

Civil Servants Career Development in the Romanian Central Public Administration

Armenia Androniceanu¹

Abstract: *The research aims to highlight the aspects that produce a direct or indirect influence upon career development activity. Participating to the training programs represents an important element for civil servants career development not only for new employees but also for others who also need to adapt to changes: the necessity for lifelong learning and human resources capacity development is a continuous process for everyone. Professional training and motivation are presented as the key towards maintaining the young and efficient employees who wish and need to achieve knowledge, to improve their abilities and develop their career. The paper presents the results of a limited empirical research in which have been involved several ministers of the Romanian central public administration. Data collection and analysis have been mainly performed by using qualitative methods, questionnaire, document analysis, observation and semi-structured interviews. The results of our research are relevant for the human resources managers of these institutions, but they can also be taken into consideration by similar institutions from Romania or abroad. The conclusions of our research prove that major changes are necessary for a modern human resources management, especially in the training area necessary to support an appropriate career development process.*

Keywords: *development, career, human resources, training*

JEL: *K23; K 25.*

Introduction

Civil servants career development is highly important as the reinforcement of public administration capacity to generate social and economic reform measures largely depends on developing a unitary civil servants body, consistent with similar structures from other European Union member states.

The concept of career frequently appears in current speech and has several meanings. Traditionally, the concept of career used to be associated with persons that occupied managerial positions or well paid jobs. Gradually, the concept of career has evolved, applying to the entire personnel of an organisation as well as to the evolution of a person within the same position or in other positions, while accumulating professional experience.

In the area of human resources management, career represents the evolution of a civil servant within an organisation and within civil service, progressively and accordant with the needs of the organisation, based on the person's knowledge, competences, performance and preferences (Androniceanu,

¹ Professor PhD, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania,
e-mail: armenia.androniceanu@man.ase.ro

2008). This means that career development represents a responsibility that belongs both to public authorities and institutions and to civil servants.

Often civil servants start their activity in an organisation expecting to receive professional training and enough information to understand how to fulfill their duties and to become effective and successful members of their new organisation in a short period.

Although human potential represents the main resource of any institution, regardless of its specificity, and the only one that can lead to performance when appropriate management is being practiced, many employees do not receive support and adequate formal mentoring, they have to learn by trying and from their own mistakes, thereby deceiving their expectations.

Given the particular importance of professional and organizational development, the concept of human resources development is being studied in more detail. It is in close connection with public service success and effectiveness, so in this paper I intend to study the importance of human resource development at ministerial level.

1. State of knowledge regarding the concept and scientific research

In the area of human resources management, career represents the evolution of a civil servant within an organisation and within civil service, progressively and accordant with the needs of the organisation, based on the person's knowledge, competences, performance and preferences. This means that career development represents a responsibility that belongs both to public authorities and institutions and to civil servants.

According to the literature in the area, the concept of career management has several meanings, as follows:

According to specialists (Manole, 2006), in the area of human resources, career management represents the design and implementation of the goals stated in strategies and plans that would enable the organization to meet its needs in terms of human resources, and the individuals to meet their career goals (Caramete, 2003).

In his work "Human Resources Management, Principles and Practice", Donald W. Myers states: "human resources development consists in training employees in order to maximize their performance and their satisfaction within the organization" (Androniceanu, 2008).

In the work "Organizational Behaviour", Hitt M. A. affirms that: "career development is the process of acquiring the necessary skills to ensure career evolution. Career development responsibility is shared between the organization and employee" (Manole, 2006).

Career development is a long term process that covers the entire career of an individual and includes the programs and activities necessary to meet the individual career plan.

The concept applies both to central government and public institutions in different competitive cities (Popescu, 2012).

Regarding the public sector in Romania - career in civil service is defined by the second article of the Government Decision no. 611/2008 on the organization and management of civil servants career as "all legal situations and effects that occur after a person is appointed civil servant until their work relations cease, according to the law".

The career of a civil servant evolves through several stages:

- ❖ the expansion - development: there are acquired new skills, knowledge increases rapidly and new competences develop at a steady pace;
- ❖ stabilization: the skills and knowledge acquired during the progression (expansion) stage are implemented, tested, modified and strengthened by experience;
- ❖ maturity: civil servants have a well-defined career path and evolve in line with the skills, motivation and opportunities they have.

Each person develops and matures at a different pace, which means that once the maturity stage is reached, either one continues to develop or they limit themselves (although they still perform useful activities) or stagnate and take a downturn (Moldoveanu & Dobrin, 2012).

Career development represents the career management process and refers to the civil servants evolution in public institutions, according to its needs and depending on each person's performance, potential and aspirations.

We can talk about three fundamental objectives in terms of career development:

- satisfying the demands of the institution in terms of human resources;
- providing the civil servants the necessary training and development in order to be able to cope with any level of responsibility, provided that they present the potential or ability to attain it;
- offering guidance and motivating competitive civil servants to achieve personal goals based on their potential, their needs and aspirations as well as their contribution within public institutions.

When discussing career development one must consider at least the following three items:

➤ First of all, the actions undertaken within the public organisation. Some public institutions dispose of concrete plans and programs regarding civil servants' professional development. Different professional training courses are being offered. However, most programs actually offer professional development courses using resources within the public institution or resources attracted from exterior, or provided through various educational initiatives. Most public institutions have their own performance evaluation systems. Through these systems each employee's performance can be evaluated and comparisons can be made. Using the results of the performance evaluation in training activities, institutions can initiate actions aimed to rectify and improve weak performance, can take measures so that a civil servant would go from a medium to a high level of

performance, can identify promotion opportunities for those who aim higher positions in order to be able to develop according to their skills and motivation.

➤ The second element of career development is the civil servant. They should play an important part in developing their careers. They should contribute to the identification of their professional training needs in order to develop their career, those of the organization and to effectively participate in supporting them.

➤ The third element of the triad characterizing career development is the development of professional and managerial skills. Most public institutions need to plan their potential to replace their management structures. There must be ensured that, in case of senior level position vacancy, there are people able to take over and continue the efforts previously made. Furthermore, public institutions must improve management civil servants aptitudes and skills.

The idea of progress in social life is closely linked to the good administration of public services, which in its turn is related to civil servants' ability to improve their professional and managerial training. Through continuous training, civil servants improve their work efficiency. (Nica, Popescu, 2010)

The increasing computerization and automation of public administration activities leads the necessity for ongoing civil servants training so that they would be flexible enough to continuously adapt to the level, structure and intensity of changes in the system of social needs and the reform process.

Another important aspect is the training. Training is necessary because:

- There is a constant pressure from the citizens whose demands are increasing;

- The nature of the requests and needs that have to be satisfied is extremely diverse and constantly changing, requiring the existence of well professionally trained civil servants;

- There are still numerous malfunctions caused by the inadequate training of civil servants;

- The knowledge acquired through initial training in the education system are easily perishable given the rapid changes occurring;

- Public sector reform requires the creation of a professional civil servants body, constantly concerned with upgrading their knowledge;

- Each individual wishes to train, promote and acquire job satisfaction.

2. Presenting and explaining the problem

Each person develops and reaches maturity at a different pace, which means that once the maturity stage is reached, either one continues to develop or they limit themselves (although they still perform useful activities) or stagnate or take a downturn.

Regarding civil servants career development subjectivity can be perceived - namely the fact that their promotion represents a subjective assessment of their direct manager, which primarily relies on the informal superior-subordinate relationship.

There can also be identified two categories of constraints: on the one hand, insufficient resources and, on the other hand, the increasing and constantly diversifying citizens' requests and social and economic environment. In order to meet these requirements, it is necessary to create and develop a professional civil servants body, which is able to ensure effective functioning of a continuously changing administration.

3. The research objectives

The aim of the research was to identify ways to increase awareness level regarding the role of career development. The main objectives were:

- To know the needs and aspirations of civil servants with regard to their own development potential;
- To know the skills and competencies of civil servants from human resources departments of ministries to use new instruments in developing human resources career.

4. The hypotheses and variables of the research

The operationalisation of the concepts maintains the link between the theoretical and the empirical section of the paper. The research which intends through its content to be explanatory aims to test hypotheses, while descriptive research provides the necessary information to formulate hypotheses.

The starting hypothesis is that the awareness level regarding the role of civil servants career development in ministries is low. They do not believe in the possibility of increasing institutional efforts in order to improve their knowledge and skills.

Conceptual variables

The variable is any concept which varies and can be measured. A variable takes different values for the members of a community.

There are two types of variables: independent and dependent.

Independent variables:

- subjects' gender: male or female;
 - education level;
 - the age of the persons.
- #### Dependent variables:
- training level;
 - the interest in career development training.

5. Research methodology and data analysis

The research was conducted on civil servants in the ministries of the Romanian Government. The subjects of the study were 100 civil servants who occupy managerial and executive positions, with varying degrees of experience in the three ministries, as shown in Figure 1.

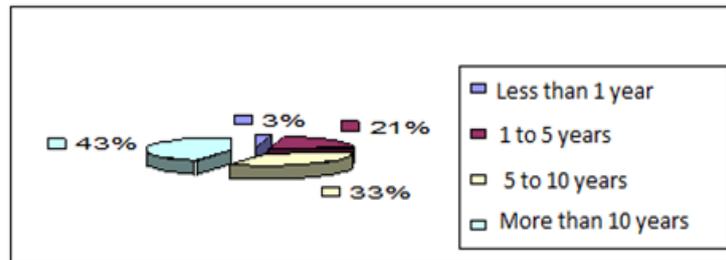


Figure 1. Sample structure by seniority within the institution

There were used the following research methods: the questionnaire and document analysis as well as observation and occasionally structured interview.

The questionnaire is an essential element and the success of research depends on it. The questionnaire is a formalized set of questions, which aims to obtain the necessary data to achieve the research objectives. The questionnaire represents a relatively inexpensive mean to collect data from a large number of respondents. In this research, the questionnaire had 10 questions. The main analyzed documents were: The program of the National Agency of Civil Servants regarding civil service development and professionalization, the statute of the civil servants and secondary legislation, evaluation forms of the human resources from ministries, annual appraisal reports, the evidence of professional training programs of human resources managers and other employees of the ministries with and without management positions.

Another method used while conducting the research and the results interpretation is observation - we used observation sheets managed with the support of the students from the Faculty of Administration and Public Management of the University of Economic Studies in Bucharest. The data obtained through questionnaires were collected, sorted and collated using Microsoft Office Excel, a program that allows performing different operations and generating graphical representations of results.

After processing the data, it results that 75 of those who filled in the questionnaire are women (75%) and the remaining 25 are men (25%). Only 18% of the respondents are junior civil servants, the remaining 82% are permanent civil servants.

In terms of professional category, the respondents are divided into: civil servants with managerial positions - 19% and executive civil servants - 81%. In terms of seniority within the same organization, which influences the knowledge regarding organizational phenomena, it can be noted that the highest percentage is of respondents with a seniority of more than 10 years. This fact indicates that these persons have a significant experience within the institution.

It is worth noting that most of the respondents, respectively 62%, answered affirmatively regarding the access to training courses. With respect to the question about creativity, Figure 2 shows that the percentages have similar values. Thus, 52% of the respondents indicated that they are encouraged to express their

initiatives on career development, but unfortunately only few of them reach their goal. The other 48% of the inquired persons answered negatively. The percentage is high enough to understand that, although personnel's initiative is important and valued, it does not actually materialize, leading to lower level of motivation and involvement of the human resources in developing their careers.

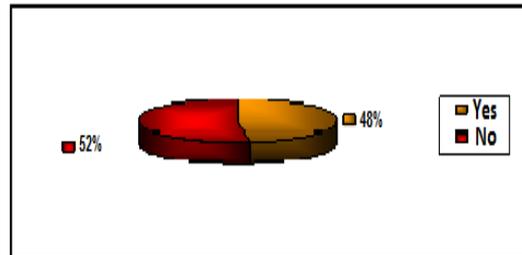


Figure 2. Respondents' opinion regarding organizational support for career development

Another interesting result represented in figure 3 shows that more than half of the respondents (63%) believes that promotions in the public institutions involved in research are not always justified.

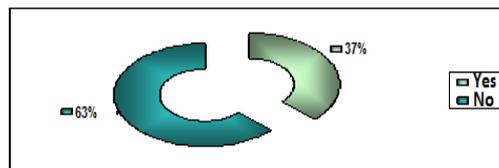


Figure 3. Respondents' opinion on promotion

Although employees' career development depends on several individual and contextual variables, as we can see in figure 4, the question regarding the criteria used for promotion highlighted two criteria - skills and qualifications with a percentage of 22% and favoritism and family influence with a percentage of 38%.

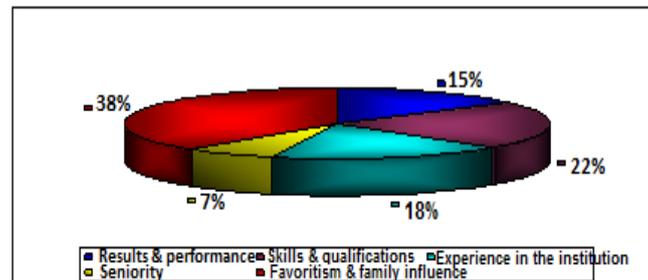


Figure 4. Criteria used for promotion

With regard to the complaints on how career development activity functions, the percentage of the unsatisfied civil servants is higher, 69% of respondents answered affirmatively to this question and the rest of them declared that there is not a clear vision in their organizations about the development of the civil servant career concept.

Regarding the financial resources assigned for professional development, most of the respondents (55%) answered that an average budget is allocated for personnel development. The other percents are presented in figure 5.

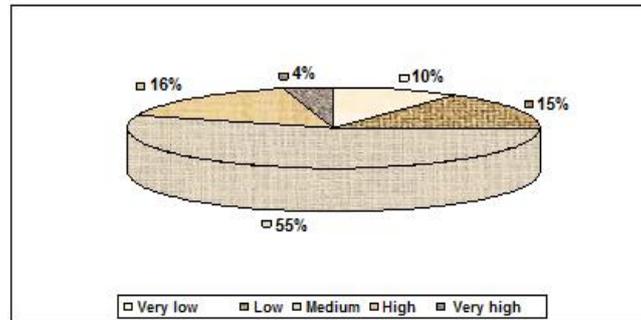


Figure 5. Respondents' opinion on the funding of the training activities

The empirical research conducted is underlining the fact that the investment in human resources training are not enough compared to the individual and organizational needs.

Conclusions

The facts revealed by this primary research have shown that the studied institutions urgently need coherent human resources strategies that would enable public institutions to meet their needs in the area of human resource both quantitatively and qualitatively. Another important conclusion concerns the training level of the human resources managers of the institutions involved in our study. The research has shown that most likely human resources managers do not have the necessary professional profile to ensure civil servants management career, that they face difficulties in planning civil servants career and the promoting system of the employees within the public institution. They also face difficulties in ensuring the assessment of organizational needs in the area of personnel training and in making the most of the annual performance appraisal results. There have been identified significant limitations in establishing the requirements and criteria for personnel promotion in different positions and functions. The research has proved the necessity to design and continuously improve a modern system human resource management that would result in developing a professional civil servants body.

The research has also shown that the time allocated by an individual to career development is limited. Any employee has similar needs to the organization

they belong to. The fundamental difference between the organization and the individual is that theoretically the organization is settled for a long time, while the employee disposes only of limited time to show and make the most advantage of their skills and take decisions regarding their career development. The responsibility for career development increases with the reduction of the alternatives. One way to increase the awareness level regarding the role of career development may be increasing the role of human resources managers in public institutions. This involves helping the employees to identify their own path and the optimal direction for their professional development, by determining together the steps to follow in order to realistically achieve their career aspirations.

One of the methods the manager could use is qualification facilitating, broadening and diversifying the work performed by employees with the aim of career development.

Generally, all employees need training courses in order to broaden and diversify their work so that they would achieve individual career development objectives. Those employees who sense that the manager is interested in their professional career become loyal, while at the same time, better perform their activity.

The management team of the institution as well as the human resources managers should understand employees' needs and aspirations, while the latter should identify as clear as possible what is to be done and how organisational matters should be handled. Even if it is recommended that all managers to be involved in human resources management, only few managers have the necessary preparation and expertise to counsel the employees and contribute to their career development.

Furthermore, even if it is a very important activity in terms of career development, mentoring or collaboration relations, which helps the individual deal with problems in a positive and constructive way, can sometimes become damaging, if the individual becomes too dependent or the mentor does not show sufficient flexibility.

Civil servants from all organizational levels need to develop their career, to achieve European level performance, aware of the fact that they are in the citizens' service and that their role is to efficiently implement the existent legislation and to contribute to its improvement.

References

1. **ALPOPI, C. MANOLE, C. COLESCA, C.** (2011). "Assesment of the sustainable urban development level through the use of indicators of sustainability", *Theoretical and empirical researches in urban management*, volume, 6., Issue 2, May, pp. 78-87.
2. **ANDRONICEANU, A.** (2008). *Noutăți în managementul public*, ed. a III-a, București, Editura Universitara, Romania, pp. 179-197.
3. **CARAMETE, C.** (2003). *Formarea și perfecționarea resurselor umane în administrația publică.*, pp. 65-71
4. **MANOLE, C.** (2006). *Managementul resurselor umane în administrație publică*, București, Editura ASE, pp. 80-97.
5. **MOLDOVEANU, G., DOBRIN, C.** (2012). "Unity of the organizational functions flexibility". *Theoretical and empirical researches in urban management*, volume 7, August, pp. 53-61.
6. **NICA, E., POPESCU, GH.** (2010). "Emphasis of interconnection between the public system of granting salary and incentives and the civil servants performance indicators". *Administration and Public Management Review*, Issue 15, pp.121-127.
7. **POPESCU, R. I.** (2012). "Study regarding the ways of measuring cities competitiveness." *Economia. Seria Management*, volume 14. Issue 2. pp. 288-303.
8. *** Manual de resurse umane, Agenția Națională a Funcționarilor Publici, 2008
9. *** H.G. nr. 611/2008 Normele privind organizarea și dezvoltarea carierei funcționarilor publici
10. G.D. no. 611/2008 - The rules on organisation and development of civil servants career