

SUMMARY

The Ph. D. thesis entitled *The Impact of the Political Factor on the Management of Public Organizations* represents an interdisciplinary approach of an extremely interesting issue for the present society – the relations between the management of public organizations and the political factor. Based on a rich bibliography which unites over 200 titles from the literature of both public and private management, the paper aims at analysing this issue from a triple perspective – theoretical, conceptual and empirical. The literature review positions the research theme within the literature and builds a theoretical and conceptual framework able to support both empirical studies from the last two chapters of the paper.

The thesis was designed to answer the following questions: *How can we best describe the relations between the management of public organizations and the political environment? How does the political influence reflect upon the decision-making process within public organizations? How can we best describe the influences upon the management of human resources processes (recruitment, selection, promotion) within the public sector? Is there room for improvements regarding the methodology of study for this issue?*

The last question articulates the need for discovering new adequate methods and techniques in order to study the issue of the influence exerted by the political factor upon the management of public organizations and offers the impulse for the design and development of the two empirical studies from the fourth and fifth chapters. Thus, the study strives to describe the nature of the relationship between politics and public organizations and to build models in order to analyze the challenges that public organizations management faces with the political environment.

One of the main directions of our research is that of discussing the relationship between politics and public administration. Consequently, one of the first research methods we used was the analysis of the literature in order to identify the theories and models of exerting influence over public organizations, arriving at contingency theory and environment theory. The influence of the environment over public organizations activities constitutes a seminal perspective of study for researchers who grounded their work on several factors in order to explain the variation of some variables corresponding to

different management processes of public organizations and through which to build models of analysis for the relations between public organizations and the political environment. The literature review on the impact of the organizational environment identified a large series of analytical and conceptual dimensions used by researchers in order to measure diverse aspects of organizational environments: environmental stability and turbulence, resource availability, homogeneity and concentration, political support.

Consequently, researches on the influence of the political factor over public administration, which we have discussed within the **first chapter**, have resulted in highlighting what researchers commonly referred to as “*the political character of public management*” through at least two aspects: “*influencing the policies and practices within public organizations by political representatives and occupying positions and public functions by individuals selected according to political criteria*”. These statements are the more so valuable for the research as they suggest the existence of some relations of determination between the external political environment and the management of public organizations.

The literature review revealed the fact that the relations of public organizations’ management with the political sphere have been an intense concern both for public managers researchers and practitioners, and for political sciences researchers. The agreement on the fact that environments strongly influence organizational behaviour has not yet materialize in a single definition and perception of this concept, researchers bringing their share to building several definitions on environments in the literature and creating more models for analysing and assessing the influence of the political environment, influence explained through several types of factors. The influence of organizational environment determines changes within the organization structure, thus resulting a relation of direct dependence between administrative autonomy and the quality of public administration.

Researchers who theoretized the transition from the bureaucratic system paradigm to the post-bureaucratic system paradigm have argued the necessity of formulating innovative strategies in order to orient the results of public organizations towards the satisfaction of their customers/citizens. However, managers from public organizations are not concerned solely with the satisfaction of their clients/citizens, but also with that of their hierarchical superiors. Since most public management positions are

also occupied by representatives of the political sphere, this aspect is perceived by theoreticians as a factor which triggers disfunctionalities in the system. Another flaw refers to the diversity of dichotomical dimensions of accountability identified by researchers within public organizations which creates a diffuse and diluted structure for managing accountability. Moreover, the process of accountability management is rendered more difficult by conflicts born from the clash of different interests within the executive and the legislative and the employment and promotion based on political criteria.

Referring to the statements made by researchers, the Romanian case is representative in this sense, the creation of accountability management mechanisms following 1989 being developed on the basis of legislative provisions, thus resulting a public domain structure in which ministries played a double role – that of increasing the bureaucratization by adopting supplementary regulations in order to implement the ones coming from the legislative, but, at the same time, that of increasing their own autonomy.

We were also preoccupied by the fact that few works approach political influences over organizational communication. Empirical testing validated hypotheses such as the one assuming the existence of provable differences between the management of information systems from public and private organizations, the first being exposed to the bureaucratization phenomenon (encountered in the literature under the name of “red tape” which supposes the imposition of rigid formal rules and excessive regulations which hinder action and the decision-making process), but also to control and to internal (organizational) and external policies.

We were equally interested in the nature of the relationship between politicians and public administrators, highlighted through researches on the existence of cooperation or conflict in their relations. Another direction of the research drove us in the sphere of political control dynamics, of administration politicization which triggers different changes in the functioning and structure of public organizations. The different results obtained in the researches on the dynamics of political control and on the nature of relations between politicians and public administrators or at institutional level have provided the support for two distinct and somehow opposed perspectives of the relation between politics and administration which have given birth to the political-administration

dichotomy theory and the theory of the complementarity between politics and administration.

The main directions followed by the theoretical research in the **second chapter** which dealt with the most relevant managerial approaches (in order to theoretically and conceptually prepare the two researchers developed in the fourth and fifth chapters) were the approaches regarding organizational structure, organizational communication and information system in public organizations.

Organizational structure was discussed through the conceptual approach of the dimensions of structure, the nature of hierarchical relations, discussing the structural approach in public organizations and the most relevant perspectives of reform in public organizations. One section was dedicated to discussing managerial approaches of organizational structures from the perspective of communication and information system. The theoretical research materialised in the literature review on information system within public organizations, internal and external communication policies within public sector organizations, presenting the different perspectives of analysis of formal and informal communication, of the importance of organizational communication within the management of change. Another section presents the most relevant approaches of the analytical and descriptive perspectives which measure a phenomenon we integrated in the research in the last chapter, highlighting political influences on communication in public organizations.

Perceiving public organizations as complex dynamics, open systems with structures continuously adaptable to the requests of organizational environment is one of the major challenges which acts upon public organizations. Changes in the environment are perceived as an element which forces organizations to act due to the interdependence between local communities and public organizations. Thus, communication loopholes regarding the reasons and purposes of change are among the factors which render this process its peculiar difficulty.

The **third chapter** materialised in a theoretical research of the literature on the components of human resources management in public organizations aiming at creating a theoretical framework in which to position the empirical researchers of the next two chapters. The management activities which interested our research were: recruitment, selection, certification, appointment of public employees, career management and

promotion policies within public organizations, training, forming and improving public employees, approaches relating to leadership, satisfaction and motivation of public employees, organizational culture, remuneration policies and evaluation within public organizations. One of the most relevant aspects discussed in this chapter and which contributed to shaping a theoretical framework for the researches in the next two chapters of the paper were the analysis of the literature on public organizations employment on two directions:

- (1) The issue of merit system versus spoils system
- (2) The issue of neutrality: presenting the researches on appointments and promotions based on political criteria.

Within their studies, theoreticians struggled to explain the variations among organizations. Although based on a number of different theoretical perspectives, most of those explanations included three sets of factors: size, technology and organization environment. Based on this approach we conducted in the **fourth chapter** a research with the purpose of building a model for the relations between the management of human resources in organizations from the education sector and the external political environment. In this sense, the research constituted an interdisciplinary approach which combined the theoretical, conceptual and empirical dimensions and aimed at building a new research perspective on the relations between public organizations and the political environment in order to test the assumption that the dynamics of external political environment is directly proportional to the degree of uncertainty for the public organization, especially for some processes within the management of human resources.

The research on imposing a model of analysis of the relations between the management of human resources within public organizations and the political environment studies the impact of the political factor on employment in public organizations in the field of education. We have practically searched for an answer to the following questions: *How can we best describe the relations public organizations in the field of education have with the political environment? Which is the variable that can best explain the variation of the number of employees in education?*

The theoretical research polarized its attention on the literature review on the assessment of the relationship between the management of public organizations and the external political environment, by concentrating both on the theory of the politics-

administration dichotomy and the theory of the complementarity between politics and administration on the one hand, and, on the other hand, on finding the fittest variable to explain the influence of political environment on public organizations and on discussing the challenges imposed by the reform of human resources management in public organizations. The empirical research materialised by modelling with the regression technique some aspects integrated to the relations between human resources management and the external political environment.

Consequently we have researched an impressive body of literature in order to find an analytical dimension which could highlight the relationship between the political environment and a management process within public organizations. We articulated this dimension with the *instability of the political environment* formula, a variable which reflects the degree of turbulence, unpredictability, dynamism and/or change in the political environment surrounding a public organization.

We have thus aimed at building a new work perspective on the following aspect: the analysis of employees number evolution from a public sector domain in relation to notable events originating from the political sphere – we have chosen to analyse this evolution in relation to the allocation of budgetary resources in the field of education in Romania.

The empirical research started with formulating a **theory** which we proposed for validation and which states that the variations of the values of specific indicators are determined by events and influences from the political sphere (laws adoption, general and local elections, political crises, budgetary regulations). Thus, it becomes possible to identify a correlation between the variation in the value of specific indicators and some influences and events from the political field. The next step meant building the work variables and launching the **research hypotheses** through which we assumed that the greater the instability of the political environment, the higher the values of the frequency of employees' turnover in the organization.

We have thus created a model of analysis of the relations between the human resources management in public organizations and the external political environment by highlighting the association among the number of employees in education and the level of salaries in education (established at national level), the competition for resources materialized through the allocation of budgetary resources for education by the legislative

authority and the reorganization of the public sector highlighted in our case through the density of educational units.

Regression method suggested the existence of a relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. We observed the fact that starting from the values of independent variables one can predict the value of the dependent variable. **Regression analysis** revealed a situation which confirmed our expectations: the independent variables that we created and on the basis of which we build our model explain almost 76% from the variation of the dependent variable. Consequently we could conclude that it was possible to accurately predict the value of the employees number in the field of education knowing the value of the annual net salary in the domain, the value of budgetary resources allocated by the legislative and the density of educational units.

In the **fifth chapter** we designed and developed a research on imposing a model of analysis of the perception of public employees on the autonomy of decision-making process in four types of public sector organizations. The starting point for this research was a **theory** we had formulated and proposed for validation which assumes that there are several factors that determine the manner in which both employees and management of public organizations perceive the autonomy of the decision-making process in these organizations.

In order to validate the theory previously enounced we launched a **research hypothesis** which states that at the level of Romanian public administration there are more representations associated to the phenomenon *political influence over decision-making*: political control over decisions in administration (phenomenon to which we referred in terms of *political discretion*); employment/promotion based on political criteria; assessment of administrative capacity by the European Union; budgetary constraints; lack of consultation in decision-making by hierarchical superiors. In trying to validate both theory and hypothesis which represent the starting point of our study we searched to formulate a set of questions that would guide our research. The central research question from which we started our approach wondered *How does political influence reflect over the decisions of public employees in both management and execution positions in public organizations?* This question was succeeded by other eight questions which addressed the perception of public employees on different representations of the phenomenon of political influence over the decision-making process.

The theoretical research materialised in studying the bibliography in search for the most relevant dimensions we could use in order to demonstrate the theory we had formulated. The literature review was carried out in the following directions: presenting the most relevant approaches of the decision-making process in public organizations (the managerial, political and legal approaches of the decision-making process), identifying the determinant factors of the evolution of the relation between politicians and administrators, discussing European Union competences in the field of assessing public administrations of Member States and Candidate Countries and highlighting administrative capacities as premises for effective integration to the European Union, discussing the financing sources of public organizations and highlighting the implications for the decision-making process.

The results of the empirical research carried out through the **factor analysis** method in the fifth chapter suggest the fact that public employees' perceptions vary as regards the degree of administrative decisional autonomy, while their perceptions are not influenced by the degree of formal (legal) autonomy of public organizations. Factor analysis is a statistical method which identifies the factors that can explain the variance of the research variables, the correlations among them and the intensity of the connection between factors and each of the manifest variables. Following the factor analysis we identified nine factors which explain as high as 65,333% of the variance of the 30 selected variables. The nine factors we identified shape a basic structure of the perceptions on political influence which inconveniences decisions within public administration. Thus, we could accept the research hypothesis which assumed the existence of a set of factors which bear upon the employees' perception on the decision-making process of Romanian public administration. Moreover, empirical analyses of the phenomenon we named political factor influence over decisional autonomy supply the support for the general statement that political discretion, conforming to European standards regarding decisional autonomy and legislative stability, appreciating qualities, knowledge and abilities of public employees in management and execution positions, frequency of consultations, politicians' influence over administrative discretion, nature of hierarchical relations, financing the institution from state budget and the politicization phenomenon constitute the bureaucracy's behavioural characteristics under the influence of the political factor.