

CAN WE BE SATISFIED WITH WHAT IS OBLIGATORY?

Focusing on the satisfaction results of the training system for public administration.

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Abstract

The significance of the education of the employees in the public sector has been increased in the last decades. The most important task of the human resource management in public administration has become the selection of the competent employees as well as the refreshing of the knowledge of the employees. A national training system for the work force in the public sphere, which enables the improvement of the civil servants' knowledge, was introduced in Hungary on 1st of January 2014, which is the initial 4-year training period. It ended on 31st of December 2017. We monitored the results and the practical experience of this 4-year period which was conducted with a questionnaire survey based on a sample of 1,000 respondents. The present study shows the results of the satisfaction-research of the civil servants – referring to the different forms of training. The results of the research draw the satisfaction markings of the civil servants on the basis of 11 factors.

Keywords:

satisfacton research, education, e-learning, leadership training, public administration

1. INTRODUCTION

It is the uniqueness of our day and age that the various organizations – depending on whether they operate in the competitive arena or in the public sphere – can only be successful if they can use people as a workforce sufficiently.³“It is detectable – based on the newest domestic and overall research results⁴ – that the need for a capable workforce has grown. The competition for them has become strained between the economic organizations – Hollósy-Vadász and Szabó (2016. p. 139) focus on the presentation of public sector talent-recruiting arguing that –“It is no longer enough to find these people but a need has emerged to train them.”

The proper strategic approach considers the workforce and their training as an investment. “In the knowledge based economy the only thing that keeps us competitive is learning itself.” (Princzinger, Kisfaludy, 2015. p. 135)

The correct expectation towards training is that we provide knowledge suitable either for the need of the employer or for the specifications of the work field.

For the fruitfullness of the training and the return of the invested resources, it is imperative to have properly elaborated teaching materials and a well-trained staff of lecturers. But it must reach its goal so an important factor of this success is the motivation for training and the satisfaction afterwards. In this presentation we are focusing on this element and showing the results of our research done in the beginning of 2018.

2. THE PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARC

2.1. *Reforms in the public sphere*

A change began in the public sector after the change of regime according to which a planned training system was established. Its operation was heavily formal those days. The scheme of training had a primarily administrative aim. The review of these planned and realized trainings was documented but “these plans and reports did not correlate with each other” (Koltányi, Kowalik, 2011. p. 58)

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³In the public administration the human resources management has to adjust to the ever-changing world, to the shifts in trend and emphasis and also have to face the challenges and tasks pro-actively and in a value creating way.(Bokodi, Szakács,2014. p. 135-175). Source:

http://magyaryprogram.kormany.hu/download/b/fa/a0000/_Tanulmanykotet_online_EN_AROP2217.pdf(13. 11. 2014.)

⁴Public Administration Humane Mirror 2014 Research

A solution for the problem was provided by the Magyary Zoltán Administrative Training Programme⁵ which was one of the most significant milestones in the process of the establishment of the new, integrated training system. (It is worth noting that the programme deals with not only the topic of the training but it considers an overall reformation of the public sector. But we can state that one of the key elements of these overall reforms was the establishment of the training system.) The details of the objectives of the Magyary Programme are in the State Personell Strategy in which the training system is an important part of the development of the administrative personel.(Princzinger, Kisfaludy, 2015.)

Another important step of the upgrade of the administrative system is the law No. 199/2011. At that time it was the newest personel policy aimed at the service of the good of the public. The rebuilding of the state began and professional knowledge and commitment had key roles. The efficient personel policy must be development-oriented – as stated in a study from the National Administrative University (Balázs, 2014). Its realization needed the reformation of the administrative training system. „The patterns of these reforms match international trends.”⁶

The government – for the sake of the establishment of the effective training system – was trying to create such a frame the key element of which was the selecting and developing of the proper pernonell staff.⁷ The competence-management was incorporated into the human resources management “which carries in itself the focused further education” (Belényesi, dobos, 2015).

2.2. The timeliness of the research topic

“The life-long training of the officers is imperative for the operation of a modern administration in the 21st century...and as other countries, Hungary too, has put a significant amount of resources into this programme.” (Gregor, Pallai, 2016)

A large portion of this investment financed an overall trainig system which – following a 6 months period of testing – was introduced on the 1st of January, 2014. The first 4-year-old phase ended on the 31st of December, 2017. During this time adequate amount of theoretical and practical experience was gathered as for the operation of the system and theimplementation of the trainings. So in this study we are presenting the results of the satisfaction towards this adminstrative training scheme which gathered the above-mentioned knowledge.

2.3. The introduction of the training system

For the sake of enhancing the effectiveness of the public administration we needed a nation-wide, overall scheme that has two basic aims:

- the establishment of an administrative faculty, the members of which keep their knowledge up-to-date so that they can carry out their tasks on a professional level for the sake of the clients
- the administrative staff must serve their country (effectively) by providing continuously refreshed knowledge (Kiss et al., 2014)

The government order on the training of the administrative officers (273/2012. IX. 28.) was established aligned with the aims of the Europe 2020 strategy and it also fits with the Government Personel Strategy (which was placed out of order) of 2011. This order defines the notions of the training, lists the tasks and sphere of authority of the institutions involved, furthermore it also explains the rules applied to the officers.⁸

⁵Zoltán Magyary Public Administration-developing Programme (MP 11.0), 2011.

⁶Márton Gellén took his note in his phd. thesis based on the following sources: “Bouckaert, Geert – Pollitt, Christopher: Public Management Reform. A Comparative Analysis. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, 2004, 2011. pp. 75-125. resp.: György Jenei: Comparative Public Policy. (theoretical approaches and international case studies in the field of public policy) Academic phd. paper September, 2007. Manuscript library of the Hungarian Scientific Academy, pp. 47-51.”

⁷ In order that there could be a personell who have proper qualification for the public administration, the government regulated the requirements needed to fulfill certain positions. The repeatedly modified 29/2012.

⁸ In the 1st issue of 2015 journal the details of the training system were provided, so in our research we only mention its features. Source: (Princzinger, Kisfaludy, 2015)

According to this the officers obliged to get involved must take part⁹in the training after successfully taking a basic exam and they can accomplish their tasks in the programmes.¹⁰

The evaluation happens with the help of a categorized point system¹¹(with so-called credit points). The administrative officers, according to their qualification, must meet different requirements. The officers with advanced level qualification must accumulate 128 credit points in four years, while the ones with medium level certificates have to gather 64 points.

The officers can prepare with the help of e-material (in the form of e-learning), in facet o face training or with the combination of both (so-called blended training).

The need for e-material was triggered by the number of officers involved, the number of trainers and the given infrastructure.¹²

One can choose from *qualified programmes* provided by the National Administrative University and/or the so-called *professional trainings* provided by other adult education institutions and/or the so-called inner trainings offered by the administrative authorities as employers.

In this programme general administrative knowledge, professional knowlelge and knowledge for leaderships is imparted along with a preparation for the so-called special examination.

The inner trainings are provided by administrative authorities and higher education or adult education institutions, which give special or job-related knowledge.

The above-mentioned two types of training complement each other well and provide an opportunity for some special knowledge which gives theoretical and practical, well-applicable knowledge (e.g. for a person for a specific task).

They offer extra training for leaderships which give a regular training, an expert-training and replacement purposes.¹³

3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1. *The central objective of the research*

In this present study,we are monitoring the satisfaction towards the various training methods with the help of local-government officials taking part in the obligatory training scheme. The educational material is available to the officials as:

- e-learning
- facet o face training
- so-called blended training that amalgamates the previous two
- leadership training

During this research we wanted to know whether there are differences in satisfaction depending on the ways the officials can further educate themselves. According to our assumption, the satisfaction of those who took part in the practice-based trainings was the highest while that of those who were involved in the presence-based sessions was higher than the satisfaction towards e-learning. (We are not monitoring the blended type of training because of its mixed nature.)

⁹ Those who are excused of taking the basic exam according to the relating law, start their training obligation on the day after the probation.

¹⁰“The employer must set up the personal trainig scheme for one year so that the aims should be met within the planned 4-year-long term.” (Kiss, 2014. p. 70.)

¹¹“The unit of measure of the educational work is the point. It denotes the working hours needed for the mastery of the given learning materials in the training programmes and courses.” (Kiss, 2014. p. 70.)

¹²“Also the University of National Administration is not able to provide small-group trainings for 75.000 officials in the wide-range higher educational and the administrative co-operative system. The support of individual learning and the exploitation of the virtual training space is needed.” (Kiss, 2014. p. 74.)

¹³ The programme table is available <https://probono.uni-nke.hu/programkereso>and on the homepage of the Leadership Training and Further Education Institution. (www.vkti.uni-nke.hu)

3.2. The methodology of the research

For the monitoring of the assumptions we have carried out primary research with the use of qualitative and quantitative methods.

The spine of our research is a questionnaire survey which we have completed with interviews from professionals. It is important to state that from the subdivisions of the administrative system we have studied exclusively the field of local-government administration. Therefore during the planning of this research our objective was to ask the local-governments to involve 1,000 of the officials who have taken the basic examination on the subject.

The answering of the questionnaire all over the country took place in January and February, 2018. The link to the survey was sent to each and every local-government (altogether 3,155 according to the Institution of Central Statistics, 2017) with the recommendation of the Alliance of National Local-Government. The questionnaire had security filters in them, so they could be filled out only by the selected officials. These officials had theoretical and practical experiences and live-registration to the web surface of the training (in the system of the so-called Pro Bono educational and exam portal).

The completion of the survey was voluntary and anonymous. The cleared sample contains 1,053 respondents.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

We monitored the satisfaction of the administrative officers based on 11 factors in case of the three training schemes mentioned in the previous chapter. We asked the participants to mark the level of satisfaction on a scale of 6. The poorest mark indicated the lowest degree of contentment (it means: total disagreement) and the highest mark showed the best degree of satisfaction (it means: total agreement). The 7th grade meant: "I cannot decide".

When counting the average level, we replaced the marks with numbers. The minimum level was number 1, the maximum level was number 6. Between the two the levels correlated with the given numbers (it means: 2=not satisfied at all, 3=not quite satisfied, 4=rather satisfied and 5=very satisfied). we excluded the level "I cannot decide". When we had converted the answers to numbers, we calculated the average value in chart number 1.

We generated *the average satisfaction indicator* with all the answers in mind doing a simple calculation.

Chart No. 1 – The data of the satisfaction survey

Tested Factor	Average number of satisfaction (calculated value)		
	E-learning (n=1.029)	Face to Face training (n=474)	Leadership training (n=100)
Quality of the learning material	4.13	4.32	4.28
Quantity of the learning material	3.97	4.16	4.27
Intelligibility of the learning material	4.26	4.31	4.35
Availability of the learning material	4.46	4.36	4.35
Used tools during training	4.32	4.33	4.30
Usefulness of the learning material	3.86	4.22	4.17
Method of examining	4.22	4.30	4.24
How the examining is built on the material	4.30	4.39	4.33
How „user friendly” the material is	4.30	4.37	4.19
Level of new information in the material	4.10	4.33	4.19
Well-being during training	3.91	4.29	4.25
Average satisfaction mark	4.17	4.31	4.27

Source: Personal editing

The *average satisfaction indicator* marks give, a reflexion of the administrative officials opinion s. According to the numbers the presence-based training shows the highest level of satisfaction. The leadership training indicates a slightly lower mark and the poorest mark was given to the e-learning.

The columns of the 1st chart show the answers always only to the given training form separated from each other.

Only those participants were allowed to fill in the questionnaire, who had already taken part in the training at least once. Based on the given answers the number of people involved was: n=1,029 in the case of e-learning, n=474 in the case of face to face training and n=100 in the case of leadership training. Because of the difference between the patterns, the conclusions do not prove the comparison to be unambiguous but shows a certain tendency nevertheless.

The *calculated value of this survey* shows the measure of satisfaction of the attended courses. In this respect the differences between the values – if we monitor only one from of training – can be measured accurately.

Going back to the conclusions of the average satisfaction indicator, we can state that if the defining of the variables was correct the results highlight the differences between the satisfaction of the training forms. It can be so if the participants meant the same by the various education forms in spite of the differing number of answers.

According to this assumption, the lowest level of satisfaction was given to the e-learning (4.17 points) seems to be proven in our research. The reason for that is that the worker satisfaction grows if the officials can get information that makes their work easier, and this number decreases if they do not get what they expect or the way they expect it.¹⁴

It is worth noticing that the difference between the marks of the presence-based training (4,31) and the leadership training (4,27) is not significant although the former has a slightly edge over the latter.

When setting up our hypothesis, we assumed that the difference between the educational methods applied during the above mentioned two types of training had a stronger effect on the administrative satisfaction than the knowledge partaken during the courses. Some of the leadership trainings take days, are enjoyable, take place in hotels, so they provide a combination of learning and relaxation at the same time. They form skills, abilities, attitudes and provide theoretical and practical knowledge. In case of the presence-based trainings the emphasis is put on the professional contents rather than on the personal development. We believe the reason for this is the desire for the professional material and that is why the assumed order was not justified before this research.

Previously we mentioned that this comparative survey would be even more reliable if the questionnaire would have been filled out by those who had taken part in all the three trainings. In order to validate this statement we used a filter and we used the data of those who had taken every course. It turned out that out of the 1,053 people only 61 qualified for this criteria (it is 5.8%). This number is too small so we cannot prove or disprove any validity.

If we do not concentrate on the relation between the satisfaction marks but we take a close look at the factors within the given training and how high its satisfaction was then we can state the following.

The highest rate of satisfaction of the e-learning type of training was given to the accessibility of the material (4.46 points). If we put the answers into two categories that is we consider everybody satisfied who chose the options “rather satisfied”, “very satisfied” and „totally satisfied” then we must state that 91%-of the participants was content with the availability of the teaching materials.

The lowest indicator was given to the “usefulness of the materials” (3.86 points). Following the above mentioned method we can say that 30.4% of the officials was not content with the usefulness of the e-learning materials.

Among the factors there is one where the satisfaction has a negative sign to it (26,1%) in case of every fourth participants. In this field mainly feelings were monitored. We was curious to know „how well the participant felt during the trainings”.

¹⁴A part of our research which is not presented in this study mentions the monitoring of the selection of the trainings. On the conference “Cultural Economy” organised by the Gyula Kautz Faculty of Economics in the István Széchenyi University we presented the results of our research on the 5th of June in 2018. In it we stated that the strongest motivation of the selected officials was “the growth in professional knowledge” and “the achievement of personal development”.

In case of the *facet o face trainings* the teaching materials produced a high level of satisfaction in many areas. The employees gave the highest mark on “teaching material-based exams” (4.39 points) and “user friendly teaching material” (4.37 points). In the former case the 88,5% of the administrative officials and in the latter case 88,2% gave some positive remarks. Also “the availability of the teaching material” got a high mark (4.36 points) and the ratio is 87,9%.

It is important to mention that the calculations above – due to some extremely negative opinion – does not show two areas with which the majority of the officials are satisfied. 89,2% of them were satisfied with the quality and from this 37,5% were very content. The situation is very similar in connection with the intelligibility of the teaching materials where 89,2% were satisfied and 37,7% of this were very satisfied. The level of contentment with the tools used during the trainings was 89% out of which 38,6% were very or fully content.

Satisfaction is justified with the quantity of the teaching materials. Only 17,2% of the officials were negative about it but the research does not show whether they found it too much or too little. This data could be presented in another survey.

As for the *leadership training* the officials liked “the intelligibility” (4.35 points) and the „accessibility of the teaching material” (4.35 points) and „material-based exams” (4.33).

The lowest mark was given to the “usefulness” (4.17 points) but the tendency is rather positive here: 83% of the leadership training participants are satisfied; 31% are very or fully content with it. The ratio of those is especially high who like the quality (90%), the intelligibility (92%), the availability (92%) and that the exams are built on the teaching material (91.9%).

5. CONCLUSION

All in all we can state that the satisfactory indicators of the officials taking part in the next generation administrative training system are positive. We can also say that in all the three training forms the highest marks were given to the “availability of the teaching material” and “material-based exams”. The officials are basically content with “the tools used during training” and “the intelligibility”. The indicators are lower in two areas: “the quantity” and „the usefulness”. Further aimed research would be needed to reveal the low level of rating in those areas. These results would promote growth and effectiveness in the operation of this system.

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