



ORIGINAL PAPER

Our Reform Priorities in Public Administration for a Pro-European Country

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Abstract

From the very beginnings of the independence of the Republic of Macedonia a lot of importance and value has been given to adjusting reforms in accordance to the new pluralist democratic conditions and those of the economy. Up to 1999, when the process of reforms was incited, a very small part of the specific engagements was accomplished in terms of improving the functionality of the public administration. The main goal to be reached through the implementation of the reforms in the RM is the development of a democratic society and the development of the economy. The reforms in the public administration take a very important role among other priorities of a country that aspires to become a member and integrate in the EU. The integration does not depend on public administration reforms, but the quality of reforms does accelerate the tempo and strengthens the road of a country towards EU integration. The basic idea is to prove that there is a correlation between these two elements or procedures. The process of integration of RM into the EU is very much dependable, among other things, also from the public administration reforms and if the Republic of Macedonia manages to conduct an efficient reformation of the public administration, it will comply with EU integration criteria faster.

Keywords: *public administration, reforms, integration, RM, EU*

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Introduction

Since gaining independence, great significance and value have been attached to the adjustment of reforms in Macedonia on the basis of the new pluralist democratic conditions and the economy. Until 1999, when the process of reform was triggered, very little of the specific engagements were conducted within the frames of improving the functionality of public administration. The main objective aimed at implementation of reforms in Macedonia is to develop a democratic society and strengthen the economy. These objectives are boosted by the need for EU membership as a strategic goal of the Republic of Macedonia, and is one of the requirements for EU membership and establishment of a public administration as professional and contemporary as to be able to support the development and economic competitiveness. As soon as the first national states were established, and since the time of Aristotle, Plato and Machiavelli, the focus was set on organization of the state, including the public administration as well. The control of bureaucratic power is a problem of contemporary politics which is difficult to solve. Basically, every public administration itself is a kind of bureaucracy. The times we live in and all the rapid changes technology and science have organized for in all spheres of life, public administration can not afford to be static and bureaucratic. We should follow the changes in society that occur in everyday life and strive to adapt to the external environment. In order to have a society functioning properly, there must be an effective public administration. Public administration is a service for the citizens, it exists because of our needs for its services. The objective of the public administration is to efficiently execute its tasks aimed at improvement of the quality of life of citizens.

The significance of public administration reforms in the Republic of Macedonia

Public administration reforms have been made as terminology to be used or applied in the politics of Southeastern Europe, and exceed other themes that are also current, such as economic reforms, human rights and those of minorities. In other words, public administration reforms are not an area where attention is missing; on the contrary, it increases every day.

In the period from the adoption of the Strategy for Public Administration Reforms in 1999, significant progress was achieved particularly in the civil service system of state institutions, central and local government, as well as in the field of financial management. Today it becomes more and more obvious that the development of an efficient public administration is a prerequisite for the development of a country towards integration in the EU. By inserting these issues among other priorities, the Government is expected to define the capacity to implement the reforms in the public administration and transform the public administration in an effective service to serve the citizens and economic entities. A professional, efficient and modern public administration is a necessary precondition for achieving the strategic goals of the Republic of Macedonia for its EU integration.

The current developments in the country, particularly the role of the public administration, its functionality and effectiveness in the intention to improve and harmonize with that of EU, as well as the reform of the public administration which is both a prerequisite and one of the main objectives for further integration, and the reform development in public administration in the Republic of Macedonia being exactly my topic of interest in this Paper, and above everything, reviewing whether reforms show improvement in the internal system of public administration with the slogan of depoliticized, independent, effective, efficient and modern administration, which will be

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the bridge to switch to a smoother way out for faster reforms in the public administration as advocated by the Republic of Macedonia.

Accession negotiations between the EU and candidate countries are divided into 31-35 chapters. Most of these relate, partly or exclusively, to the harmonization of public administration and administrative procedures of the respective countries with EU standards. At the political level, a significant part of the Copenhagen criteria relate to the rule of law, as an important feature of the state structure for the candidate countries (Mehmedi, 2015: 11).

The values in the public sector as a leading principle for administrative reforms

It is believed that the paradigm of values in the public sector developed by the authors from the leaderships in the public sector (Moore, 1995:41-57) is the matrix for development of the public sector because of its capacity to comprise both the criteria for governance and principles of management. Management refers to the interaction between the public sector and civil society towards collective decision-making (Castro, Mlikota, 2002). In the concept of values in the public sector, public intervention should be aimed at meeting the needs of citizens in a fair, effective and responsible manner.

The concept of values in the public sector emphasizes the need to achieve a balance between the demands of the democratic political processes and those of the effective management of public resources (Concentrating on the importance of focusing on citizens to deliver public values, this paradigm is useful for guiding civil servants towards achieving economic and social results. In the perspective of public values, public interest comes in the center of civil servants' activities; the role of managers in the public sector is highlighted and it contributes to the democratic processes.).

This requires open access to procurement in the civil service (assessment of the benefits of public and private sector) as well as dedication to the credo of the civil service, as defined by Aldridge and Stoker, with five criteria: culture of work: dedication to services for individuals and the community; capacity for support of a universal approach: special responsibility of the public sector; responsible practices for employment: well trained and motivated personnel which acts professionally and is fairly rewarded; contribution to the wellbeing of the community: recognizing the need to work in partnership with others.

The approach of managing values in the public sector opens an alternative way for running the public sector outside the traditional Weberian Bureaucracy and the new theories for management of the public sector. In circumstances where complexity and uncertainty are permanent characteristics, the concept of values in the public sector requires adaptability and flexibility as key factors which are best concretized through constant evaluation and learning, as creation of policies based on proofs. In this sense, efficiency should be assessed against higher goals, as are social wellness, sustainability and responsibility. The theory of management in the public sector is inspired from the experience of practitioners and managers in the public sector who had felt the need of adjusting the concepts to theories and practices and harmonizing conflict values. Democracy and management should be considered as partners in the process of creation of policies to close the gap between policies and management and convert ideology into reality (Joly, 2011).

Managers in the public sector should manage the processes, people and resources, so that they shall think wider and improve leadership, communication and evaluation.

Human resources have a key role in the implementation of administrative reforms. Civil servants are responsible for designing laws, organizational development, administrative restructuring, creation of policies and implementation of laws (to accomplish these crucial tasks they should be well prepared). In order to ensure sustainability of reforms, a quality policy for human resources is necessary and this requires investing in human capital, knowledge, competences and trust.

Major priorities mentioned in the research of administrative reforms in the Balkan countries are depoliticisation and professionalization of the civil service. The modernization of administrative personnel should concentrate on improving ethic standards in the public sector (This presupposes a major change in individual and social relations from the former political regimes which leads to a "cultural gap" between old and new generations.). Governance should implement the changes in relations and mentality by addressing resistance and fears while new values are consolidated and by persuading people to accept the new standards. Balkan countries have numerous consequences in harmonizing procedures in civil service (In this process Balkan countries need to overcome major barriers, such as poor management of changes, poor skills, lack of experience in project management, standing behind the laws and lack of focus on customers). National laws should be accorded with the principles of the European administrative space. Professionalization of administrative personnel presupposes strengthening the local capacities and structures for training when a meritorious system for human resources is established. Lessons learned from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the preparation of the accession process are important for the situation of the Balkan transition: reasons for changes have to be explicit and felt; goals have to be clearly defined and accepted; partnerships for reforms have to be built; local ownership has to be matured; specific models can not be transplanted; legal approach has to be an entry point of the reforms in the civil service; proper alignment of reform steps in order to ensure sustainability.

An example of relevant reform steps is that of Croatia in March 2008 when the country developed a whole strategy for reforms in the public administration for 2008-2011 which was called "Strategy for Reforms in Public Administration" and served as strategic frame towards modernization of the country. The plan of the reforms included the following goals (Kandžija, Mance, Godec, 2010: 105 - 118): strengthening the competences and effectiveness of public administration; enhancing expertise, professionalism, knowledge and transparency; developing electronic administration; reducing the operational costs and simplification of regulations.

The management paradigm of the public sector emphasizes the need to find out new ways of cooperation towards collective decision-making (Stoker, 2006: 41-57). In this context, interdependence of many actors which involve individuals and organizations is constantly increasing. It is believed that policy is crucial for coordination of social demands. Many reports in the Balkan countries underline the importance of political will in achieving real reforms. Real progress in anti-corruptive policies can not be achieved unless there is political will and apathy among the citizens (Igric, 2010: 18-28). Due to the above, coordination of social actors has the greatest importance in the implementation of changes. In order to overpass the lack of citizens' trust in political institutions, it is necessary to show greater transparency of political decisions and administrative procedures, as well as stronger and independent media and judicial authorities (Zuka, 2011: 43-44).

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To deal with corruption and ensure democratic political processes, civil society has a key role in achieving political changes, since it is the key actor in the implementation of reforms. Civil society has two major functions in implementing democratization of the society (Miljenko, 2010: 29-31): to follow the steps of the governments in their reforms towards new standards; to motivate support and participation in the European accession processes. Wide participation of interested parties from the civil society may be accomplished only if people engage themselves in a practical manner and at the same time keep ownership over the process of changes. In this context, the role of the guards, that is non-government organizations and media, should be strengthened and supplied with capacity for revision of the reforms by enhancing their expertise and further encourage debates for strategic decisions. The reports of the European Commission on the Balkan accession countries emphasize the importance of civil society in the reform process. The Croatian Progress Report 2010 confirmed the role of civil organizations in promoting and protecting human rights and democracy, but regretted its exclusion from the political process, and their weak capacity to monitor the political development. As far as Serbia is concerned, the Commission informs about the active role of the civil society in social, political and economic life, but for insufficient operational capacity and uneven cooperation with the state, too.

Management of changes and the public administration

The changes in the public administration must be permanent. They provide quality of services, efficiency and effectiveness in working and achieving goals. Public administration does not have to stick to the past, not even to the current situation nor routine works which are being implemented now, procedures that functioned sufficiently in the last year do not imply that they will be good enough for this or next year. Today changes happen everywhere. Public administration can not afford itself to be static. If we want to be successful we should embrace the changes as an opportunity to advance and reach results. We should all the time consider ideas and findings in order to identify the areas that need changes and prepare for the future. Changes in the public administration are inevitable. The only safe thing in every organization is changes.

Institutions that are part of the public administration have to be sure that they have established processes to prevent failure of the factor of changes. These processes include assessment of the needs of the organization and awareness of all members of the organization about the foreseen changes. The employees have to recognize the reason for changes and be involved in their implementation. The assessment and interaction of employees are of vital importance since they will reduce the level of resistance and contribute to successful transformation. When implementing changes in the public administration we should have in mind the effects of changes over the behaviour of employees in the organization and the delivery of services provided for the citizens. The governance of the organization should create a vision of the future of the organization in a way that will make the plight in the process of changes be worth the efforts. The vision is of essential importance for long-lasting success. Each programme for changes requires a strategic plan. The process of four steps developed by Kurt Levin and Edgar Shane has proved to be an efficient method for changes: the employees in the public administration have to accept the changes. This can be achieved upon the creation of discontent with the old way of working; this undesired behavior must be abandoned (defrosting), the members of organizations must quit the old way of behaving and replace it with the desired one and motivate themselves for changes; the members of organizations must be presented a

feasible model of the new behaviour (changing). Employees in organizations should be aware of what benefits change will bring along; in addition, changing requires communication and time for people in organizations to understand the change; the new behavior should be strengthened (freezing back), and the employees will accept the new way of working and behaving.

One of the objectives of changes in public administration is creation of a system of public administration which shall work under the principles of equal treatment in exercising and protecting citizens' rights, or public administration - service to citizens. Thus, in the Republic of Macedonia, the relation between the public administration and the work of administrators who believe that they are above the system, and not service to the citizens, should be changed.

Through proper use of the resources and offering quality services to citizens, public administration increases the efficiency and quality of services, but, also the trust of citizens. Goal of any organizational change is allow the organization to work more efficiently, which means: efficient - the degree of utilization of resources against results; effective - whether products and services meet the needs of the client; legitimate – accepted and recognized in areas where it acts; flexible- ability to adapt to changes, and sustainable - ability to conduct activities for a longer term.

Efficiency of public administration is objective of every democratic country. Efficiency of public administration is an indicator of successfulness of the country, and society, too. The work of the public administration and the services it provides to citizens results in the need to increase efficiency. Employees in the public administration are the main resource and the efficiency of public administration might be determined through employees' performances, i.e. through their way of working, the knowledge they have, their motivation, interpersonal communication, cooperation, governance, coordination.

In the last years, the Republic of Macedonia and the rest of the countries of Western Balkan and Eastern Europe, which aspire to become EU and NATO members, have been making huge efforts to increase efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. The need of more responsible and quality public administration is high, because of the harmonization of legal frameworks and reforms related to public administration taken over by the candidate countries. The Republic of Macedonia should show greater flexibility and political understanding towards the issue of public administration reforms, the efficiency of the public service allows the foreign, and domestic investors, to easily achieve their goals. Investments in economy positively affect the changes in public administration which should be professional and able to deliver quality services, at the same time requiring better observance of laws and regulations, and institutional stability. It is these standards required by the public administration that represent an opportunity for creation of favorable business climate and possibility to draw foreign investments (Zuka, 2011: 55). To date, expectations of citizens, especially of the business community in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the private sector, are huge due to the increasing competition both from outside and inside. There must be a consensus that the previous orientation towards administration based on rules has to be replaced by general orientation towards results in which the needs of the users or more precisely citizens, play a significant role.

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Administrative harmonization

EU requirements for administrative harmonization of the candidate countries are an essential step towards their full accession to EU by ensuring compatibility of their public administration systems with a certain set of EU standards, or it comes down to additional, secret way to impose additional political conditions which otherwise would be considered as unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of independent states in order to find out the nature of the various EU requirements either as structural needs or policy measures that impose certain patterns of behavior in the internal political scene of the respective countries, not only during the enlargement process, but also within the European partnership for democracy.

Developing professional and accountable administrative systems in the newly developed countries in the Balkans is not an easy mission. As in other post-communist countries, there is an urgent need for support of weakened public institutions to discontinue former practice of management and finish their basic role of embodiment of law and democracy. The principles of European administrative space are treated as a starting point for administrative reconstruction of the Balkan countries. The criteria for the management of public values that combine efficiency and democratic imperatives to guide the public administration are presented as potential drivers of institutional change in the region. Human resource management and collaboration with stakeholders in civil society are critical factors for the creation of high quality public sector. In addition, the tools of information technology can significantly contribute to greater openness and transparency of public administration when used to enhance the dialogue between the administration and society. European Administrative Space should be seen as "an environment in which national administrations are called upon to ensure homogeneous levels of efficiency and quality of service." It is important to learn from the historical context to be able to study the trends of future organizations and challenges of public service (Grizo, Davitkovski, Pavlovska-Daneva, 2008: 170). The need for collaboration and evaluation is growing rapidly and is connected with the need to control the globalization of the economy.

This new and complex situation leads almost to crisis of the state, because countries are incapable of managing their own territories. This new situation can be resolved through international cooperation, supranational organizations and networking the public sector. But these new trends could result in a review of state power. In Europe specifically, the interaction has increased significantly, which is partly based on the process of unification. The new approach developed after 2000, triggered formally by the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations, aspires to institutionalize and encourage cooperation and strengthen public services in each country. In Europe and especially in the Balkan region, public administration also experienced this new trend, but is still facing challenges. In the future, EU will turn to positive common policies that lead to administrative homogenization. To make this effective, it is necessary to determine the common goals and the measured performances, but not to adopt a common model for all member states.

In a world that is moving and changing, with interrelated activities that create mutual independence, administrative institutions and systems must be flexible and transparent to adapt to these changes and to create the best conditions for the development of social life in all aspects. The expansion of EU has mainly reduced the capacity of the Balkan countries in adapting their administrative structures and models promoted by EU standards which are based on traditions, economic, social, cultural and administrative

values of the Balkan countries in comparison with those promoted in the Western countries and EU.

European administrative space as a new European challenge for reforms in public administration in the Republic of Macedonia

European administrative space should be seen as "an environment in which national administrations are called upon to ensure homogenous levels of efficiency and quality of the service". The need for collaboration and evaluation is growing rapidly and is linked with the need to control the globalization of the economy. This new situation can be resolved through international cooperation, supranational organizations and public sector networking. But these new trends could conclude with a review of the state power. In Europe specifically, the interaction has increased significantly, which is partly based on the process of unification. The new approach developed after 2000, triggered formally by the Millennium Declaration of UN aspires to institutionalize and encourage cooperation and strengthen the public services in each country. The European Administrative Space is an area where increasingly integrated administrations practice together the powers delegated to EU in a system of shared sovereignty. The term of "European Administrative Space" has emerged as a central reference in discussions on trends in European governance. There is probably not much sense in searching for an authoritative definition of the term. EAP tends to connect with several interrelated developments, including in particular the emergence of supranational forum of the European administration, new forms of interaction between the supranational and national administrations, the occurrence of "administration of the Union with multiple levels," the impact of the European integration over national administrations, (Goetz, 2000: 211-231) and that which some view as expansion of common administrative standards in the whole of Europe (Siedentopf and Speer, 2003: 9-28). The need for collaboration is constantly growing and is connected with the need to control economic globalization and transnational companies. The new and complex situation leads almost to the crisis of the state, because it seems that states are incapable to govern their territories. Thus, the latest global developments lead us to the definition of administrative law which encompasses mechanisms, the principles, practices and support of social attitudes that promote or otherwise affect the liability of global administrative bodies, in particular by meeting the appropriate standards of transparency, participation, prudent decision-making, and legality, and with an effective review of the laws and decisions made. In traditional concepts, countries agreed through contracts or other agreements, on regulatory norms which they then implement in the country (Cassese, 2005). Processes of agreement of countries and their implementation, however, are subject to domestic mechanisms of political and legal responsibility. The emergence of global and European regulations completely exceeded the ability of these traditional concepts and control mechanisms and legitimate regulatory decisions. The latest developments in international law show the beginning of an era of global rule of law. One of these developments is the European administrative law that arises where European administrative space is seen to arise from the pragmatic needs of cross-border regulation underpinned by the normative aspiration to European rule of law.

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System of prey and principle of merit

In the Republic of Macedonia, contrary to declarations for the establishment of a merit system of employment, the reality is slightly different where still operates the spoils system - a system of prey, which means that the public administration turns into a politicized factory that produces inadequate and incompatible or less compatible products which affect the society very unprofessionally and risky for the public service.

If the merit system involves reward and advancement of professionalism that they receive with their expertise and education, the spoils system is the opposite of the merit system, inaccuracy and inefficiency in operation. Unfortunately, in such situations very capable and competent persons do not come to the fore, their knowledge, expertise, experience, simply does not allow them established system. In order to fulfill that consistent implementation of the above principles of meritocracy, it requires major reforms in the public service in the country. In particular, significant changes in recruitment of staff in public administration. You have to apply value criteria such as personal values and qualifications, professional competence, should eradicate nepotism and political structure that creates inadequate, inefficient, unproductive and corrupt administration.

The public administration should be the only key player in the creation of conditions for the development of a professional, politically neutral, competent, responsible and stable civil service, as an efficient service to the citizens. It takes true professionals, people who know well the issues to think independently and decide, love the administration, live professionally by it, pleased and happy to be part of the public sector and such a responsible state legal activity. These professionally trained staff will be ready to realize the social obligations to the benefit of socially useful work, and be a service to the citizens and to the society itself. These officers who have the knowledge, and are willing to respect the criteria of morality and values advocated by our society, can lead to improvement of the public service.

Conclusion

The administrative capacity of the Republic of Macedonia plays a vital role in integrating itself into the European Union. Scholars and analysts dealing with the study of integration processes, give great commitment and role to the reforms in the public administration of a country and the EU integration. The Balkan countries, including the Republic of Macedonia also give great importance to this issue, although from a broader perspective, the countries of this region are still preoccupied with the economic and political stability. The development of an effective public administration in other countries, such as those in South-East Europe, was completed prior to their integration into the EU, and the public administration of the Republic of Macedonia as a basis for democracy, rule of law and free economy is a real challenge in the future. Nowadays it is very clear that an effective public administration sector is a prerequisite for the further development of the Republic of Macedonia towards EU integration. Including this issue as one of the major priorities, all previous governments of the Republic of Macedonia put an emphasis on the definition of their involvement in the implementation of reforms in the field of public administration and transform it into a service for citizens and economic entities in the country, since a professional, efficient and modern administration is a necessary predisposition to support the objectives of the government of the Republic of Macedonia for full membership in the EU structures. Theoretically, since gaining independence of the Republic of Macedonia, all government bodies have recognized the importance of reforming the public administration. The reforms were seen as one aspect

of the transition to a democratic society, predisposition to economic development and a prerequisite for entry into EU. idat service of citizens and society. These officers have the knowledge, possessing will and who are willing to respect the criteria of morality and values should have in our society, can lead to improved public service..

In addition to the adopted legislation, institutions also have an impact on the process of public administration reform. With the establishment of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, which is responsible for coordination and adoption of reforms in the public administration, although functioning since 2011, it has taken over some of the responsibilities of the Agency of Administration (former Agency of Civil Servants). With the establishment of the Agency of Civil Servants and the Ministry of Local Government as part of the process of reforms, great institutional importance has been given to reforms in both fields - public administration and decentralization. If some institutions implement the reforms better than others, then emphasis and efforts should be put to remove the bad experiences of non-implementation and focus on a public administration that is efficient and modern.

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