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Using the Mentoring Process in the Public Sector – Opportunities and Realities

Manuela Panaitescu[1], Tincuța Vrabie[2]

Abstract: The tools used in the mentoring process are rich and diverse, focused on mentoring techniques. Emotional intelligence and the level of emotional intelligence (EQ) are complementary to academic or conceptual intelligence based on understanding (IQ). Self-realization, self-awareness and empathy are basic elements in the mentoring process. Maintaining performance standards for the public sector, through mentoring processes and techniques, is based on information, performance monitoring, periodic analysis and evaluation of procedures and operational processes, and the environment conducive to their implementation. The problematic breakdown of the sets of principles applicable in the public sector intersects with the objectives of the mentoring process, through planning, monitoring, evaluation, recommendation, measures taken and even the use of alternative or complementary methods. Thus, the use of the mentoring process in the public sector leads to an increase in the degree of trust and awareness of the public interest and to the preparation in an adequate and efficient way for obtaining high-performance results.

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1. Introduction

These Everyday needs and challenges require adaptive capacities to achieve individual and institutional performance, by streamlining knowledge and knowledge exchange, social and emotional skills, integration and adaptation to institutional tools

The evolution of society and its issues has imposed the professionalization of the public sector, as a fundamental factor in the development and assurance of institutional performance, through the qualification and improvement of public sector employees. Mentoring has developed as a result of the guidance of those with less experience, aiming at a transfer of information, knowledge and skills.

International administrative practice (USA, France, Great Britain) recognizes the importance of mentoring as a method and process for staff training and runs mentoring programs at the administration, field or sector level. In the Romanian public administration, the established mentoring method/technique/practice is not applied, although in the public sector, at a general level, we find

[1] Associate Professor, Phd, Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., Galati, Romania, Corresponding author: manuelapanaitescu@univ-danubius.ro
[2] University Lecturer, Phd, Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania

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nuances and principles of it, known as guidance, coordination, tutelage, and in the education sector, we find even the notion of mentoring. Most often, mentoring is found in the private sector, being in most cases neglected.

2. Differences between Professional Training and Mentoring

Professional training only ensures the transfer of knowledge and information that is considered useful in the future, while mentoring aims to put the value of the transferred knowledge and information into practice.

A first difference between professional training and mentoring is determined by their purpose. In the first case, the purpose is well defined and is based on the concentration of specific skills and knowledge, and in the second case, that of mentoring, the purpose is focused on personal and professional development. Professional training is provided by a person with a certain professional training and ability to carry out this activity, while in the case of mentoring, the process is ensured by the involvement of a person who is older or has greater experience and valuable knowledge than the one to whom the mentoring is provided. In the case of professional training, the one who provides the mentoring activity, no matter what it is called - teacher, boss, inspector, trainer, is in front of the one he trains, unconditionally by sympathy and approval as a person, while in the case of mentoring, a flow of trust and sympathy is ensured between the subjects of the mentoring process, based on the qualities and influences of the mentor.

Another difference between the two processes is the form of interaction. In the case of professional training, the interaction is structured in groups and is focused on groups of individuals, and in the case of mentoring, the interaction is focused on individual relationships. Professional training can be achieved individually, through self-improvement, but also collectively, through participation in seminars, courses, exchange of experience, professional workshops. Mentoring can only be achieved based on compatibility between the subjects of the mentorship and can be materialized in documents, through specific individual activities organized and programmed in such a way as to become a way of professional development in an original and effective way.

The two processes also differ in terms of duration. Thus, professional training has a shorter duration, which can vary from one day to several weeks, while the mentoring process has a longer duration, which can reach several months or even a year. The design of the stages for professional training and mentoring is another difference and follows aspects such as: setting expectations and objectives, selection, program, interaction, evaluation.

3. The Opportunity to Use Mentoring in the Public Sector

Supporting public sector personnel to develop effectively personally and professionally is the essence of the mentoring process. Strengthening professional competencies and developing skills reflects the quality of the relational system in the mentoring process, the methodology and technology used, but also its outcome.

Studying mentoring that can be applied in the public sector is important for achieving individual and institutional professional performance, but one must also take into account the difficulties and reluctance of the public sector towards this process and implicitly the existing bureaucratization of the public sector.

The "companionship" born during the mentoring process is based on credibility, accessibility, communication and empathy.

The space created in people-centered dialogue will generate the promotion of inter-institutional partnerships and facilitate professional exchange, flexibility and prioritization of needs only if the mentor and mentees know each other and specific objectives for the mentoring process are established.

The intersection of personal and institutional interests will be essential in achieving the individual objectives of the employee and those of the public entity. From this perspective, two other institutional values emerge, namely: creating an image of "it can be done" and demonstrating that "it really can be done".

Thus, at the level of a public sector field, the mentoring process can be ensured by better understanding "what you have to do" and "how it should be done", completing specific activities of interest to the entity to which the mentee belongs, establishing institutional values that are important for the institutional strategy, identifying individual, collective and institutional professional opportunities, developing a professional network with real and honest feed-back. This is what we encounter in public sector practice, a "pilot project", with the possibility of expanding the activity in the respective field. But, by implementing mentoring in the public sector, it is also possible to collaborate and implement the strategies identified in different fields of activity.

The priority of the public interest, impartiality, professionalism, moral integrity and freedom of thought and expression are the basic elements of governance within the mentoring process and the purpose of mentoring activities is to contribute to ensuring the quality of the public sector.

Quality standards, the roles of participants in the mentoring process (mentor, mentee, institutions), skills, communication, mentoring strategies converge to those of the public sector and thus ensure the implementation of efficient and sustainable reforms, in fact pursuing objectives, actions, success/performance criteria, resources, deadlines and individual and institutional portfolio.

4. The Realities of Using Mentoring in the Public Sector

Mentoring programs are limited in the Romanian public sector, especially in the education sector. In contrast, for public administration, the first steps towards using mentoring are highlighted from 2003 to 2009, when the Young Professionals Scheme (YPS) was regulated, when mentors worked within a formal mentoring agreement, coordinated at the central level by state institutions (the National Agency for Civil Servants and the National Institute of Administration) and financed through the budget from external funds (YPS). An important step was taken in 2021, when, through external financing, an information vector was provided for the establishment of a body of mentors in the Romanian public sector, through the pilot project for training the national body of mentors.

The use of mentoring in the public sector should be based on a “mentoring program for the public sector in Romania” and take into account some specifications regarding the objectives, target group, mentoring format and general training areas for mentors.

The development of the skills of the staff involved in the mentoring process should take into account the levels of execution and leadership and ensure support for workplace challenges, through the development of specific skills and the management of institutional changes. The identification of difficulties in the public sector should be carried out by all the factors involved in the mentoring

processes, with the support of the hierarchical superior and the conceptualization of a Mentoring Code, accepted by the parties involved.

The format of mentoring in the public sector must be open, so that the parties have the opportunity to be part of different public entities and based on a mentoring agreement, the registration must be voluntary, both for mentors and beneficiaries. This aspect requires the establishment of the Register of Mentoring Processes in the Public Sector, in which the development needs of public sector personnel, the institutions involved, mentors and future beneficiaries can be effectively identified and in which the path of the results obtained as a result of the mentoring process and the correlation with other personal and professional development measures can be recorded, through careful monitoring of the mentoring periods. Therefore, the separation of hierarchical roles from those existing during the mentoring process is evident, which will ensure the specific materialization of the mentoring program in a sustainable and unique form.

The use of a mentoring program in Romania supports the implementation of reforms in the public sector, namely public administration, as the current Romanian public sector allows for efficiency and sustainability in the face of significant challenges and human resources with professional potential can be harnessed so that training and career development policies contribute to public sector performance. Thus, competency-based performance management begins from initial training, entry into the profession and its ascension throughout the career. There must be a connection between the stakeholders of mentoring, between the personal needs of the employee and those of the public sector entity and between the potential conditions for the mentoring process. Institutionalizing the mentoring system will be one of the reform measures to increase learning opportunities and strengthen the professional capacities and skills of staff.

The permanent need for professional training and professional development is imposed by the "art" of transmitting information, knowledge and making oneself understood to the internal and external environment of public sector entities. Similar to the mentoring process practiced by teachers, the following types of mentoring can be used in the public sector: peer mentoring, unit-level mentoring, domain-level mentoring.

The use of a mentoring program in the public sector is determined by its definition and structure and should have as its "engine": the initiation, development and evaluation of the mentoring process. The cyclicity of the mentoring process is in fact the cyclicity of the initial preparation for identifying mentoring needs, respectively of mentors and mentees, the identification and recruitment of mentors from the mentoring program, training of subjects, allocation of mentors to beneficiaries, the mentoring agreement, the development of mentoring sessions, the interim and final evaluation of the mentoring process, the measures adopted for the sustainability of the mentoring process and its improvement.

The establishment of a mentoring program for the public sector is determined by the importance and understanding of the importance of mentoring by the political, administrative and economic spectrum, the involvement of decision-makers and obtaining their agreement on mentoring and the possible financial and non-financial benefits, the provision and provision of the necessary infrastructure, the development of sets of documents necessary for the mentoring process and its evaluation.

5. Conclusion

Compared to traditional teaching, the mentoring process used in the public sector aims to be the link between theory, practice and obtaining a professional and institutional path, by using the own resources

existing in the public sector, by relevantly directing the accumulated and accumulated experiences and expertise.

Maintaining performance standards for the public sector, through mentoring processes and techniques, is based on information, performance monitoring, periodic analysis and evaluation of operational procedures and processes, as well as on the environment conducive to their implementation. The problematic breakdown of the sets of principles applicable in the public sector intersects with the objectives of the mentoring process, through planning, monitoring, evaluation, recommendation, measures taken and even the use of alternative or complementary methods. Thus, the use of the mentoring process in the public sector leads to increased trust and awareness of the public interest and to adequate and efficient preparation for achieving high-performance results.

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