

Competency-based Human Resource Management in the Public Service from Educational Perspective

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Abstract

The study is providing a theoretical analysis of the applicability of the competency-based Human Resource Management (HRM) approaches in the civil service with a view to enhancing and embedding the development of HRM in national systems, like in the Hungarian civil service, where despite its growing popularity, it has not been adequately addressed so far. It is our intention to focus on several interrelated aspects of the issue, analyze the components and show directions for improvement.

Exploring the reasons behind this backwardness, the study is highlighting e. g. the misunderstandings resulting from the differences of interpretations, or the practical implications of the measurability of competencies. It also presents the special features of practices within the European Union, where the interpretation of the competencies is based on the unified personality of the employee, who is ready to develop new competencies that meet the requirements of employers and the changing work environment. It seems important to bring the approaches of the training institutions into line with those of the public institutions, even if compromises are unavoidable.

The study is based on research data related to the Hungarian practice on the one hand, as well as empirical findings regarding the American civil service on the other. While data collection by Belényesi targeted primarily the efforts made in the Hungarian public service to develop a comprehensive competency-based management system, research findings by Dobos in the U.S. are focusing on competency models, core practices and the education and training philosophy, as well as the methods and practices applied in the professional and leadership development of public officials at federal and local levels.

During the past decade, but nowadays in particular, the modernization tendencies characterizing Hungarian public administration have resulted in new requirements concerning the operation of public administration and public organizations. These changes in the attitudes raise the importance of the development of competency maps and models necessary for the more efficient and effective work performance and mark a shift in the appreciation of functional orientation in competency development, as well as public services, which have evident impacts on the professional training and development needs of the civil service personnel.

By presenting the American best practice in the related field it is our intention to reflect on the benchmarking opportunities. For example, in the American civil service the global competencies, the requirements of the multicultural working environment have already appeared among the new competencies of civil service professionals, and it cannot be otherwise in a member state of the European Union either. At the same time, we need to consider that various national and organizational cultures may represent different values and practices at a deeper level, which requires careful consideration. However, with thoughtful preparation the best practice of a different culture, or certain elements of it, can be adapted to other countries' practices.

Benefiting from the multi-disciplinary and comparative approach, present study is also aiming at the examination and the analysis of the research findings from an adult education perspective to facilitate the change of paradigms in the training and professional development practice towards the application of the principles of modern andragogy.

The study draws the attention to the fact that facilitating the change of the methodological paradigms in the education and training of the civil service staff and managers needs the partnership and cooperation of all the parties concerned, i. e. the government, the university, and the teaching staff, – the target groups, as the

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evaluation of the professional training component of several projects have proved, are open and ready for the change.