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**The Need for Mentoring Activities
in Public Administration in Romania**

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Abstract: The present study analyzes the models from the public administration of some countries where the mentoring activity works, as well as the possibility of introducing the mentoring activity in the Romanian public administration. We consider the need identified in the public administration and we propose to identify its benefits on the career of the employees.

Keywords: public authority; professional formation; civil servant

1. Introduction

The specialized literature in administrative sciences (Ioan, 1999, p. 70) supports and argues that “in every country and at every moment of history, the administrative regime is the result of a series of causes, mostly external to it; it reflects the political, economic, social regime of the people in which it applies, from the era in which it is placed, it is marked by the wills, responds to aspirations and needs”. Therefore, the values of a public administration are determined by the goals it pursues, extending also to the competences and embodied in its autonomy.

The administrative network of the Romanian system is stable from an organizational and relational point of view, so that the differences appear only where the collectivity imposes specific territorial, demographic or political conditions.

The specificity of administrative power is determined by public authority, which the private sector neither has nor acquires. The public authority of the existing administrative structures in the public administration is established by laws elaborated because of the existing opportunities from a certain moment and it acts or not, depending on the circumstances.

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2. The Current Context Regarding Public Administration in Romania

The public administration in Romania has a system organized hierarchically vertically and for sectors horizontally, in a continuous expansion imposed by the complexity of social life, the dynamics and composition of collective structures, but also by the professionalism, age and mobility of officials.

The professional training and improvement of officials, regardless of the level occupied in the administrative organizational structures, is also imposed by the relationship with citizens, which shows the democratization and development of society, but also a level of the quality of the decision-making system imposed by the costs of public services.

The mutual trust of the administrative structures, the existence of public criticism regarding the public sector and implicitly on the officials, imposes the need for a new concept, that of mentoring. The concept of mentoring for the administrative system must help and meet both the employees and the administrative structure to improve performance.

According to the specialist (Militaru, 2005, p. 9), “*organizational behavior essentially aims at the human component, understanding the way people act and leading them to work efficiently*”. So, the adaptability of public administration to changes is imposed by the practiced management. And regarding the concept of mentoring, the public administration must adapt to achieve the desired goal, through the interaction and coordination of the activities of those involved. An approach to the concept of mentoring based on the workload, the specifics of the activity, the dynamics of training and professional training, the relational system and interest groups must be considered. Collaboration for the achievement of institutional objectives must be based on effective work in the mentoring process and improving the activity, based on rules and procedures specific to each position. The existing organizational behavior in the administrative structure that will use the concept of mentoring, will also be extended within the mentoring program.

The first concept of mentoring used and implemented in local public administration stood out during the 2000s, when the position of “public manager” was legislated. But the rigidity of the administrative system and the lack of experience of the people recruited at the national level for the operationalization of this concept, determined the dissolved dissemination of their skills and their almost total integration into the body of civil servants.

With the adoption of the statute of civil servants, the concept of “mentor” was regulated for the debutant civil servant, regardless of the level of studies, to prepare him for the demands of the administration and the adaptation of the debutant to the legislative rigors.

In the public sector¹, a few 1,264,843 positions are currently occupied. Out of these, 808,687 at the level of the central public administration and 456,156 at the level of the local public administration. Approximately 10% of them occupy public positions and an almost similar percentage, specific public positions, the difference in positions being occupied by contractual staff and persons exercising positions of public dignity. They represent, as a whole, the “administrative public” whose employer is the “state” and who carry out their activity within public entities, having regulated general and specific rights and obligations, as well as a career path, as appropriate. The public sector also develops relationships with employers/employees from/in the private sector that depend on them, through business relationships and service provision with it. From this perspective, the efficiency of public sector

¹The situation is based on the data of the Ministry of Finance including the month of January 2022 - Project title: “Strengthening the capacity of INA regarding the development of studies/analyses with impact on the professional training system in the public administration”, MySMIS Code 127558, SIPOCA Code 617.

structures and personnel is of increased importance, in addition to the systemic one and the one given by the mentioned extra-systemic interest.

3. The Concept of Mentoring

The general term (Packard, 2003) “mentoring” is used to describe the relationships of a more inexperienced individual, called a disciple, or protégé by a more experienced individual, called a mentor. Traditionally, mentoring is seen as a dyadic, face-to-face, long-term relationship between an adult supervisor and a mentee to enhance the latter's professional, academic, or personal development.”

The concept of mentoring will be implemented at the organization level, through the mentored parties, based on the attitude, talents, inclinations, habits, and competences of each of the parties. The personality, heredity, culture, family, belonging to a certain group or to several, but also life experience, will delimit the two parts of the mentoring process. The parties in the mentoring process are the mentor and the mentee. The attitude towards professional and administrative activity, as well as job satisfaction and behavior, will fit officials into the two components of mentoring.

The professional training of the staff within the local public administration is carried out through training and professional development programs, followed by the official's initiative or upon the indication and with the support of the public entity to which the official belongs.

In the Romanian public administration, the concept of mentoring must be seen as a specific professional training program, based on the collaboration between a mentor and a mentee (the beneficiary of the mentoring process) and on the transfer of knowledge, in order to develop skills, using specific tools (procedures, techniques, methodologies, etc.).

The concept of mentoring for the public administration in Romania must be seen as a training opportunity for professional development, both for existing civil servants and for those who are new to the system, regardless of the level of the held position.

4. The Need for Mentoring in Public Administration in Romania

The activities carried out within the mentoring process must be determined by the existing organizational framework but also by the individual one, as a component of the organizational whole. The public entity that will support the mentoring activities will benefit from a consistent segment of employees in the middle or towards the end of their career, in order to keep and raise their motivational and professional level adapted to the demands of the public sector.

In this respect (Why Mid-Career Public Servants Need Mentoring, 2023), mentoring is a cost-effective and proven way to:

- provide employees at any level with a confidential space where they can explore the development needs and career options;
- learn about areas of departments with which they are not familiar with;
- re-energize and reactivate/rediscover their current role;
- feel supported and valued - supports better communication and understanding between the department's work and competency areas.

Thus, a motivation and professional training will be reached in the institutional framework, which will have a favorable and appreciative impact in the relationship with the beneficiaries of the local public

administration, the citizens, and an increase in the quality of the public service provided and ensured to citizens.

From an individual point of view, the mentoring activities will have an impact on the employees involved in the mentoring process. On the one hand, the mentor will strengthen his experience, notoriety, and professional prestige together with the strengthening of the quality of services offered by the public entity, and on the other hand, the mentee will develop the exchange of information, which will determine professional progress inside or outside public entity, emotional and professional motivation, and awareness.

The individual psycho-social and professional needs of the mentee will be integrated into a set of procedural needs, based on which future priority actions will be established in the relationship with the mentee and which will contribute to the achievement of institutional objectives. The mentor must identify the motivation, or lack thereof, that the mentee faces and understand the internal and external environment of the mentee's work. Thus, the mentor-mentee relationship system will lay the foundations of a communication and motivational concept based on tracking the effective performance of tasks, administrative "policy", individual and organizational success, or failure.

Therefore, the more motivated and well-trained the employees are, they will increase the level of satisfaction of the employer and the citizens, by providing efficient public services, regardless of the field of activity.

The initiation, cultivation, facilitation, and establishment of the conditions for carrying out the mentoring process in the public administration will have the purpose of a mentoring agreement, as an administrative component to formalize the activities and the opportunity to capitalize on the results, depending on the individual program established between the mentor and the mentee.

The activities of the mentoring process will be based on the moral and professional ethics of the mentor, who may have different tools and options to define the attitudes of the mentee, namely: confidentiality, fidelity, institutional loyalty, transparency, competence, well-determined and established time, the elimination of casual associations, the exercise of specific activities only by the mentee, the use of personalities from the areas of interest for the mentee, the elimination of any professional recommendations.

Each public entity within the public sector is required to carry out an analysis regarding the need for the mentoring process, its positive and negative consequences, the monitoring and individual and professional needs of employees, the regulation and optimization of the mentoring process.

5. Models from Public Administration of some Countries where the Mentoring Activity is implemented

Mentoring as a social institution is a normatively fixed stable form of organization and regulation of the socialization process of an individual's life through the development of behavior patterns, values, traditions accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation, determined by the purpose of the social structure of society and the motivational goals of the professionalization of social work (Băleanu & Irimie, 2011, pp. 33-44). Mentoring in public administration is a practice adopted in many countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia, and in some European countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In these countries, mentoring programs are designed to help develop the professional skills of employees and to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience between generations of civil servants.

USA: In the USA, mentoring in public administration is very well developed. For example, the US State Department has a structured mentoring program that includes activities such as career guidance, improving leadership and management skills, and encouraging continuous professional development.

Canada: In Canada, the federal government has mentoring programs to support the personal and professional development of civil servants. These can include formal mentoring, where there is a structured and planned relationship, as well as informal mentoring, where guidance takes place in an unstructured way.

United Kingdom: In the United Kingdom, the civil service has a mentoring program that connects more experienced civil servants with less experienced ones. The program is designed to develop skills and support career development.

Netherlands: The Dutch government promotes mentoring as part of its career development programs in the public sector. These programs focus on developing leadership skills, improving performance and promoting diversity and inclusion.

Australia: In Australia, the Government has established mentoring programs to support skills development and employee retention in the public sector. Mentoring programs are based on structured and planned relationships with the aim of developing skills and competencies, increasing understanding of organizational culture and encouraging knowledge sharing (Singh & Kumar, 2019, pp. 1-9).

Singapore: Singapore is recognized for its efficient and innovative system of public administration. Here, the role of mentoring is to train future leaders, and those with more experience are encouraged to share their knowledge and experience with the new generations of civil servants. Mentoring is seen as an opportunity for mutual learning.

New Zealand: In New Zealand, the Government has implemented mentoring programs in the public administration to support the professional development of civil servants. The purpose of these programs is to create a work environment that encourages continuous learning, skill development and performance improvement.

Mentoring programs in public administration play an important role in the personal and professional development of civil servants, as well as in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration (Kim, 2011, pp. 97-115). They encourage the transfer of knowledge and experience, the development of skills and abilities, and create an organizational culture that supports continuous learning and development.

6. Conclusions

Mentoring in public administration is a valuable tool for the continuous professional development and performance improvement of civil servants. Based on the transfer of knowledge and experience from more experienced to less experienced officials, this process significantly contributes to the development of skills, competences and understanding of the organizational culture. From various models of mentoring in public administration around the world, we can conclude that mentoring is effective in training future leaders and encouraging innovation. Also, by implementing mentoring programs, public organizations can improve their efficiency and effectiveness while promoting diversity and inclusion. In addition, mentoring plays a crucial role in supporting the adaptation and retention of new employees, thus helping to build a strong and stable workforce in the public sector. By creating a work environment that encourages continuous learning and professional development, public organizations can strengthen their efforts to respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of citizens. In conclusion, mentoring is an essential practice in public administration, with significant benefits for employees and the

organization. Adopting a well-structured mentoring program can be a decisive factor in increasing productivity, employee satisfaction and the quality of services offered to the public.

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