

Improving the Management of Local Public Administration

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Abstract

A continuous and essential effort is being made to improve local public administration management in order to achieve effective governance that meets community requirements. Adopting solutions and putting them into practice to promote operational effectiveness, accountability, and citizen engagement are required. The main objective is to determine practical strategies to improve local public administration management in the current period, which is characterized by the limitations imposed by the global economic crisis, integration into the EU, and the resulting obligations, while also raising the standard of services required by the general public. Improving public administration management is not a static process, but a continuous one, which requires flexibility for a systematic and public approach. As citizens' needs and expectations evolve, local public administration must be able to learn from experience, identify good practices and adapt to new demands.

Key words: management, public administration, performance, objectives, strategies

J.E.L. classification: M11

1. Introduction

Currently, it is evident that the management of public institutions at the local level is receiving significant attention. However, it is crucial to emphasize the necessity for effective management that aligns with the demands of citizens and is structured to address their specific needs. This entails establishing a high-performing administration equipped with robust and sustainable development plans. Improving the management of local public administration is an essential and continuous process to ensure effective, transparent and community-oriented governance. Local public administration plays a vital role in the provision of public services, decision-making and community development at the local level. To meet the complex and dynamic challenges of today's society, a proactive and adaptive approach to the management of local public affairs is required.

Local public administration has a direct impact on the lives of citizens and the development of communities. To adapt to new challenges and meet the demands and expectations of citizens, an efficient, transparent and community-oriented governance is necessary. Improving local public administration management is essential to achieving these goals. One important factor in improving the management of local public administration is operational efficiency. By identifying and eliminating inefficient processes, local public administration can optimize the use of financial, human and material resources. The implementation of modern resource management methods and techniques can lead to a more efficient and sustainable use of resources.

Another important aspect in improving local public administration management is responsibility and accountability. This involves clearly defining objectives and expectations, monitoring performance and taking appropriate action if these are not met. Accountability contributes to more transparent governance and building citizens' trust in public institutions.

In order to ensure a governance oriented towards the needs of the community, citizen involvement and public participation in the decision-making process is essential. Local public administration must facilitate consultation and dialogue with citizens, non-governmental organizations and business to obtain valuable feedback and input into decision-making and public policy development. Public participation brings diverse perspectives and community needs into the discussion, which contributes to more informed and legitimate decisions.

The scientific approach to finding modern ways of managing public institutions is not necessarily new, being current in the specialized literature and found as a problem of major importance in the economy of the 21st century. Public sector bodies are required to become more effective and efficient, and the evolution of international economic integration, the increasing sophistication of technology and, last but not least, the heterogeneity of socio-economic conditions, produced by the merging of markets at very different levels of development, are all factors that accelerate the rate of change in the social environment. While there will be massive pressure on public sector bodies to achieve significant, quantifiable cost savings in the coming years, there is a bigger and more complex performance challenge facing public sector leaders. They will have to achieve the potential reduction in administration costs, without negatively affecting the performance perceived by citizens.

The article intersects between two distinct fields of study: management, particularly public management, and sociology. Therefore, the approach must encompass both branches and begin by considering the foundational contributions of these two major fields. Synthesis of the main currents including personalities who were concerned with deepening and finding logical, credible and substantiated explanations regarding the field of study.

The scientific significance of the article lies in its formulation of proposals aimed at enhancing local public administration management. These proposals include increased investment in human capital through staff training activities, facilitated by training courses financed either from the budget or through non-reimbursable external grants. The essay also highlights how critical it is to advance e-government, enhance organizational performance within local public administration, privatize some public services, and carry out local projects through public-private partnerships. These ideas offer workable methods for enhancing the management of local public administration while also expanding the field of research.

In conclusion, improving the management of local public administration is essential to ensure an efficient, transparent and community-oriented governance. By implementing effective strategies and practices, local public administration can increase operational efficiency, accountability and citizen involvement, contributing to sustainable development and prosperity of the local community.

2. Literature review

Scientific management developed within the rational school of managerial thought, led by Henri Fayol, the author of the work *General and Industrial Management* published in 1916. Within this school, management was viewed as a *rational system* and it was considered that in any business activities should be conducted based on a series of *elementary principles of management, such as: division of labor, discipline, authority and responsibility, unity of direction, decision-making unity, subordination of individual interests to the general interest, hierarchy, payment, centralization, order, equity, stability, initiative, verbal communication* (Profiroiu, 2014). The orientation of management as a science is based on the approach of Frederick Winslow Taylor, who analyzed workplaces to identify the elements that make up physical work and proposed their redesign, modification to find the best or fastest work method (Androniceanu, 2016).

The school of human relations emerged as a result of the research of Professor Elton Mayo from Harvard University and emphasizes the importance of the relationship between management and workers for increasing productivity. He conducted a series of studies on labor productivity at the Western Electric plant in Hawthorne, Illinois. Based on these studies and the results of current research in the behavioral sciences, the discipline *organizational behavior* emerged. The human relations school emphasizes participative management, managerial style, teamwork, group dynamics, individual behavior, motivation and communication (Morey et al., 2002).

What is management? - one of the most important factors generating economic performance at the company level. Its functionality, efficiency and effectiveness are appreciably dependent on the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of management (Lena, 2015). It can be characterized as *science* - studying management processes - a distinct category of work processes, it can also be studied from a practical point of view, and elements of a theoretical-methodological nature are operationalized at the company level and processual or structural components they can be operationalized through specific decisions and actions (Cameron and Green, 2019).

Management can be defined as an activity, accumulating specific attributions in the exercise of which several positions from a compartment or even a compartment are involved (Leisering, 2011). The specific management functions forecasting, organization, coordination, training and control-evaluation, are exercised by managers and occupy the entire area of actions of the entity, and the management subsystems - methodological, decision-making, organizational information, human resources management, acquire due performance the era of internal informatization of the knowledge-based society. Unlike traditional entities, with well-established hierarchical relationships, in today's society, there is a reconsideration of the human factor and a change in its condition, by changing relationships that become little by little more informal, reducing the importance of organizational documents (Maney, 2011).

Between the five classical functions, the organizational, research, commercial, production, and financial/accounting functions, *a new function appears - knowledge*. In helping the manager, in carrying out his activity of coordination and decision, computer applications have a major implication, which centralize data structured by categories, statistics and comparisons revealing the evolution over time, facilitate the construction of estimating future evolutions of economic phenomena, with the additionality of influence due to political factors, the evolution of the European markets, the integration to the European Union, the influence of the euro exchange rate, the openness offered on the labor market. The study of public administration can be approached by studying its components and the links between them, the interaction with other social systems (Burnes, 2017).

Descriptive perspective reveals the analysis of the public administration from several points of view of the activities within public institutions, and the analysis from the *normative perspective* provides information regarding the design of public institutions, the administrative structure, organizational models and officials, not in the end, we can look at administration at an abstract level from the perspective of ideas, concepts or principles that allow an evolution of the field of study (Armstrong and Murlis, 2018). Max Weber, considered one of the founders of the modern study of sociology and public administration, begins his theory by defining the term *dominance* through the distinction that can be made between power and influence, which are the big categories from his point of view. Domination over groups of people requires a specialized staff, the problem raised by the author is how to maintain staff loyalty (Smith, 2014). Loyalty can usually be achieved by a complex of purely material interests, Weber identifies within the theory the following ways in which it manifests itself: emotional ties, payment as remuneration for loyalty or beliefs, but regardless of the reasons underlying loyalty, there is a need of legitimacy. Based on experience, notes Weber, different types of legitimacy give rise to different *types of listening*, *a type of administrative staff* and *a pattern of exercised authority* (Blakely and Leigh, 2017).

The classical managerial approach begins at the end of the 19th century, by moving from the practice of appointing supporters of the winning party to public positions, to the system based on merit and professionalism. The party that won the elections obtained the sinecure of the public administration and absolute control over its composition, although perhaps those appointed did not have the necessary professional training, their actions not being centered on the public interest (Nicholls, 2022).

The involvement of the state in all aspects of social life in order to ensure a high standard of living (that general well-being) for the most comprehensive part of the population, was considered the great problem of contemporary society - we are dealing with a situation of overload, in which public institutions are overwhelmed by both the quantity and the high degree of complexity of the tasks they have to perform. Trying to offer as many services as possible, the administration is overwhelmed by the tasks it has. The objectives are ambiguous, and this fact leads to inefficiency (Majone, 2006).

Another determining factor of the reform process was European integration. The policies implemented at the European level, focused on establishing a common market and subsequently introducing a single currency, have resulted in significant transformations in the organizational structures and operations of Western states. The administrations had to adapt to working conditions in a competitive environment similar to those in the private sector, triggered by a huge process of privatization or concession of some public services - national post, telephone, public interest services - unimaginable with 10-15 years ago. The European integration process has weakened the authority of central governments, in favor of local authorities. Considering the principles promoted by the EU, especially those of local autonomy and subsidiarity, the central government lost the position of sole intermediary between supranational and local institutions. Local authorities have the opportunity to interact directly with various European institutions. The implementation of European legislation in the national legal framework has determined a series of changes in the administrative structure, making it more flexible and open. The term *New Public Management* refers to all the modifications made to the traditional model of administration by incorporating some managerial strategies and procedures unique to the private sector in the field of public administration (Hayes, 2021).

3. Research methodology

The goal of the study is to investigate how management affects the development of local public administration management. The goal of the study is to identify and evaluate the variables that affect how much local public administration management has improved.

In this research, the sociological survey questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The chosen method was interactive, which implies a direct exchange of information between the researcher and the subjects participating in the study. The main purpose of this method was to obtain relevant data regarding the influence of the main types of management on the degree of progress of local public administration management. Participants were questioned specifically and pertinently on important elements of management in local public administration through the sociological survey questionnaire. The researcher had the opportunity to interact directly with the participants, clarify questions and obtain additional or detailed information when necessary. The use of an interactive method made it possible to collect a lot of data, giving the researcher a deeper understanding of participants' opinions and experiences regarding the influence of different management philosophies on the development of local public administration management. The goal was to gather solid and representative empirical data through the use of sociological survey questionnaires and the interactive method for a more thorough analysis and comprehension of the relationship between local public administration management and the degree of progress in its management.

The sampling method used in this study is stratified sampling, more specifically stratified proportional sampling. Through this method, a complete representativeness of the sample in terms of its structure was ensured. In this study, the sampling was carried out by selecting subjects with management positions from several local public institutions in Romania (mayors, local councils, county councils, local public administrations, community public services, regional development agencies), and the selection was based on their willingness to participate in the research. The sample included a total of 482 participants.

In this research, SPSS software was used to perform statistical analyses, including Chi-Square tests and Kendall's tau_b tests. These analyzes were performed to examine the relationships and associations between the studied variables. Chi-Square tests were used to assess the existence of a significant association between two or more categorical variables, while Kendall's tau_b tests were used to examine correlation and rank order between two ordered variables. By means of these statistical analyses, it was aimed to obtain robust and relevant conclusions regarding the relationships and patterns identified in the collected data. These results were aimed at providing useful information for improving local public administration management. This system was used to analyze and organize the collected data, providing results and statistical information to gain a deeper understanding of the researched aspects.

The methodology used in this research was carefully selected and adapted according to the specifics of the field of study and the distinctive features of the researched problem. A rigorous approach was adopted to ensure the validity and reliability of the results obtained.

All these stages of the methodology have been carefully designed to ensure the achievement of valid and relevant results that contribute to the understanding and improvement of local public administration management.

4. Findings

The degree of development in local public administration management and the style of management used are strongly correlated. A local public institution's total performance and efficiency are significantly impacted by the management strategy it chooses, as shown in Table 1.

Table no. 1. Relationship between the type of manager used and the level of local public administration management progress

		The degree of progress of local public administration management			Total
		Satisfactory	Good	Very good	
The type of management practiced	Strategic management	21,7%	44,9%	1,4%	68,1%
	Performance management			23,2%	23,2%
	Participatory management			8,7%	8,7%
Total		21,7%	44,9%	33,3%	100.0 %

Source: developed by authors based on collected data

From Table no. 1, we can conclude that managers who use performance-based management have very good results in proportion to 33.3% (of total results). This type of management focuses on measuring and evaluating the performance of local public administration in achieving objectives and providing quality services to citizens. Performance indicators are used, progress is monitored and corrective action is taken if results are not in line with expectations.

On the other hand, it can be observed that the type of strategic management obtains good results in 45% of the total cases and that it is the most used. This type of management focuses on developing and implementing a long-term vision for local public administration. Strategic goals are set and action plans are developed to achieve those goals. Emphasis is placed on analyzing and anticipating local community needs and effective resource management.

Participatory management promotes the involvement of citizens and stakeholders in the decision-making process of local public administration. Public consultations are held, dialogue mechanisms are created and citizens' feedback and input are taken into account in decision-making.

Table no. 2. Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	129.191a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	156.320	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	79.069	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	138		
a. 2 cells (22.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.61.			

Source: developed by authors based on collected data

From Table no. 2 Chi-Square Tests, we note the significant value of X² of 0.000, which is below the threshold of 0.05, showing a significant link between the two variables, in other words, the types of management practiced influence the results of local public administration, conclusion also represented in the results recorded in the table below (Table no. 3).

Table no. 3. Factors that influence the degree of progress of local public administration management

			The degree of progress of local public administration management			Total
			Satisfactory	Good	Very good	
The factors that influence the degree of progress of local public administration management	Strategic planning	% of Total	2.9%	3.9%	2.2%	9.0%
	Public participation and consultation	% of Total	2.7%	7.0%	4.1%	13.8%
	Transparency and access to information	% of Total	3.9%	8.5%	5.3%	17.7%
	Operational efficiency	% of Total	3.9%	7.5%	5.8%	17.2%
	Developing skills and professionalism	% of Total	3.6%	6.5%	5.3%	15.5%
	Performance monitoring and evaluation	% of Total	2.9%	6.1%	4.4%	13.3%
	Technology and digitization	% of Total	1.5%	3.9%	3.1%	8.5%
	Effective assessment and resolution of complaints and complaints	% of Total	0.5%	1.7%	2.9%	5.1%
Total		Count	90	186	137	413
		% of Total	21.8%	45.0%	33.2%	100.0%
Percentages and totals are based on responses.						
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.						

Source: developed by authors based on collected data

Transparency and access to information, which account for 17.7% of the overall influence, are the factors that have the greatest impact on the degree of progress of local public administration management, according to the data shown in Table no.3. This emphasizes how crucial it is to make information on the actions and choices made by local public administration accessible and pertinent. Budgets, activity reports, and other crucial information are made public to promote transparency and citizen trust. Operational effectiveness comes in second place, contributing 17.2% to the overall influence. Enhancing operational efficiency is essential for improving local public administration management. This calls for streamlining internal procedures, removing red tape, and managing the available human and financial resources better.

Overall, the findings underscore the significance of transparency, access to information, and operational efficiency in driving the progress of local public administration management. Addressing these factors can contribute significantly to improving the overall effectiveness and performance of local public administration. Then the item Development of skills and professionalism (15.5%). In order for the local public administration to be effective, it is necessary to develop the skills and professionalism of the staff involved. Through appropriate training and coaching, a well-prepared team capable of tackling the complex challenges of local public administration management can be ensured. On the last place is the item Evaluation and efficient resolution of complaints and complaints (in proportion of 5.1%). The implementation of an effective system for managing citizens' complaints and complaints can contribute to increasing trust in local public administration. It is important that these complaints are dealt with promptly and appropriate solutions are provided in a transparent and accountable manner.

These percentages explaining the results obtained by using performance management, as is revealed in the data contained in the following table (Table no. 4).

Table 4. Correlation of the way performance management functions are carried out

			Performance measurement	Performance monitoring	Performance evaluation	Performance improvement	The degree of progress of local public administration management
Kendall's tau_b	Performance measurement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.409**	.319**	.009	.285**
	Performance monitoring	Correlation Coefficient	.409**	1.000	.441**	.376**	.079
	Performance evaluation	Correlation Coefficient	.319**	.441**	1.000	.174*	.249**
	Performance improvement	Correlation Coefficient	.009	.376**	.174*	1.000	.454**
	The degree of progress of local public administration management	Correlation Coefficient	.285**	.079	.249**	.454**	1.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

Source: developed by authors based on collected data

In table no. 4 we find the Kendall's-Tau coefficient for each item taken into account. The coefficient shows us if there is a connection between these items and the degree of progress of local public administration management, the meaning and intensity of this connection. From the data presented in this table, it was found that, in most cases, the variables are correlated with each other, the relationships being significant at the 0.01 level as well as at the 0.05 level, the correlations are positive, medium in strength in the case of Performance improvement, correlated with the Degree of progress of local public administration management. The performance improvement function refers to taking measures and actions to improve the results of the organization and achieve the set objectives. This may include identifying and removing obstacles or inefficient processes, implementing continuous improvement initiatives, developing employee skills, and implementing best practices within the organization. By monitoring results and receiving feedback, the organization can identify opportunities for improvement and take appropriate action to increase performance and achieve better results in the future.

And weak in strength is the case of the Performance measurement function, correlated with the Degree of progress of local public administration management. This function involves the development and use of performance indicators to objectively evaluate the organization's results and progress toward achieving goals. Performance indicators can include financial measurements (such as revenue, expenses, profitability) and non-financial measurements (such as citizen satisfaction, service quality, delivery time).

In the case of the correlation between Performance Monitoring and the Degree of progress of local public administration management, currently, it can be observed that the correlation coefficient is insignificant, this shows the lack of connection between the two items. The performance monitoring function involves the collection, recording and analysis of relevant data to assess real-time progress towards objectives and to identify deviations or problems. This may involve the use of reporting tools and dashboards to track and communicate organizational performance to relevant stakeholders.

5. Conclusions

Performance management in local public administration is essential to ensure the monitoring and continuous improvement of organizational performance. By setting clear objectives, measuring and monitoring performance, evaluating and providing feedback, and implementing improvement initiatives, local public administration can achieve better results and respond more effectively to community needs. Performance management plays a vital role in enhancing efficiency, accountability, and transparency within local public administration, resulting in improved citizen services and the attainment of strategic objectives. By effectively implementing and integrating these functions, local governments can foster an environment that encourages innovation, operational efficiency, and sustainable growth.

Performance management is crucial for establishing efficient and effective governance in the field of local public administration. The local public administration can get the following advantages by putting these tasks into practice and managing them:

- Alignment with strategic objectives: by establishing precise and quantifiable objectives, performance management guarantees that the actions and outcomes of the organization are in line with its long-term vision and strategy. This approach aids in directing resources and efforts toward essential priorities, ultimately yielding concrete and measurable outcomes.
- Performance monitoring and evaluation: through the use of performance indicators and monitoring tools, local public administration can track and evaluate progress in achieving objectives. This monitoring allows the prompt identification of possible deviations and problems, allowing for appropriate interventions and continuous improvements.
- Accountability and improvement of results: performance management facilitates accountability and accountability for results. By evaluating performance and providing feedback, strengths and areas for improvement can be identified. Thus, the local public administration can take specific measures to improve performance and achieve better results.
- Transparency and effective communication: performance management plays a vital role in enhancing transparency and communication within local public administration. Through the provision of clear and pertinent performance information, it enables citizens and stakeholders to actively engage and gain a comprehensive understanding of how the administration is effectively working towards its goals and serving the community.
- Continuous improvement and innovation: By identifying opportunities for improvement and fostering a culture of innovation, performance management stimulates organizational growth and development. Local public administration can adopt better practices, implement innovative solutions and adapt approaches according to community needs and requirements.

Overall, performance management in local public administration is a continuous and interconnected process aimed at achieving objectives, monitoring results, evaluating performance and continuous improvement. By effectively implementing and integrating these functions, local public administration can promote a culture of performance and accountability, ensuring the efficient use of resources and achieving positive results in the service of citizens. The presence of committed and engaged leaders is crucial for the successful implementation of performance management. These leaders promote a results-oriented approach and provide the necessary support and resources for continuous improvement. With efficient management practices, local public administration can fulfill its mission of delivering quality services, ensuring transparency, and fostering citizen satisfaction. Consequently, this contributes to the development and prosperity of the local community.

Performance management in local public administration plays a pivotal role in enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the management of public affairs at the local level. Here are some important points to note:

Efficiency and resource optimization: performance management plays a crucial role in identifying and enhancing inefficient processes, as well as promoting the efficient utilization of financial, human, and material resources. By continuously evaluating performance and monitoring relevant indicators, local public administration can identify and implement measures to improve efficiency and save resources.

Accountability and responsibility: clear objectives and expectations are set through performance management, and outcomes are frequently tracked and assessed. This procedure promotes accountability in local public administration and motivates staff to accept accountability for their work product and accomplishment of predetermined goals.

Transparency and effective communication: providing citizens and stakeholders with pertinent and understandable information about the organization's performance is part of performance management. In addition to improving openness and fostering community trust in local public administration, this promotes efficient community communication.

Improvement of public service quality: local public administration can find and implement improvements in the delivery of public services thanks to performance management. The assessment of citizens' needs and expectations through performance evaluation and feedback from service recipients enables the adoption of steps to raise service quality.

Achievement of strategic objectives: performance management makes it easier for resources to be allocated and activities to be coordinated with local public administration's strategic goals. Progress toward reaching these objectives can be ensured through performance monitoring and evaluation, allowing for the corresponding modification of plans and activities.

Overall, performance management in local public administration is a complex and interdisciplinary process, which contributes to the efficiency of activities, improving the quality of services and increasing transparency and accountability to the community. By applying a systemic approach and continuous commitment to performance improvement, local public administration can create an enabling environment for development and progress in the local community.

To ensure the success of performance management in local public administration, it is important that the organization adopts a performance culture, where commitment and accountability for results is promoted. Also, the involvement of all stakeholders, including citizens, representatives of civil society and the business environment, is essential to obtain relevant feedback and ensure a comprehensive view of the organization's performance. It is also important to use appropriate tools and technologies for collecting and analyzing performance data, such as integrated IT systems, dashboards and performance reports. These tools facilitate real-time monitoring, identifying trends and providing relevant information for decision making.

In conclusion, performance management in local public administration has a significant impact on the efficiency, responsibility and quality of services offered to citizens. By implementing and integrating this process, local public administration can achieve superior results, increase citizen confidence and contribute to sustainable development and local community prosperity.

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