

THE PRINCIPLES OF MODERNIZING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN FRANCE AND THEIR EFFICIENCY

MORARIU ALUNICA¹, CONDREA P., BOSTAN I.²

¹“Ștefan cel Mare” University Suceava

²District Chamber of Auditors Iasi

Abstract: This originality of France public reform is due to manager understanding of the decentralizing necessity with a view to solving management problems and to implementing public policies. This process is focused on giving chances to information regarding the public institutions both for politicians and citizens.

Keywords: administrative system, public services, autonomy, decentralization

Preliminaries. The French approach to public government modernizing, initiated by Michel Rocard on February 29, 1989, is part of the general framework of the public government reform in OECD countries. French administration modernizing is based on admitting that the only ones responsible for running the public services are their performers who are at the same time capable to define their general acting objective.

Principles of modernizing French administration. To reform the French public services, the following principles were conceived:

- implementation of an objective-based management manner;
- judicial settlement of the administrative measures after going through an experimental phase that will allow a better estimate of their effect;
- passing through unilateral decisions made exclusively by state to a partnership based on local community consulting for finding out its interests;
- increasing the autonomy degree of public services by creating responsibility centers within the public institutions e.g. certain functional units charged with the management of the material, human and financial resources;
- the need to associate the public servants to change process

Estimates in the field. The first estimates of the new measures, applied in the

French public administration, were carried out in 1992. Their conclusion shows that:

1. The ministries estimated that the modernizing process lead to the improvement of the public services, and the created responsibility centers contributed to the improvement of managing control, because:

- granting budget credits to central public administration has better responded to the needs (Ministry of Agriculture);
- public services have unit costs (Ministry of Industry);
- certain credits for investments in informatics and equipment were granted for a three year period (Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Justice);
- the possibility of carrying forward the budget credits makes more reasonably the managing process (Ministry of Equipment and Ministry of National Education);

2. The procedure of making the responsibilities centers increased the decentralizing degree and mobilized and motivated the public servants within the administrative body.

In the same way, is the finding that the ministries got flexibility and suppleness in their entire activity.

Fragility factors showed up in the modernizing process of public administration. The application in practice of the mentioned principles cannot omit that there appear certain disturbances connected to the existence of some fragility factors. In this respect we may mention the following categories of such factors:

a) Fragility in strategic terms¹

- *Incomplete diagnoses.* The quality of a strategy of change is based mostly on the quality of the preliminary analyses. However, not often it is the case that, within the public government, the diagnostic phases are rapidly expelled; sometimes the solution is selected before identifying completely the problem.

Often this approach determines a focusing rather on solving the symptoms and not on the removing of the causes and the basic problems. This makes the initial change not to produce the expected effects which will lead, finally, to its abandonment.

¹ See also *Strategia guvernamentala privind accelerarea reformei in administratia publica (Government Strategy regarding Reform Acceleration in Public Administration)*, Bucuresti, 2006, pp. 35 and the following (www.gov.ro/strategie). In case of Romania it would consider another two factors: • *Lack of perspective (planned) in time* (absence of strategic reflection and of time planning, that would be necessary in preparing the phases coming after the putting in practice of the changes, makes up one of the frequent causes of failure in the long run. The change conceiving is set around its power in practice, which leads to forced mobilizing at the same time with its launching, but neglecting the management of watching and updating the operated changes); • *Lack of balances and estimates* (Romanian public government remained apart for a long time from concerns of estimating its actions impact. The same has happened also in the case of changes: formal rigorous balances are rare).

- *Centering on content to the prejudice of the process.* The strategic piloting of a change implies a managing of the “process-content” couple. The public government has the habit of centralizing interferences of technocratic directives, of circulars containing the reforms that have to put into practice.

As a consequence of this, often the process is neglected: the involved actors are not consulted, the adopting to the context does not exist and the real possibility of anchoring the change in time is extremely reduced.

b) Fragility in cultural terms

- *The reflex of resorting to hierarchical assistance.* It is about a frequent tendency of the public government like that of the habit to execute directives or that of a general behavior of waiting. In all these cases, the reflex to resort to hierarchical assistance seems to be firmly anchored.
- *Tendencies towards concert.* It is a reality by now that the public government is not ceasing to organize concerting reunions, to make up study commissions, to launch reflex seminars. Thus, the concert became a permanent risk that leads to mixing and debating the ideas without concretizing them yet and which could lead to their failure even of the most attractive projects.

At the national level (the government and senior state servants), as well as at the territorial level (locally elected persons and the territory-administrative boards), excessive resort to reunions or working groups, enforced by compulsory consulting devices, could place a question mark to already operated change initiatives.

Within the same category of factors, we can introduce in the debate also the fragility in behavioral terms. More frequently, in practice, it is about the powerful personalizing of the projects, concretely, it is about the reality that in spite of the fact that in decision making participates more persons, the equations “a change = a person” stands powerful in public medium.²

We additionally mention the fact that due to this personalizing, when the respective individual is discouraged or leaves the working place, the initial change is destined to failure. However, in the last period, it was imposed the idea that for the success of certain changes it is necessary of the reunited energy of more individuals to use their personal margins of handle.

² The fact is also revealed by orders issued by the minister who promoted them.

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