pressure on performance, the impact of strategic planning on performance evaluation; establishing performance indicators and techniques used in performance evaluation; the role of reporting and information on evaluation results in performance management.

To test this framework, the thesis describes the reforms in central and local public administration in Romania, focusing on key performance management variables: the adoption and use of strategic planning, evaluation, adoption of performance management by analyzing modern management tools and methods.

The empirical research respond to the question how key factors of the performance management cycle are adopted by the Romanian local public administration institutions. An administrative capacity analysis of the cities and municipalities selected as respondents in the survey was prepared. Starting from the hypotheses of the doctoral thesis, I designed and implemented a quantitative research at the level of local public administration authorities, at the urban level (cities and municipalities), focusing on the adoption and utilization of evaluation in

the context of performance management in public administration. Based on the findings, I have constructed a performance score for the cities measuring the evaluation capacity.

Regarding the research questions below are the conclusions based on the research process:

Is a functional regulatory framework currently in place to enable performance management?

The progress of Romanian public administration was analyzed in terms of adopting the mechanisms for evaluating and measuring performance and key political reforms related to the proposed procedural model of performance. The analysis focused on key reforms regarding the management framework for planning, measuring results and reporting. Even if the legal framework has some provisions regarding the stimulation of performance and sanctioning of under-performance, these are related to some specific public services or to some dimensions of performance rather than with general functioning of institutions. The reform measures, most of them legal, have often not been backed up by appropriate administrative measures to make them applicable - tools, guides and methodologies, resources. Moreover, several measures were not substantive, in the sense that no financial instruments were foreseen, public finance being always treated separately from managerial reforms or public policies reforms.

On the other hand, the role of quality management tools designed to improve performance has not been clearly understood and have not been adopted in public administration. ISO, CAF, and other systems are little used by public institutions and an even smaller number at the level of local public administration authorities. According to my findings, internal managerial control is implemented by all central and local public administration institutions but does not yet have the capacity to be the system that integrates organizational performance management. The bottom line is that these methods and tools are often formally used without an endogenous motivation of managers to increase organizational performance,

Even today, evaluation, program budgeting and planning of public institutions' activities in terms of programs are topics that are not treated unitary. An example is the public policy reform initiated by the Government, through the General Secretariat of the Government. The unit that has a role in coordinating public policies has managed to adopt the reforms regarding the strategic

planning, a reform that obliges each ministry to realize a strategic plan containing the substantiated sectoral priorities. But in order to work, these reforms should have been linked to budgetary reform and fiscal-budgetary rules, and this has not yet taken place.

Has the performance management cycle been adopted at the level of public administration?

The performance management cycle (Otley, 1999, Ferreira and Otley, 2009), consist in a series of stages, including a series of processes and functional stages at the level of organizations, allowing to obtain better results.

In terms of strategic planning, the management framework and the formal budget framework were adopted, but the two components of planning were not integrated, and for this, the whole process was affected, as I observed when analyzing strategic planning at the level of the Central Government. The strategic objectives in the strategic documents formulated and adopted by the central public administration have a certain degree of ambiguity, which has a negative impact on institutional and individual performance (Jung, 2011).

Utilization of indicators is only partially addressed through legislation and administrative practice in the Romanian public administration. Institutional strategic plans and strategies rarely include SMART performance indicators that are: specific, measurable, time-bound, realistic, achievable. Indicators are utilized mostly in European or nonreimbursable funded projects and in some national programs, but the practice is not unitary and is differentiated between national and external funds.

Performance reporting is part of the management cycle, but it is not well developed at the level of public administration, although regulations in force provide a legal framework for this process, both through annual reporting and transparency obligations.

The analysis at the level of the central public administration revealed that, from a formal point of view, the legislation is adopted. However, the analysis of secondary information indicates problems of coherence and quality.

At the local level there are issues related to the lack of a unitary performance management framework, performance at the municipality depending on administrative capacity and the

adoption of regulations and methodologies promoted by central public administration by the institutions coordinating the public administration reform.

To better coordinate performance measurement efforts, the Government has started a process of defining performance and cost indicators and standards for most areas of services, decentralized, or where provision is shared with the central government. This approach was piloted by collecting indicators at the local level. I used a number of those indicators and was able to assess institutional practice at local level, in terms of strategic planning (strategies do not have budgets or action plans), measuring and indicators, disseminating or reporting performance information (publication of normative acts at local level on the website), administrative process capacity (examples regarding waste management or the use of one-stop shops) or human resources capacity (through professional training for communication with users).

The evaluation of the indicators reflects a series of vulnerabilities at local level, which are mainly related to the ability to select and customize performance indicators, the absence of a managerial approach oriented towards measurable results, towards the idea of effectiveness.

Evaluation capacity of cities is medium to low according to the score designed in the 6th chapter. I have built a score on a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 represents the maximum evaluation capacity. The scale has generated an average result of 5,112 for the cities and municipalities surveyed, which reflects a rather modest evaluation capacity of the respondent cities. A conclusion of the analysis is that there are not major differences between municipalities and cities in terms of evaluation capacity. In conclusion, there is a need to improve the performance of cities, and this can be done by using the performance management process factors: improve strategic planning, adopt measurable indicators, transparency, coherence of the various requirements related to evaluation and performance regulations, and in particular, increase administrative capacity.

Does external pressure, manifested through the evaluation procedures imposed by the external funds and external audit, have an influence on the evaluation of the performance at the level of the Romanian public administration?

The conclusion is that the evaluation of programs and policies is formally regulated in Romania, and the constraints regarding the evaluation of European non-reimbursable funds and programs are applied by the Romanian public administration. There is an evaluation framework and tools for evaluating programs and projects, as well as for monitoring and evaluating public

policies by analyzing the impact of regulations. However, the analysis indicates that, except for EU funds, for which a system has been built and a culture of evaluation has been built in the last years, evaluation is not systematically adopted and utilized to measure public interventions.

In terms of evaluation, a meta-evaluation exercise proposed in the thesis of mid-term evaluations of selected Operational Programs for the 2014-2020 multiannual planning period, reflects the use of evaluation criteria imposed by the EU, especially those related to efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, a relatively similar organization of the process and a relatively close final reporting structure. Here too, criteria are not unitary used, there are some differences in approach, depending on the nature of the program and the expertise of the evaluators in the field.

Evaluations of operational programs, ex ante, interim or ex post are the only systematic evaluation examples. Due to their dissemination in the administration, it can be concluded that they have a certain degree of influence the evaluation practice in public institutions in Romania, by influencing the procedures and practices of monitoring and evaluation of projects on the practices of institutional evaluation. EU evaluation practices have influenced the practice of evaluation in Romania, especially since the case study reflects that project evaluation is a practice at the level of public institutions at the level of local public administration and the concepts used for indicators, for example, are originating in the EU programs and projects evaluation procedures.

External audit has, in various administrative systems, the role of ensuring the control of public resources expenditure, economy, efficiency and effectiveness, especially in the case of performance audit. In Romania, the Court of Accounts and the Court of Audit for European programs perform this system audit and, occasionally, performance audit. However, the practice for non-EU programs is limited to the level of central public administration institutions, for which the Court of Auditors has initiated, for the time being timidly, the practice of performance audits. The audit at the level of local public administration is rather seen as a formal request from the center, being mentioned as having an important role in the practice of evaluating the results. According to my study, the role of audit in the practice of performance evaluation is partially confirmed, as it is a form of external pressure. However, this finding requires a more complex analysis to be able to formulate and test the influences on the performance of public service provision and processes at the level of local public administration. The qualitative analysis has shown the role of the European evaluation system on the development of evaluation at local level,

the interviewees stating that financial resources, especially external resources, are essential for the use of evaluation in administration.

Management systems and managerial and quality tools are used and influence the performance of public administration

According to institutional theory, these instruments influence the adoption of performance in administration, especially through the control of managerial processes and the integration of Management Control Standards.

Conclusions on the use of total quality control using internal control and control systems quality (ISO) and self-assessment (CAF, BSC) at the level of local public administration authorities are, unfortunately, rather negative. The vast majority of quality systems, especially those recommended in the Public Administration Consolidation Strategy, i.e. CAF and ISO, in parallel with the strengthening of internal managerial control (SCIM), are funded with the help of EU funds to support the development of administrative capacity. Under these conditions, there are very few urban municipalities that implemented optional quality systems (ISO, CAF) when looking at all the 320 localities at urban level. In the empirical research conducted, due to the small number of localities that had implemented quality or self-assessment systems, it was not possible to make a correlation between the existence of systems and the adoption of performance management, to validate the hypothesis of some authors (Johansson and Siverbo, 2009) on the impact of the instruments on performance management.

Does administrative capacity influence the success of performance appraisal?

Testing of the indicator for administrative capacity designed in the thesis led to the conclusion that, reflected in non-reimbursable external funds (FEN) expenditures per capita, the capacity to access European Union funds does not necessarily correlate with the economic situation of the municipality or city. Expenditures related to local budgets with FEN funds per capita are in excess of state budget expenditures only in 29 counties of Romania. In 11 counties there is a surplus of FEN funds, but explanations are needed to explain why, in the sense that the influence is not similar in the urban localities of a county. The large differences between the

localities with high performance in attracting and spending non-reimbursable funds do not allow for statistical testing, a qualitative study being necessary to identify representative factors. It seems that a correlation could be found between capacity to absorb EU funds and administrative culture or cultural factors. Structural factors such as local resources or the size of the locality seem to have less influence in the model.

The idea of the thesis is that performance is influenced by management and managers, by human resources working in public administration and by a certain degree of mimetics in copying models that favor performance. Empirical research has provided evidence in this regard, with respondents considering human and financial resources to be important conditions for performance.

I can draw a qualitative conclusion that confirms the role of administrative and evaluation capacity, from the perspective of the process of collecting questionnaire responses in the context of empirical research, depending on the degree of completion of the questionnaire, the quality and consistency of responses, direct, telephone and via email with local public administration authorities. Almost all responses chose pre-completed suggestions on performance indicators, about 5% of respondents named other performance indicators that are used by their institution when evaluating performance. In general, respondents limited themselves to completing predefined answers.

I corroborate this conclusion with the results of the analysis of the administrative capacity indicator, which highlighted the difficulty of predicting the relationship between economic factors and administrative capacity.

Conclusions

The general conclusion is correlated with the general objective, namely the existence and utilization of a performance system at the level of public administration in Romania. The answer is that the public sector, at central and local level, has learned some lessons and adopted some of the dimensions of the model. These are however incomplete and they work separately, which affects their effectiveness and efficiency. This conclusion has been constantly formulated by the European Union, the World Bank, the social and non-governmental partners. The

recommendations refer both to the adoption of performance management principles and to the adoption of concrete policies.

First, the process of defining performance measures and performance indicators for the local public administration sector is not completed, on none of the key activity processes: service performance, organizational performance, individual performance.

Complementary to the establishment of the indicators, it is necessary to clarify the type of performance pursued, depending on the objective of the process, the longitudinal performance, and the current performance, that of the day-to-day processes. Reduced performance of the public sector, as shown also by governance indicators from the of international organizations scoreboards, is caused by the absence of the continuous performance monitoring, which involves constant monitoring of processes and rapid decision making and feedback. This type of measures must be correlated with the tools of quality and managerial control and with the adoption by the managers.

Improving the clarity of planned objectives, indicators, and evaluation, as well as reporting are important elements in developing evaluation capacity. The whole management process must be organized in a functional way, so that the evaluation can be used effectively.

It is important that knowledge on evaluation is expanding, starting from the existing and functional evaluation systems that are set up for European funds, which could be disseminated at local public administration level. For specialists, internal managerial control can be improved by simplifying the implementation procedures and by adopting it by law.

Except for EU funds, in Romania is little to no demand for performance evaluation at the level of the public sector, which strongly affects the development of a “culture” of performance management. It is particularly important, to concentrate on developing an evaluation market, in the sense that the administration could request evaluations on other types of important public interventions, other than those financed by grants. This approach can be regulated by imposing the evaluation of all initiatives that have a significant cost, above a certain level. This model is used in the European Union for investments above a certain threshold.

Applying variables from the performance management process model has led to different results. Central public administration institutions have more resources and managed to have some results but only formal obligations are insufficient for improving institutions performance

processes and results. Local government uses performance appraisal in a more limited and less systemic way than central government. In the urban environment, positive examples of this type can be encountered. However, the decentralization process requires the use of evaluation and performance management, both from the obligation to analyze how public resources are spent and to identify whether the public interest is served. Continuing decentralization also implies a greater accountability of local public administration institutions, and the conclusions of the present thesis according to which a coherent model of performance should be followed, naturally find their application. One of the conclusions concerns the close relationship between decentralization and its further continuation and the requirements regarding quality assurance in the implementation of public services provided at local level.

Evaluative research requires high expertise. The academia, through its evaluation related degrees, can have a more important role in strengthening the evaluation and in popularizing the concepts and methodological knowledge at the level of central and local public administration. Another key element with a considerable impact on increasing public accountability is for greater openness and transparency of public institutions, through participatory methods that involve all relevant stakeholders in the decision-making processes.

Personal contribution

The topic of adoption of performance in public administration, as well as the use of performance management systems, is analyzed in the literature related to several disciplines: political science through institutionalist theories, public administration and public management, development economics and even in the field of psychology. I have selected the framework of the performance management cycle for its clarity and for being already tested in the private management field. It is complete since it covers key processes, similar to what the public administration is using already, for example the public policy cycle, strategic planning and management and also integration of evaluation as a key component of institutional performance.

Another important contribution is that my thesis tries somehow to clarify the concept of performance and performance management, but also to identify common elements to explain performance management.

A personal contribution is the empirical study performed at the level of the local public administration. In this regard, I have created an indicator of administrative performance (defined in Chapter 3) which refers to cities public expenditure ratio between expenditures from the national budget per capita and expenditures from external/EU budget per capita. This approach is not unique, other authors (Pina and Avellaneda, 2017) have analyzed indicators related to the capacity to spend EU money by the local communities.

Another useful contribution of the analysis for the evaluation capacity of the local public administration is the model built through the empirical research on evaluation in Romania. Although this approach has some limitations, described in the section below, this research represents an important contribution to better understanding the performance of cities in using evaluation and performance management in general.

Limits of research

One of the limitations is given by the fact that some of the causes for low performance cannot be analyzed without a qualitative component. A set of interviews or focus-groups would have contributed and clarified the determinants of performance and utilization of evaluation.

The availability of local or central public administration performance data is reduced, therefore I had to complete data with my own research. Besides utilizing data from publicly available sources, I have built an administrative capacity indicator by analyzing the performance data published on a public platform, and I have designed and conducted empirical research through a survey applied to Romanian cities.

Selection of the theoretical model regarding performance management analysis could have a certain degree of subjectivism.

Proposals to improve research

The proposals focus mainly on improving empirical research:

- Improving the design of the questionnaire by allocating a more complex set of questions to each research objective.
- Use of scales with a higher level of sensitivity.

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Projects

Strengthening the framework for increasing the quality of public services and supporting local development (SPC) SMIS code - SIPOCA 9

PHARE TWINNING RO2003 / IB / OT / 10, 2003 / 005-551.03.03 “Strengthening the institutional capacity of the Romanian Government to manage public policies and the decision-making process”, carried out in collaboration with the State Chancellery of the Republic of Latvia.

Legislation

Law no. 52/2003 on decision-making transparency

Law - framework no. 195/2006 of decentralization

Public Finance Law no. 500/2002

Law no. 544/2001 on free access to public information

Law no. 672/2002 regarding the Internal Audit

Government Decision no. 521/2005 on the procedure for consulting the associative structures of local public administration authorities when drafting normative acts

GD no. 775/2005 for the approval of the Regulation on the procedures for elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of public policies at central level

ȘCOALA NAȚIONALĂ DE STUDII POLITICE ȘI ADMINISTRATIVE

GD no. 870/2006 on the approval of the Strategy for improving the system of elaboration, coordination, and planning of public policies at the level of central public administration

GD no. 961/2009 on the approval of the Framework Guide for the development of minimum quality standards and minimum cost standards for decentralized public services

GD no. 1361/2006 on the content of the instrument for presenting and motivating draft normative acts subject to Government approval

GD no. 1807/2006 for the approval of the Management Component within the Methodology regarding the medium-term strategic planning system of the public administration institutions at central level

Government Decision no. 139/2008 regarding the approval of the Methodological Norms for the application of the Framework Law no. 195/2006 of decentralization

Government Decision no. 961/2009 on the approval of the Framework Guide for the elaboration of minimum quality standards and minimum cost standards for quality public services

Government Emergency Ordinance no. 45/2003 for the management of local public funds

Government Emergency Ordinance no. 43 / 14.06.2006

Order of the Minister of Labor and Social Protection no. 29/2019 for the approval of the Minimum Quality Standards for the accreditation of social services for the elderly, homeless, young people who have left the child protection system and other categories of adults in difficulty, as well as for services provided in the community, services provided in integrated system and social canteens

Order of the Secretary General of the Government no. 600/2018 on the approval of the Code of internal managerial control of public entities

Regulation no. 1303/2013 on the European Social Fund

Regulation no. 1304/2013 on the European Regional Development Fund

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