

# Career management perspective in public administration

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**A***bstract.* An innovative public organization must be capable to access, internalize and implement the newest forms of knowledge and capitalize efficiently and effectively the potential of human resources available to it. Economic, political, social, administrative, organizational changes in the context of the global crisis impose permanent efforts aimed to ensure flexibility and to redesign the public organizational architecture, adaptation of career management systems to new conditions. Public organisational entities make substantial efforts to increase the quality of public services, performances and their innovative capacity, using as much as possible the employers' potential and talent. The paper explores the importance of the concept, role, objectives and management of career from both individual and public organizational perspective. We try to identify the career features and its innovative role in the knowledge-based economy during the crisis, considering the fact that public services have in fact the ultimate responsibility for managing their own careers.

*Keywords:* public career management, organizational development, innovation, crisis, knowledge-based management

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## 1. CAREER EVOLUTION IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND ITS INNOVATIVE APPROACH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

*„The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning”, Ivy Baker Priest, ex Minister of Finance of the USA, January 1953 and January 1961.yg*

In our days, long-term stability of a job even in a public organization during economic crisis is not only an exception but it is also far from the ideal we can aspire nowadays. In the evolution of public organizations we notice the flexibility of the structures and their continuous reconfiguration by adopting new innovative solutions, which highlight changes in the systems of career management in a dynamic environment that undergoes continuous changes (Armstrong, M., 2001).

The aim of a public organization is to satisfy the public's interest. There are situations in which private initiative is not sufficient to cover the needs of the society and this has become the task of the public organizations. A very difficult task of the public entities is to motivate their employees in order to satisfy, in terms of effectiveness, the citizens' public interest by providing full responsibility for each task they need to accomplish. As a public organization has a very important role, we consider that each public servant, as a part of the public system, needs to obtain professional skills truly certified according to explicit standards focused upon basic principles of public management, a necessary condition to increase performance at every level of the public organization, for a good anticipation of future tendencies, to manage activities, for a better administration of limited resources, to gain the public motivation, to get people's control and processes. The value of every public organization stands in the quality of human's potential, not in the quantity of available material and financial resources. The best laws don't offer the expected results if they aren't applied in the society's interest, in each citizen's interest from a professional body of public servants well prepared to develop certain activities. There are different opinions about the ignorance or neglect of the professional and managerial qualification, and a great number of public servants is maintained in structures replacing the quality with the quantity. So let's give the right value of each human being and of the enormous potential available in the public system, the individual's talent and unknown capacities, let's manage their careers in order to gain the needed performances.

In the new economy, there is no official definition unanimously accepted, the concept of public career has a lot of meanings and we need to keep in mind some important aspects: the contribution of the individual in the management of his own career, the support offered by the public organization where the individual evolves; the particular and general context in which the individual lives, acts, professes, the quality and the features of the legislation and the ways in which it is applied in specific public areas.

Generally used, the term of career suggests the fact that we talk about an individual's professional background. The professional public career is a complex concept which can be defined in many ways: a sequence of jobs, in ascending order of the prestige, through which an employed individual is engaged, after a predictable rule; a sequence of activities and positions in a hierarchy, together with the associated jobs. The term of career was often associated only with the jobs placed at the top of the hierarchical pyramid - chairman, public manager, general manager and so on - without including the other employees who have executive jobs, with contributions more or less significant, but which were part of the organizational structure (Novac, E. et al., 2008).

There is no doubt that the career is related to work, including the experience gained in work and private life, through style and working conditions. The professional career represents a fight in order to achieve the professional objectives but in this context, we can highlight the importance of the individuals' options related to family and life values. In the opinion of the majority, family represents that "natural" unit or that institutional model accepted by the background of the social organization, whose aim of familial solidarity gets the most accessible and adequate ways of protection (Manolescu, A., 2001).

In our opinion, the public professional career means a gain of different personal and professional experiences, separated or intercorrelated, which are successive or in the same time felt by the individual throughout life in order to get and maintain the personal, professional and social state. Each individual has a particular mechanism of thinking and self-assessment of his aspirations, values, beliefs, own personality, generating a unique mix of arguments, wishing to manage the private life and the professional one in a balanced manner. This process is unique, dynamic, specific, innovative and it needs a creative, continuous and constant development throughout life in the context of a knowledge-based economy.

## 2. PUBLIC CAREER CHALLENGES AND THE INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN AN ECONOMIC CRISIS

The study of the literature about the public career prospects offers opportunities to new challenges in searching the adequate answers to a series of key questions:

- ✓ Is the professional public career meant to be an individual's simple alternative or should it behave as a more developed process?
- ✓ Should the success in the public professional career relate to the individual's capability and abilities or to the social rules accepted by the public organization?
- ✓ Since the responsibility to plan and manage one's own professional public career is transferred to the individual, which of the attributes belong to the career management at the level of the public organization?
- ✓ What could be the relation between the management of our own professional career and the public career? (Mathis R., et al., 1997)

In our opinion, the public career development is an organic process, continuous, creative, innovative, not a mechanical process, according to a predetermined schedule. Each stage of the personal life and professional career brings on a superior level of experience and trust in its own person, as an effect of validated success and as a result of obtained failure, every time remodelling the way in which the individual is perceived in relation with the universe he lives in, with the potential and limitations imagined through his inner beliefs, of the determination towards the awareness of the needs to be achieved, self-achievement and self-overcoming of self-capabilities and in relation with the other individuals.

To understand the concept of career and career management within a public administration, we depend on the establishment of the perspectives upon concepts: either from the individual's point of view or the organization's point of view. It can be noticed that in the literature of speciality, career is mostly treated through individual, but in early 1990s we could notice a change in vision from the perspective of the individual to an approach from the organization's perspective. (Gutteridge, T.G., 1993) We believe that a balanced approach could have real chances to be used nowadays, emphasizing the potential benefits both in terms of individual development and the development of public organizations, which actively takes the role of public career management and planning. If the individuals and the public organizations involve in the establishment, formation, development and evolution in professional public careers, this becomes one of

the meeting point between the organization's aspirations and the individuals' interests and wishes. Thus, the employees' successful careers would be helpful in the establishment of successful organizations. (Ilieș, L. et al., 2002)

Various authors state that these different meanings of the concept of career management, have two aspects that must be highlighted. First, the personal identification with the work, which allows anyone to be seen as "*I am the one who makes*" and vocation which allows to say "*my life is work*". Secondly, the society tends to measure the individual's value, his professional success, taking the risk of social assessment (Pastor, I., 2008).

The successful public career systems are dependent on the processes that take place between the individual and the public organization. They can be differently understood in the context of multiple dimensions: internal - how a person understands the development of its own career through own aspirations, values, aims; external - how the external environment perceives the success, from the point of view of status, hierarchycal position, income, power; organizational - in terms of influence and power made upon the organization; social - the evolution on the labor market, professional development, globalization (Baruch, Y., 1999a).

A great part of the literature is dedicated to an approach of the career from the individual's point of view and an acute lack of theoretical formulation is felt in terms of practices in the organizational management.

A wide range of applications is held by the concept of individual who invests in himself. This principle refers not only to the investments in formal school and after-school qualification but also the investments in family, as care given to the child and time spent with the child, the preoccupation for the child's health, investment in information regarding the labor market and looking for a job. In our opinion, the changes deeply determined by the global crisis lead to the awareness of the fact that it is necessary to have an innovative and an active involvement, not only moral involvement, and especially professional involvement in all the structures we belong to, offering opportunities for success in the new challenges of the modern world.

## **HUMAN CAPITAL AND PUBLIC CAREER MANAGEMENT**

The human capital refers to the collective value of the employees' intellectual capital (competences, knowledge, and skills) in the organization. This capital is the constant renewable source of creativity and innovativeness in the organization but it is not reflected in its financial statements (Mathis, R., 2011).

The human capital is not only represented by the public servants from public organizations, it implies what those people bring with them and the way they contribute to the organizational success. In our opinion, the human capital represents the collective value of knowledge, capabilities, skills, motivation, life experiences of a public organizational workforce. A few years ago, a Nobel Prize winner, Gary Becker, expanded the view of human capital by emphasizing the fact that those countries that better manage the human capital are more likely to have better economic results (SHRM, 2008).

The human capital includes critical knowledge, skills, talent and behaviour in any public organization. As public organizations become more based on results, and search partnerships, integrated and externally oriented, the strategic management of the human capital assumes greater importance in the overall administration of the public sector. A number of European countries with different political, cultural, social, economic, legal and historical backgrounds have developed or are developing active measures, or are in the process of undertaking significant reforms of legal, political and regulatory frameworks governing employment in the public sector. The main objective of these reforms is to achieve greater efficiency, accountability and responsiveness in the public service, through more flexible and open employment frameworks, in the same time preserving the benefits of continuity and institutional memory, generally considered an important strength of closed career-based systems. A particular challenge facing many governments is how to create open and flexible employment frameworks that are well structured, equitable and promote the maintenance of a high level of accountability in the public service, including the equity and long-term prospect of civil servants. In this context, the required competencies of civil servants are quickly changing, due to factors at local, national and global levels. Some European countries are also moving away from a traditional career system to more open recruitment, where staff is selected by predefined technical competencies. The change from a career-based system to more open recruitment methods in many countries is also shifting the primary responsibility for professional development from the employer to the member of the staff. European countries need to adapt the capacities of the existing staff at all levels to the changing needs of government. Some countries, particularly those at low level of economic and social development, have chosen the creation of comprehensive training systems, while others are moving towards the creation of specialized training mechanisms using learning at distance, information technology and private sector approaches.

Public organizations require quick dissemination of knowledge among those with an immediate need for information (Scarborough, H., 1999). Some knowledge acquisition and knowledge maintenance is technologically led, some through system-embedded knowledge, but much is knowledge that resides within people. Data and information are highly valued, not for their intrinsic worth, but through human capital that enables their effective use.

The knowledge industry creates innovative types of careers. Knowledge can now be captured through Internet connections, and shared through cellular telephones, video-conferences and e-mail. For personal progress, networking has become more crucial than ever. Within traditional industries too, the growing need for knowledge management requires the establishment of specialist positions. Employees in these positions seek information necessary for effective decision making and then send it to those who must implement organizational policies. These new jobs have emerged and gained recognition and remuneration while other vocations have declined, some have become absolute (Baruch, Y., 2010).

In the past two decades the changing labour market, as well as new management ideas, determined new trends in public employment modernization. The EU's most important finding is that the traditional career-based system, and the position-based system, which many countries are replacing it, are both under pressure; the actions taken have tended to be adaptations of particular employment instruments to meet specific problems, with less attention to their impact on the public management system as a whole.

The human capital is measured in terms of knowledge, and knowledge management is required from the public organizations. Knowledge acquired by individuals and their competencies become their career assessment. The ability to learn is more valuable than formal qualification. Human capital is the source of innovation and renewal, and its management is mediated via career management.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The Lisbon Strategy aims at the transformation of the European Union into a dynamic and competitive economy, based on knowledge and innovation. In our opinion, the foundation of a public organization based on knowledge and innovation, especially during the economic crisis, must determine the entity, and it represents the accumulation of knowledge existent in an individual, a group level, an organization or assimilated in artificial supports and the expansion of

knowledge by stimulating the development processes, continuous learning and innovation in the individual and organizational context. The public organizations must actively develop their skills, transform the knowledge it has, into successful innovative actions, while a decisive contribution is made by the adequate and continuous management of the career and talents. The existence of the organizations was, is and will be conditioned by knowledge at the level of their members' behaviour because each of them is aware of the aims-ways-results relation and at the level of the whole organization and its environment.

We consider that the creation of the organizational behaviour regarding knowledge is necessary for the analysis of the following aspects: the acquired knowledge and skills valued and developed in time are changed to the competitive advantage of the organization, playing a decisive role in getting its strategically performance; the processes of intensive intellectual accumulation are determined for the organization's functioning in order to achieve its objectives; for all the components, the entities can structure roles and responsibilities regarding the knowledge management and the processes related to it; the organizational culture promotes the values of communication, creativity, innovation, learning, skills, career; the identity of the organization in terms of structure, strategy and action. The public managers cannot simply do what they knew and used to do in the hierarchies, they need new skills; knowledge, as a resource and organizational process, needs a type of managerial intervention, and which is officially and professional imposed.

The improvement of labor quality is interacting with the progress made to build a competitive economy, based on knowledge and it has to be supported by joint efforts of all actors, especially boosted by the social dialogue. The concept of labor quality is a multidimensional concept, which is addressed to both job features and labor market. This concept includes the intrinsic quality of the job, qualifications, lifelong learning and career development, gender equality, health and safety of the job, flexibility and security, inclusion in and access to employment, work organization and the achievement of a balance between work and private life, social dialogue and employers' involvement, diversity and the elimination of discrimination, also the general performance of the work (The Ministry of Labor, Equal Opportunities and Family, 2007).

As key factors in democracy, civil servants cannot be considered as mere employees: they have a constitutional role to enforce laws and to serve the society. Thus the state has a responsibility to establish an efficient, professional, fair and transparent civil service. This objective may be achieved through strategic human resource management including consistent staffing and career

policy as well as a fair and merit-based approach to selection, recruitment and promotion. The best elements of European civil service experiences may be used as a source of inspiration for designing a suitable human resource framework. However, strategies and principles need to be adjusted to the real situations of the European countries. Considering the inconsistencies in public administration and the lack of coordination in the European administrative systems, a strategic vision is needed to set coherent standards, adjusted to local absorption capacity, in order to achieve a goal-oriented and well-functioning administration (Arcadis, 2004).

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