

THE BUREAUCRAT IN THE 21ST CENTURY THROUGH THE EYES OF HIS CLIENTS

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Abstract

The public sector is one of the main pillars of a mixed economy. At the same time, its activities significantly contribute in running and functioning of the State. of the world. At the same time, the trust that citizens of the State in question show to public institutions, institutes and their representatives cannot be overlooked. For this reason, an employee is a key consideration. The aim of this article is to provide an up-to-date view of human resources issues in the public sector. Among the wide apparatuses, we decided to focus attention especially on the area of the administrative apparatus, its attitude and relation to work, as well as possible areas of development. For this purpose, we have used several research methods. We can mention the method of analysis, synthesis, comparison, questionnaire investigation, interview, deduction and so on. These methods have helped us to achieve our goal and formulate recommendations based on our findings.

Key words

Bureaucracy, Client, ESO reform, Public Service, State

JEL Classification: H70, H83, D73

Introduction

Human resources are the most valuable resource of the public, private, and non-profit spheres. Significant contribution to this status is the absence of technologies or apparatus suitable for the substitution of the individual or the whole group. On the other hand, an era of humanoid robots can be expected, in which human resources will be substituted. All those involved are very aware of this reality. However, we assume that their onset will not be as fast. Therefore, the issue of human resources quality remains open and up to date. In this regard, one can speak of the rivalry that forms this space. It can be identified within internal and external systems. It is therefore difficult to obtain and maintain a quantitatively and qualitatively valuable human resource base. In our article we decided to focus attention on the issue of the clerical apparatus from the perspective of its customers, ie. clients. On the basis of such a defined object of exploration, we tried to approach and outline solutions leading to modification of the current scheme. Several methods have helped us to do this, eg. abstraction, analysis, synthesis, questionnaire investigation or deduction.

1. Human resources in the public sector

The human resources of any organization are the only source whose value grows over time. If the organization can understand this correlation, human resources will not be a cost item for it, but an investment (Vojtovič, 2011). In parallel to this, it is also the framework of the creation of the main goal of human resources management in the organization. According to Čapošová (2013), it is precisely the “search for a balance concerning the provision of an appropriate and necessary professional, personal and qualification structure of workers and their optimal quantity in accordance with the strategic and short-term goals of the given organization”. We have to say, that management of human resources grows and becomes less important depending on the pressure the organization is exposed to. ” (Milkovich, Boudreau 1993)

By addressing human resources issues and their governance in the public sector, these pressures need to be multiplied. The reason is the power of the public and the need to strictly comply with the laws, acts, regulations and so on. This specific group of people is closely linked to the performance of public administration. Their employer is the holder of state administration or

self-government. The occupation of an official therefore exhibits certain specific features that are in the private space not shown. This includes the representation of the State, the responsibility to the public and the performance of tasks under the laws and orders of the superiors.

However, if we stop at the issue of legislation, procedures or regulations, we will come to a dilemma related to their double role. It is unnecessary to talk about their positive effects like eg. justice, equality or order. However, it is important to address their negative effects, such as e.g. inflexibility, low reflection on the needs or obsolescence of processes.

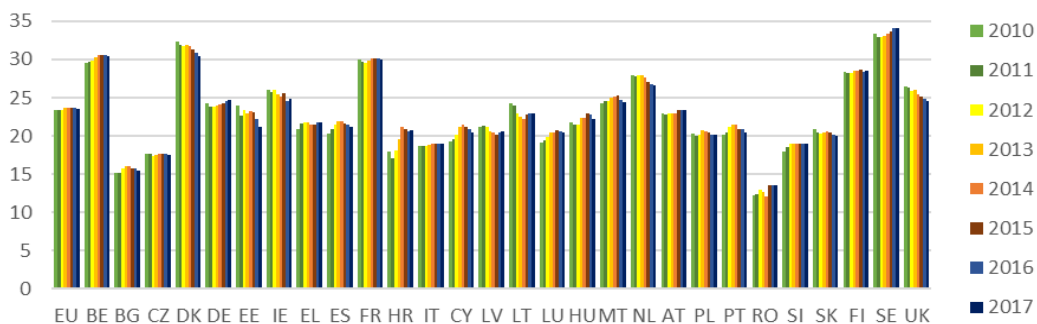
In a similar way, Wright and Němec (2003) literally write that "There are several limitations of individual procedures in the public sector, respectively activities and the enforcement of formal rules as in the private sector". We can also mention Berkley (1975), who atypically approaches this issue: "In the private sector, laws only tell managers what they cannot do. In the public sector, laws say what managers can do.

Therefore, the question is whether it is possible to resolve this contradiction or be their slave.

1.1 The importance and role of bureaucrats in the public sector

Bureaucracy is an administrative apparatus (Figure 1.) whose representatives are involved in fulfilling the functions and tasks of the State. For this reason, there is a need for action on governance, control and assistance by the State and society itself. Therefore, it is important to enhance this environment. It may be based on Johnson (1997), who states in his work: "The source of bureaucratic problems is not in bureaucrats, but in essence public goods and motives, controls and institutions that exist in bureaucracy. Therefore, any solution to bureaucratic problems must be based on the clarification and resolution of these institutions and motives so that bureaucratic decisions serve more to the public interest." (D. B. Johnson, 1997)

Figure 1. Employment in public administration - percentage in EU countries (2010 - 2017)



By: Eurostat data (2019)

Based on the above, it can be said that the quantitative and qualitative aspect of human resources in the public sector is constantly a burning issue. The general public (professional and lay) is interested in streamlining this space and building a new open management scheme. Reconciliation of the currently valid and valuable elements with the concepts of new public service, good governance and comprehensive quality management (Table 1.) should be a priority for

any advanced State, nation or community. Another question may be asked: Why should it be so? It is possible to build on the implementation of several studies and the application of individual concepts in practice. For the time being, the results show several times higher benefits, which are perceived by both the public and the apparatus of the States in which these changes are realized.

Table 1. Characteristics of each concept

New Public Service Principles	Serving citizens and society To act democratically and think strategically Respect people, citizenship, civil service
Good management (good governance)	Responsible approach Public participation Applying ethical and moral principles Transparency, clarity, and openness
Complex quality management	Clearly set plans and goals Responsible organization of management structures Increasing employee participation in decision-making processes

By: IFAC (2013), Klimovský (2014)

The Slovak Republic is one of the countries that set out on this path. The Government of the Slovak Republic understood that this issue must be dealt acutely. Attention is focused on the activities of the State and its citizens, namely to simplify and unify the agendas, make procedures more transparent and the whole organization, the characteristics of bureaucratic apparatus, general satisfaction and so on. However, the need for legislative protection of all actors and actions remains crucial.

If we focus our attention on the bureaucratic apparatus, or the officials, it is imperative to set the assumptions of the work of its representatives. In the Slovak Republic, this issue is addressed by Act no. 552/2003 Coll. on the performance of work in the public interest. The law defines the basic conditions of the candidate who is interested in the position in the public sector institutions. According to the law, we include legal capacity, integrity, qualifications and personality, health fitness for the profession. At the same time, the law defines assumptions, duties and limitations as well as the possibility of business activities or compensation of public employees. According to Križanová and Kútik (2017) is for this area very important “the professional preparedness of its employees.”

A candidate who becomes a public official should be identified with the duties associated with that function. At the same time, it is obliged to observe and respect the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, laws and regulations. In the performance of his / her duties, he / she is obliged to act and decide impartially, to maintain confidentiality of facts which cannot be communicated to others or not to misuse the information acquired during work. As a representative of this important profession, he

must not engage in activities that significantly reduce dignity in relation to the function he performs, directly mediate trade with the State or local government and its budgetary organizations. It should respect and abide by moral and ethical principles, avoid corruption (accept, demand gifts and other benefits), not exploit the benefits of its work or make false statements.

In case that this employee is unable to identify with the principles, rules and regulations of this environment, it is not worthy of the function, place and status that he / she should exercise as a public service operator. The question therefore remains whether and how these persons can be identified and subsequently eliminated.

One possible solution is to prepare and educate future administrators of this environment. Universities are enabled to participate in the process of providing education in social, economic and legal sciences. These universities should instill the moral and ethical dimension of the profession. Together with them, they should actively participate in the construction of the basic pillar of modern bureaucracy, ie respect for themselves, clients, occupation and the State. Only in this way it can undergo a transformation that marks progress. Progress needed by the individual, society and the State. And it is the State who cannot afford to build an army of bureaucrats who are not conform to this.

At the same time, human resources that cover this area must distance themselves from promoting the individual's opinion and fulfilling their own interests. Therefore, let us say that the nature of correctness, transparency and compliance with legislation is the alpha and omega of the public sector. Guaranteeing the protection, fairness, equality or enhancement of

the idea of public interest should be the overriding aim of the State, its employees as well as clients, who are just citizens.

For this reason, it is important to pay attention to the qualities of this apparatus (education, experience, qualities, and values) and at the same time to monitor the performance and results they achieve. Only in this way can the general objective of human resources management be fulfilled, to ensure the organization has successfully accomplished its goals. According to Hajšová (2014, p.10) "the official makes a decisive contribution to the satisfaction".

1.2 "Good Official" Initiative

Bureaucracy is an element of guaranteeing the existence and operation of the State. For now, nothing better has been created to replace it. It is therefore necessary not only to accept its existence, but also to impose new requirements on it. The general public perceives bureaucracy negatively as a "necessary evil". Few are aware of its positive aspects. It is therefore appropriate to think about who or what can and how to make an adequate correction for such perception? For the time being, we will focus on the issue of bureaucrats themselves, ie. officials.

Although the official is not in Slovak legal terminology a public administration worker, we will use that term in this sense. Being an important part of the day-to-day realization of public authority in the state, an official need to be a representative of the positive values of society, organization and himself.

In this respect, we can speak about so-called Codex or rules of behaviour. These rules and their needs and possibilities evolve and transform on the basis of expectations and possibilities. It is important to think in this respect also about the adjustment of the conditions or processes of obtaining, selecting, evaluating and educating officials. This is possible solely on the basis of legislation and other related acts.

However, it is questionable whether this can be considered a sufficient element of the optimum guarantee. In the case of a negative answer, the next question is: How can we achieve this optimum? In the affirmative: How to keep this optimum?

As the literature suggests, very important of this area is the interaction with citizens (Braithwaite, 2007, Needham, 2006, Moon, 2002). It is undeniable that officials are among the first in contact and solving the government's and its clients' administrative agenda. It is the official who stand for the success or failure of activities related to this initiative. Significantly, geopolitical, economic, social and historical developmental changes have been marked on them.

In our conditions, we can speak about decades of misinterpretation of the meaning and potential of this apparatus. In order to remedy this situation, the need for maximum depoliticization of the area and ranking reconfiguration of the values of state representatives (public interest in the first place).

The steps taken by the initiative of a group of young Slovak officials are heading towards this idea (Good Official Initiative). They are trying to correct a negative official reputation. They openly focus their attention on the need to improve state culture and to introduce new solutions in the internal system. To this end, they seek to achieve a positive change in the perception of the profession of an official directly with the officials. They call for the official's mission to be the one who cares about building a functioning State and the reciprocity of all the actors concerned. For this reason, a "codex of good official" has been developed which can be considered as a clue or inspiration for responsible officials - Ten Commandments of a Good Official (Openness, Proactivity, Self-reflection, Efficiency, Ethics, Involvement, Participation, Over individuality, Idealism, and Motivator).

1.3 Bureaucracy in a new dress

Public administration is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored. There are several patterns in it that we cannot find anywhere else. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that many countries or government apparatuses are trying to set it in the most effective way for their own needs. However, they may not always reflect the needs of citizens or private entrepreneurs. But it is the citizen who should be the co-creator of this system and not his slave.

Denmark, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Estonia may be a positive example in this respect. This and many other states have succeeded in moving the established way of governance and thinking significantly forward. They managed to move from quantitative to qualitative, from the paper agenda to the digital agenda, from individualism to over-individualism, and so on. These changes have succeeded in fulfilling the expectations of their clients, whose priority is functional governance of the 21st century.

Therefore, the key issues in the Mzee (2012) are:

- strengthening systems and units of public administration planning and management;
- strengthening the core values of public service (low tolerance of corruption and crime; increasing sensitivity to and respect for citizens);
- promoting political culture (respect for institutions and standards, not personal interests);
- promoting professionalism in public administration (education, skills) and public service image (performance);
- creating a culture for the learning organization (promoting knowledge and use of ICT tools);
- introducing incentive structures (a fair remuneration system; increasing the need to recognize).

ESO reform does not deal with this and many other issues in the public sector, public services and public administration of the Slovak Republic. The State modifies this specific environment and moves it through a significant step forward. Not only eGovernment or informatisation of society can be highlighted. The burning issue is the realization, performance and results of the work of the main actors – the officials.

The solution of the material and technical deposit, the interest shifts into the area of qualitative goals and the creditworthiness of the human base of the administrative apparatus. The State creates space not only for initiatives from the outside (Good Officer), but also from its inner environment. This initiative is a proactive approach and the introduction of the "one time enough" principle, ie. Stop bureaucracy (Act No. 177/2018 Coll. On certain measures to reduce administrative burdens by using public

administration information systems and on amendments and supplements to certain acts). We can therefore talk about a new era of communication between citizens and entrepreneurs with the extended hand of the State – the authorities and officials. Clients will no longer have to carry certificates to the authorities, which the authorities can also provide from state electronic registers. This applies, for example, to extracts from the Commercial Register, Trade Register and Real Estate database. The authorities will exchange important data and information among themselves. This also requires expertise and training for officials. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that individual officials may fail individually when introducing new changes. This needs to be solved promptly.

But not only an appeal to the expertise of bureaucrats is important, but also an appeal to their moral values. As an extended hand of the State, they must uphold the principles of ethics and decent behavior. So we can talk about pride, credibility, decency, morality or moral values. Matoušek (2013) discusses the importance and tasks of moral consciousness, character traits, interpersonal relationships, and human behavior in the public-state area. The author expresses the idea of reciprocity and respect.

Many workshops, conferences and seminars have also shown interest in solving this issue. The seminar "How to increase the quality of Slovak officials" can be considered beneficial in the Slovak Republic. This seminar was organized by the European Commission Representation in Slovakia together with Transparency International Slovakia (December 10, 2018 in Bratislava). One of the participants of the seminar, Tatiana Janečková, is of the opinion that "The quality of public service is not only about the ability to meet citizens' requirements. It is important to be aware of social responsibility and the need to do the right things in the right way. This can be done by working with citizens / clients and public entities, all in accordance with integrity." In this context, B.C. Forbes' famous statement "Decency costs nothing. It can bring high benefits to individual and company."

2. Goal and Methodology

When processing the theoretical knowledge, information and data related to the issue we were based on available resources related to the issue in print and electronic versions. We also used a questionnaire and a method of interviewing the respondents we addressed. The questionnaire was distributed to 367 respondents who had the opportunity to comment on 3 open and 14 closed questions. This questionnaire has been expanded to include 6 more questions on public administration students' questions related to their future profession. We also approached 13 students with whom we conducted a controlled interview. The results were processed using mathematical calculations and comparison of groups of respondents. The most exciting results have been presented at work, and we have also tried to make some observations. In the final part of our work, we look at the conclusions we have drawn from the deduction.

3. Findings and discussion - The relationship between clients and the clerk apparatus

The public sector, as a major driver of public services, must be able to provide high quality and user-friendly services. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that it is these services that affect citizens' quality of life from their birth. At the same time, we derive health and welfare of the nation and the quality of the social State. This requires a clear strategy, regulation / frameworks and good human resources. Strengthening public sector capacities therefore requires a holistic approach. An approach that should be based on trust in the public sector, strengthening the core values of public service, culture, recognition and so on.

Extrakt from report of European Commission Quality of Public Administration 2017 says: „The ability to reflect today's needs and to anticipate tomorrow's, agile enough to adapt, must become permanent features of the public sector. Most of all, administrations must build on a solid foundation: ethical, efficient, effective and accountable.“

“Values are essential components of organisational culture and instrumental in determining, guiding and informing behaviour. For bureaucracies, adherence to high-level public service values can generate substantial public trust and confidence. Conversely, weak

application of values or promotion of inappropriate values can lead to reductions in these essential elements of democratic governance, as well as to ethical and decision-making dilemmas.” Ireland's Committee for Public. Management Research (European Union, 2017).

Public managers thus have to balance the intended and potentially unintended effects of taking charge behaviour (Homberg, 2017).

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Within this range of issues, we conducted a questionnaire survey in the first decade of 2018, the results of which we decided to publish in this article. Respondents (367 respondents from all over the Slovak Republic) were randomly selected actors dealing with the agenda with the State and at the same time future reinforcements of bureaucracy, ie. students of the study program Public Administration (34 respondents). All the respondents had the opportunity to comment on two issues: 1. Official - Professional (Organizational Performance), 2. Official - Man (Behavior). Similarly, interviews with students (13 respondents) were conducted.

a) *The Official - Professional*

It is proven that the quality of public services and the role of society in carrying out state tasks have a direct impact on the quality of citizen's life. Achieving this can be done through a high-quality deposit of human resources. Its quality

level depends to a large extent on the level of education, skills and willingness to learn. The basis of the whole process is orientation in the issue. This can be acquired from a theoretical point of view in the educational process. This is ensured in our conditions by tertiary education. Approximately 780 potential bureaucrats (CVTI.SK) will annually leave universities, which include education in Public Administration and Regional Development, Public Economics and Public Policy and Public Policy. These graduates also gain practical experience through professional practice. In addition, respondents to our questionnaire survey expressed a very positive opinion on this obligation (320 respondents, 87.2%). Pleasing is the discovery that relates to students taking up education in the field. Up to 64.9% (22 respondents) would like to work in public administration institutions. The reason is the application of theoretical knowledge (9 respondents, 41%), fulfillment of the mission (7 respondents, 32%) and stability of public administration institutes (6 respondents, 27%). In personal interviews, the results were in the same order. In addition, it has been shown that they would like to be the initiators of change because of the negative perception of bureaucracy. They also justify the fact that an official - a professional - should be the initiator, supporter and implementer of change. They consider it is important that the agenda is done professionally, without unnecessary burdens on the client and with the utmost regard for their needs. The official should also focus his attention on details. These results were also confirmed through a questionnaire survey conducted by us. Clients using the services of the authorities consider the orientation in the issue to be the most important element of the system's functionality (83.1%). Professionalism is essential to them in terms of handling the agenda. They consider it unacceptable to have to repeatedly visit and communicate with the authorities, or to proactively search for agenda-related information themselves (96.7%). At the same time, they urge that the selection of representatives of this environment be as transparent as possible (75.5%).

b) Official - man

In examining this area of the issue, we focused on the ethical and moral values of the administrative apparatus. Ethics in public

administration is important for building a good image in relation to the public. It can also be said that strong ethics is paramount in the public sector. However, adhering to an ethical and moral code is challenging. Strong external and internal pressures can cause damage that is not easy to eliminate. It is therefore important to withstand pressures and to tighten firmly rooted principles and targeting. Early and informative communication, as well as the transparency of individual processes and procedures, have a positive impact on good ethics in public administration. It creates trust and prevents or minimizes potential problems that may arise when information is published from outside sources.

The results of our investigation show that 72.8% of all respondents (267 respondents) rate this environment positively. This applies to both the state (82%) and the local government (73%). However, up to 9% of respondents (33 respondents) met with unwillingness and disrespect of the officials during their agenda. Respondents encountered this unfortunate experience mainly in relation to state authorities (ministries, tax offices), but 3 respondents also assessed the work of officials at municipal offices. In this respect, the professional skills of the officials dealing with the issue were also negatively evaluated. However, it is possible to draw attention to the fact that 3/5 of those concerned did not meet such behavior for the first time. However, a pleasing finding is that up to 78% of those who have experienced these negative experiences evaluate the qualitative shift in staff of this environment. We believe that the objectives and principles of the current ESO reform have an impact on the outcome. This directly appeals to open access and client orientation - actors in the process. The interview showed that the person who holds the post of an official should also represent this function in private. They also call for senior executives to follow a codex of decent people. The respondents also said that bureaucracy is not a problem, the problem is an element in this chain, and that is the man whose aims are low.

In the summary of the results, we can draw the following from our inquiry (Table 2.). The agenda and professionalism of the agenda is more important to clients than empathy and emotionality. This result did not surprise us

because we regard the right and professional approach as the basis. On the other hand, we were surprised by the result of ethical and moral characteristics who, despite declaring these values, are not commonplace with all officials. But the truth remains that the system is changing for the better. Superordination is slowly disappearing. Actors are transforming this area with their "human" behavior and thus shifting the image of public administration closer to clients. It is therefore desirable to continue to spread and fulfill the idea of Action Center - Citizen / Client. It is important to set up and emphasize

professionalization and human approach correctly. Emphasize the choice of the appropriate human resource. And not just because of his education, skills, but also emotional assumptions. Ethical and moral approach is not only to declare, but also to implement. Build a pleasant environment for clients and employees, develop a given space by the State's natural influence and focus on the citizen / client. This significantly eliminates the threats of losing confidence and not fulfilling the vision, whether public administration or ESO reform, which focuses on these issues.

Table 2. Official and his characteristics

Professional assumptions			Personality assumptions				
Knowledge of laws and regulations		Performance autonomy	Mouth / Respect to clients		Communic. skills	Cultivated speech	
Responsible processing of the request	Prompt processing of the agenda	Control of ICT	Facial expression	Haptics	Native language	Foreign language	Olfactory

Monitoring and inquiry is equally important. However, not only in relation to clients but also in relation to workers. These activities, carried out within the internal and external environment, and their value are important in the field of modifications and improvements, as well as attention to weaknesses and characteristics of elements that weaken the process:

- Stagnation element (respect and strict adherence to valid standards - implementer)
- Activation element (innovation and creation of new schemes - Inspector)
- decadence element (loss and decline of values - destructor).

We can assess not only the process as a whole, but also its individual active ingredients, e.g. individual.

Conclusion

Good governance is strengthened by public confidence in this area. The aim of this paper was

to provide an up-to-date view of human resources issues in the public sector. Several changes and modifications of the environment led us to this setting up of strategies to fulfill the essence of ESO reform. We have focused our attention on the area of the administrative apparatus, ie. bureaucracy. This apparatus should always keep in mind that it works for the public. That is why we watched the shift and perception of news that the system modification brought with it. Based on a questionnaire survey, we have mapped and evaluated these facts. We can therefore conclude that the proximity of the State to the citizen is perceived positively. The qualitative shift in the field of professionalism and ethics reflects, perceives and feels the company. This enriches this space significantly. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly monitor external and internal needs or environment, inquiring and making proactive adjustments. These should touch the whole environment, not just human resources. However, given the focus of our work, the preparation of future officials, their education and their willingness to actively develop should be taken into account as well as the character and ethical

and moral dimension of those actors. We live in a time when the client becomes the center of attention, so it is appropriate for us to grasp this opportunity and communicate about our needs and ideas. Increasing proactivity, openness and

participating in a new form of public administration is a step by which the State gives its citizens the knowledge that it respects and recognizes them.

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