

THE NEED OF ENHANCING THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TRAINING CAPACITIES TO SUPPORT THE PROCESS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

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INTRODUCTION

During the last ten years of transition to market economy, the governments of Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) had two major reasons to reform their public administration systems: to develop a democratic society, and to ensure a market economy. Later, a third reason was added in ten of the countries: to integrate with Europe and to facilitate the accession to the European Union.

The main task of an administration in a market economy should not be, in the first place, the production of public goods and services, but to create fair and equal preconditions for economic activities through regulation and by monitoring these activities through impartial institutions, in order to establish a competitive private sector. An administration in a country aiming for European integration should be able to implement effectively the EU regulations within the national context. Although the European Union does not have any direct powers in relation to how the accession countries should organize their governance system and public administration, the membership and the accession to the Union presuppose certain capacities and qualities of the public administration in these countries. So, the administration in a country in a process of accession to the European Union must be able to cope with all the preparations and negotiations required in this process, and to adopt and implement the “aquis communautaire”.

Public administration reform is a continuous process in all Western European countries and USA. For reasons dictated by changes in substantive policies or financial constraints, and for purposes of achieving greater efficiency, service-orientation, internationalization, etc., the governments of these countries are continuously adapting their public administration system to the changing requirements and demands of the society

(Synnerstrom, 2001). All the transition countries need to reform their public administrations for the very same reasons and purposes, and most evidently for the reason of financial constrain and the purpose of internationalization. As a result, an administration in a democracy, functioning in a market economy, should sustain at least the following basic qualities:

- Guarantee of fundamental rights;
- Legal certainty and predictability;
- Balance of powers;
- Instruments of accountability and control, and transparency;
- Coherence within government.

According to Synnerstrom (2001) the main objectives of the public administration reform in a democratic society should be aimed at:

- 1) Improved quality of the outputs of public institutions;
- 2) Improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness in public institutions;
- 3) Better coordination between these institutions;
- 4) Improved professional continuity and development within public institutions;
- 5) Reduced scope for nepotism and corruption;
- 6) Increase the public trust for the administration
- 7) Attract and retain qualified individuals for management positions.

The new President Bush's Management Agenda developed to offer many new techniques for managing federal governments outlines three basic principles of the government reform in USA (The President's Management Agenda, 2002):

- Citizen-centered, not bureaucracy-centered;
- Results-oriented;
- Market-based, actively promoting rather than stifling innovation through competition.

The success of the reform is to a large extent a question of establishing an appropriate administrative context in which officials can carry out their duties in a professional, impartial, transparent and controllable way. It requires a continuous training of public

administration to develop appropriate management capacity, new administrative culture and professional ethos in the public sector.

THE NEED OF ENHANCING THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TRAINING CAPACITIES IN BULGARIA

Since 1990 all Bulgarian governments have expressed commitment to restructuring and modernizing the Bulgarian public administration system, but real reforms are taking place de facto from 1997 onwards. Focused mainly on the legislative and institutional issues, the administrative reform laid the foundation of a modern and effective public administration. Here are the highlights of the reform:

- Adoption of a Strategy for establishment of a modern administrative system (1998);
- Adoption of Law of Administration (1998);
- Adoption of Civil Service Law (1999);
- Adoption of Public Procurement Law (1999);
- Introduction of a new position of Minister of State Administration;
- Creation of the State Administration Directorate at the Council of Ministers;
- Creation of the State Administrative Commission (with control and supervision functions);
- Establishment of the Institute of Public Administration and European Integration.
- Amendments to the Civil Service Law (2002)

The adopted legislation defined the scope and the principles of public services and the status, the rights and obligations of civil servants in Bulgaria, as well as the structure of the public administration, its responsibilities and functions. During the years of 2000 and 2001 a secondary legislation dealing with the issues of performance, professional development and classification of the civil servants was adopted and entered into force, enabling the development of responsible, creative and professional public services. The complete unification of the structures within the regional and municipal administration has been finalized.

In addition to the legislative and institutional aspects of the reform, two other important issues must be highlighted as to have a more comprehensive understanding of the public administration reform development. These are:

- The efforts towards introduction and rapid adoption of the *new information and communication technologies* in the central and regional/local government (including establishment of the necessary technical infrastructure, legal regulation of the access to public information and the electronic signature, training of the public officials, on-line publishing of the registers of the administrative structures and the administrative acts, etc.), and
- The establishment of *Bachelor and Master degree programs in Public Administration* at the Bulgarian universities (currently there are 10 universities in Bulgaria, offering Public Administration courses, with approximately 1500 students just at the three leading universities).

All these activities have contributed to the “extended capacity of the administration” and the first phase of the reform (1998-2000) has been characterized as “strong and successful”. Although the challenges in front of the government have been diverse and complicated, the basis for modern, professional, independent and client-orientated public administration has been successfully created. The commitment of the new Bulgarian government (from July 2001) to continue the process of modernization of the public administration further strengthens the positive expectations about the pace and quality of the reform. The main problems, as defined by the governmental action program (The New Government’s Action Plan, 2001), that will be addressed in the near future, are:

- The effectiveness and coordination of the administrative system;
- The provision of more client-orientated public services and the struggle with corruption;
- The improvement of “e-government” techniques and approaches;

These issues correspond also to the recommendations of the European Commission and the World Bank and focus on the development and the effective management of the human resources in public administration. More precisely, attention should be paid to strengthening the promotion system elements in the civil services, extending the professional knowledge and skills of the civil servants, establishing a new administrative

culture and professional ethos in the public sphere. Although no specific analysis of the needs for training and education of public officials have been conducted so far, the main areas for improvement have been outlined and incorporated into the strategy for development of the Institute of Public Administration and European Integration (IPAEI). The institute will play a key role in the current phase of the administrative reform in the field of training and qualifying the civil servants in Bulgaria. The vitality of this institution will be crucial for the development of potential of the public administration system in Bulgaria and the successful pace of the reform.

The Institute of Public Administration and European Integration (IPAEI) was established in 2000 following the Civil Servant's Act, with the status of an executive agency under the Minister of State Administration supervision. It is a legal entity, financed by the state budget and its own resources. IPAEI's mission, according to the Charter of the Institute, is to "enhance the professional qualification and skills of the civil servants" and is aimed at integrating and centralizing the various modes of training of civil servants existing so far (mostly organized on *ad hoc* basis and depending upon universities, private firms and NGOs). It should support the process of strengthening the professional capacity of current and future civil servants and preparing the public administration system to function in the EU policy-making system.

In order to attain these strategic objectives IPAEI develops and implements training programs (courses, workshops, and seminars), oriented towards:

- Developing the abilities of public administration officials to apply the achievements of the EU law and extending the overall knowledge of the public administration officials about the EU and its policies
- Improving the communication skills of public administration officials and extending the managerial knowledge of the specialists who advance in their professional career
- Changing the organizational culture of civil servants and developing the skills required for implementation and use of modern informational technologies

THE KEY ROLE OF TEACHING AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

The increased demand for professional public administration education offers new opportunities for the institutions of higher education. However, they have to identify and pursue a viable role among a broad range of providers. Three main types of providers can be identified (Sizer, 1998):

- the *formal sector*, i.e. university and non-university higher education institutions;
- the *informal sector*, i.e. training institutions, professional associations, unions and non-profit-making organisations, whose primary mission is not (higher or other) education, but the production of professional training courses;
- the *commercial sector*: the sale of education as a profit-making business activity is a fundamental distinction between this sector and others.

In another typology used by U.S. authors (OECD Report, 1995), four types of providers are named: higher education institutions, professional associations, training agencies and independent providers. The providers and the training programs specially designed for the public administration needs may differ notably according to the following key features:

- Definition of the training strategy;
- Scientific and technological potential;
- Type of clientele;
- Source of finance;
- Mature of training;
- Type of certificate.

The role of HE institutions as main providers of education and training in the field of public administration and public policy is very important. They provide mostly Bachelor and Master Degree programs in Public Administration differing in formats and type of diplomas. At the same time a study undertaken by the European Commission in the early 1990s (Becher, 1992) came to the conclusion that the universities' involvement in continuing professional education of their graduates is still "promising but patchy". HE institutions are mostly involved in undergraduate and graduate education of their students, as well as postgraduate training, at a lesser extent in continuing education of the

traditional professionals, and marginally in occupational areas hardly professionalized. One might say that they fill a gap where a strong professional need for continuing education and training of public administration is felt but the professionals (civil servants) are not sufficiently independent to serve for themselves.

Despite the wide diversification of this sector, HE and training institutions are the key element in providing client-oriented training services that are necessary if the civil servants are to make their full contribution to transformation and modernization of the civil society in Bulgaria. The evidences of the increased demand for training public sector managers and civil servants have already been described, although turning this into an effective demand is dependent on the price, quality and appropriateness of the training that is actually offered. One of the problems facing transition countries (including Bulgaria) in this regard is the small number of top-level managers who have practical experience in public sector management, which in Western countries and USA is often a pre-requisite for public administration (state and municipality staff) to take training seriously. Another thing is the need to create a new central management capacity, which will be in charge of selection, appointment, training and development of the carrier of each top-level civil servant. That requires creating and introduction of a new system of selection and management of higher officials and managers which is transparent, and which guarantees that individuals are selected on their professional merit and none other.

The question of price (of training) can be linked to a segmentation of the “market” for public administration training services. Some public institutions (ministries, state agencies, municipalities, etc.) may have the necessary resources to pay the full cost of specialised professional training programmes, whether these are short courses or more extended periods of study. Such demand creates market opportunities for universities, public and private training organisations to offer such services, although to obtain credibility and acceptance, some regulation of this market should be required in order that any qualification offered by them, receives a proper accreditation. At the same time, it must be recognized that the prevailing part of public organizations are not able to pay the market price for appropriate training, although they may recognize its potential value. In this context, the role of the state training institutions such as the Institute of Public Administration and European Integration (IPAEI) will be essentially a strategic and

facilitating one, since in the short term at least, public resources from internal sources may be very limited.

For example, during its first cycle of training activities (March - May 2001) IPAEI managed to organize over 40 seminars, attended by more than 650 civil servants from the central (60%), regional and municipal administration (34%) and other organizations (6%). As a whole, the training programs of the Institute have been developed to:

- a) Build *general* knowledge and skills for effective management and better performance of the administrative duties of civil servants, and
- b) Acquire *specialized* knowledge and skills of legislation process, public finance, communication and ethics, information systems, European law and regional policy of the European Union.

During the next two cycles of training activities (October – December 2001 and March – May 2002) IPAEI organized 42 short-term intensive courses, 2 conferences, 2 summer schools and 9 specialized training seminars on request (including modular courses for decentralized delivery), attended by more than 1947 civil servants from the central (63%), and regional and local administration (37%).

Covering various issues (Administrative and Taxation Law, Public Affairs and Communications, Human Resources Management, European Integration, European Law, Public Administration Ethics, Leaderships, etc.), as well as providing language and information technologies training, the Institute has trained representatives of different target groups (young civil servants in the beginning of their professional carrier, top-level public managers, decision-makers, secretary-generals, etc.) and begin to create a network of potential trainers (leading academics, distinguished public officials and foreign experts). With the support of the European Union, through PHARE program, the educational managers at IPAEI were qualified in training needs analysis, design of training programs, monitoring and evaluation of the training processes, by external experts from similar institutions in Europe and through visits to the Public Administration Institutes in Portugal, Spain, Italy, the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Having identified the training needs for public sector the education and training institutions are then in a position to develop courses to meet these needs and to identify

other institutions such as universities and colleges that can assist in this process. Training of the following types could be jointly provided:

- *Seminars and short courses*

It is expected that such training will run a number of specialized seminars in different areas. These seminars will be client-oriented to different levels civil servants - young civil servants in the beginning of their professional carrier, top-level public managers, decision-makers, secretary-generals. Depending on the need analysis conducted short courses on obtaining additional skills and specialized knowledge related to strongly professionalized areas will also be run.

- *Certificate-based courses*

These will be longer-term courses (up to 6 months) that lead to a certificate. The training will be in a regular and/or ODL format that provide a flexible system of accumulating new professional skills and knowledge. Such type of training should become an integral component of the new promotion system introduced in the public administration.

- *Web based courses*

It is expected that web based training will be set up to attract public administration through a number of e-learning courses related to knowledge that is needed to develop further the professional carrier of civil servants. This web based courses will be fully interactive and include exercises to be completed, self-evaluation tests, etc.

- *Information Technologies courses*

More and more Bulgarian civil servants are using e-mail and Internet facilities (Gramatikov, 2003). Their skills and knowledge should be improved. Using modern information, communication and management systems in public administration is a necessary pre-requisite for improving the quality of production of civil services. Such courses will help the civil servants to understand the ‘e-government’ concept.

- *Foreign language courses*

Undoubtedly, it would be very helpful if the new public administration skills could be based on improved language abilities of public managers and civil servants. It is widely recognised that foreign language training becomes more and more important element of the overall organizational culture of civil servants, especially for those top-level managers who are dealing with European integration issues.

It is also important to recognise more widely the role of education and training systems in influencing the value placed on public administration in the context of ongoing civil society reform. Whilst this may be a longer term objective, introducing a compulsory element of continuous training of civil servants as to increase their professional qualification and create pre-requisites for promotion is one of the means of achieving it. This is because of the need to change civil servants attitude towards their clients and to develop an understanding and awareness of what an effective and efficient public sector should be. This is the key challenge facing transition countries in the long run if an appropriate environment to encourage and facilitate civil services is to be created, in which the principles of public administration are clearly understood and embedded in a great number of individuals and public institutions.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion of the presented need analysis for enhanced public administration training that should lead to a better governance of the public services, the following findings could be drawn up. Short and/or continuous training programs will become one of the priorities for public administration; the emphasis will be put on student-centred and client-oriented courses; the training using modern ICT approaches and ODL formats accompanied with acquiring a wider practical skills will be placed in the centre of market-oriented training provision; the strengthening of co-operation between related training institutions - schools, universities and centers, that could initiate new programmes and initiatives, will be forced. Attempting to match the real needs of citizens in a new market environment, new strategies for public administration development will emerge, providing value-added, client-oriented support services. These services should be complementary, interactive and business-like (e.g. one stop shopping approach). The training institutions have to be in charge of the needs assessment and course design with the participation of government, experts and consultants. Objective-targeted education and training should supply the civil servants with strong competitive advantages through giving them additional skills and knowledge in the context of their responsibilities and local environment (e.g. regional, national and international conditions). Training of civil servants will play more and more vital role integrating the key elements of the process of internationalization in field of public administration.

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