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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ACTUAL SITUATION OF TRAINING PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR IN ALBANIA

***Sonela Stillo and Gentisa Furxhi**

Pedagogue in Faculty of Economy, Department of Management, University "Fan S.Noli", Korca

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ABSTRACT

Albania as a developing country, which is involved in integration processes, needs to improve immediately the productivity of civil servants and to intensify the reforms in public management. Reforms in public management can be seen and analyzed in many dimensions. Firstly, we can say that reform in public management is constituted by changes in organization's structures and processes to improve them. Secondly, reform in management involves continuously changes in systems which are used to hire, train and assess civil servants. Our researches are focused in public administration training. Our analyses are comparative, because it involves a study on private business and its results. In the meantime that we want to increase the efficiency of our public administration and to create an administrative elite, although the problems that we have with constant circulation of civil servants, we want an administration to serve in a quality way to the public. These are the reasons that we arise some questions: which is the extent of trainings in public administration? How often do these training happen? How much trainings are accomplished during these last five years? And the most important question is: what is the assessment that the participants give to the training programs? The aim of the study is not to show only the facts that we have found, but side to side of them to give our recommendations to improve the quality of training programs. We have used the same questionnaire both for public administration and private business to collect dates on public service reformation in Albania and to complete the analyses on public sector effectiveness. It is chosen a sample of 500 (five hundred) questionnaires, which were divided in a equal way, 250 questionnaires for public administration and 250 questionnaires for private business. Our research was extent in the main cities of Albania as Tirana, Korca, Durres, Fier, Elbasan, Shkodra. To accomplish our survey in private business, it was accomplished a multistage choice (selection). The first stage was the selection of the districts, where the survey would be done. The second stage was the delivery of the questionnaires in the chosen districts. The third stage was the selection of businesses in the chosen districts.

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INTRODUCTION

Right after the new employee is positioned in his work, begins the process of training. Training is the process of learning, which includes the acquisition of knowledge, abilities and skills necessary to perform the work. We can list a number of factors which make it imperative the training program, such as:

- The economic, technological and governmental changes can make skills learned today not available in the future;

- Changes in organizational planning can make necessary the updating of employee skills or learning new ones;
- Through training many performance problems can be reduced within an organization, such as low productivity;
- Regulatory issues, contractual, professional, or certification, an employer may require the provision of training for its employees.

Trends, which tend to increase foreign and domestic competition, have accelerated the need to modernize the operations of an organization. One specialist says: "Technology is changing; some jobs are being eliminated and new ones have begun to create which require higher level skills. This is true not only for jobs that involve computers and other equipment technically processed but also for those so-

**Corresponding author:* sonelastillo@yahoo.com

called ordinary job (unskilled). Normally, greater training responsibility goes on new employees"¹. Training is often delegated to older employees in department. We stress that the quality of training programs can have a significant influence on the productivity and attitude of young workers at work.

We can say that some of the criteria for successful training are:

- To be a tool and not an end in itself;
- Performance specifications should be made for each working process;
- Management should provide effective training;
- Development should occur at every level of organization;
- There must be collaboration between managers, employees and trainers;
- Managers and trainers need to understand the process of learning;
- Training should be integrated into work processes with a systematic approach to identify needs

Today, training and development are characterized as a multi-millionaire industry. Many organizations often maintain a pro-training attitude, but on the other hand they spend money unnecessarily by taking any kind of available training. With such a large financial investment, use of a systematic training method would be more efficient. The first step is to determine the training needs for the department, human resources staff and managers who are responsible for determining the training needs of the organization and run a need analysis. This stage of the process seeks to identify deficiencies or performance gaps between current performance and desired performance of individuals (and entire organization). Later, analysts need to determine whether training would improve or eliminate this deficiency.

The overall strategy of organizations is to assess their training needs. These needs should be disclosed within the context of overall goals and strategies of the organization. In addition, top management should support training efforts. Training should help the organization meet its objectives by identifying and providing knowledge and skills that are needed in meeting these objectives. Another aspect of the needs analysis is the assessment of tasks, which is addressed to the specific requirements of the position. It is extremely important to determine what needs the job and what qualifications are required to accomplish these tasks. The final part of the needs assessment is to evaluate the employee. This phase identifies gaps between the demand for skills that the job requires and actual skills the employee possesses. Training can help fill these gaps.

1. Evolution of the Public Administration Reform

Reform is generally thought as a careful movement from an undesirable situation (past) to a mostly desired one (future). In general, increased interest in public management reform in developing countries comes from 3 main areas.

- New public management, which seeks to turn back the role of the state by applying the principles of private sector management in state organizations. Enthusiastic spread of this model in developing countries was seen by many as an attempt to "colonize" the developed administration with a standardized European application led from the public administration reform. However, the language of the New Public Management, and the principles of customer focus, decentralization, separation of policy formulation from implementation and use of private partners sharing services continues to meet the current thinking about public administration reform.
- Structural adjustment reforms - in the mid-1980s, focused on reducing the overall cost of government, mainly through privatization of public enterprises and reduction of wages, in order to reduce government expenditure in stable levels and acquit resources for other beneficial uses to the general economy. However, most public sector reforms came through a considerable resistance (and not only because in many countries the public sector is the main source of formal employment) and their implementation has rarely been successful.
- The transition from the central planning to market economy and the monist system to the pluralist democracy - the fall of the Soviet Union made the governments of former socialist countries to transform their economies according to market principles often linked to political reforms. In the '90s, a large number of economies, especially in Central and Eastern Europe (also in Southeast Asian countries) were involved in the transition.² This established the reorientation of the public administration system.

Today we are convinced that "reform" is a term having deep roots in the politics of improvement. Today "reform" carries no sense of speed, observed in the American "transformation" or as an easier term, renovation but it appears that neither carries the dynamism, which European countries have qualified with the term "modernism". The reform has become a term more or less cautious, but clearly political. It does not refer to the total renewal, but to the re-shaping of the existing reforms. In addition, the ongoing reform is seen as a central feature of modern life according the psycho-socialsciences. The Department of Public Administration and the Civil Service Commission are two key institutions in the development of civil service reform in Albania. The Department of Public Administration is the central institution in charge of personnel policy development and execution / monitoring of public administrative reform. Attributes of the Department of Public Administration can be grouped into three major categories:

1. Attributes that belongs to the strategic developments;
2. Attributes that belong to human resource management in the institutions of central administration;
3. Attributes that belong to the field of the adjustment of salaries for public administration institutions. The Civil Service Commission is an independent institution charged with the responsibility of overseeing the management

¹ C.Pollit, G.Bouckaert 2000, "Public management reform –a comparative analysis" Oxford, University Press

² Nunberg, B. (1995) "Managing the Civil Service: Reform Lessons from Advanced Industrialised Countries", World Bank Discussion Washington, D.C.

of civil service in all institutions within the area of civil service. It is the administrative body for appeals in matters related to civil servants.

The Civil Service Commission, in accordance with Article 8 of the law has the following powers:

- a. Resolves all appeals against decisions regarding the admission to the civil service, the period of testing, promotion, parallel movement, evaluation, disciplinary measures and civil officials' rights.
- b. Supervises the management of the civil service in all institutions that are in the scope of this law. When it finds irregularities, Civil Service Commission warns the institution by giving it two months to fix the legality and the end of this period brings the matter to the Court.
- c. Performs any other competency provided by this law or normative acts issued under it and its implementation.

2. Training as an universal problem in the civil service

Lack of qualifications and insufficient experience of the staff, sometimes accepted in superior positions, is a universal problem in the civil service in developed countries, so training is the main feature of many programs in Public Administration Reform. Training programs include training of technical specialists on staff that need to improve management skills and other non-management section. Recent decades have seen the biggest attempts in terms of training, by including in such programs the encouragement of the public sector employees.

The training process requires

- ❖ Adjust the training program, according to specific needs;
- ❖ Selection of candidates for training;
- ❖ Maintaining continuous training of employees trained before.

If there is a large number of training types to be selected, in-service training remains the main choice. For many young people this may include training in local training colleges or second hand training, while for a middle-level staff and supervisors, specialized trainings have proven their usefulness. All trainings show some form of recovery and the presence of transparency in the selection of candidates is necessary³. However, it can be noted that there is a reduction of the cost of training in civil service and the reason is the self-improvement of employment conditions in this sector. As result of poor motivation techniques applied in the public sector there is a fear that trained civil servants pass into the private sector. A national policy on training is important in providing support to training programs⁴. Training is usually limited to employees of the central administration, but the tendency for decentralization and local officials including the national training program noticed an increase in its importance. Problems associated with the training system in Eastern European countries do not differ substantially to those encountered in Western countries. Thus, it is noticed: Lack of a clearly defined training policy at national level.

³ Stillo, S. (2008), "Menaxhimi i burimeve njerezore"

⁴L. Schuknecht and V. Tanzi, January 2006. "Public sector efficiency for new EU Member States and emerging markets"

- Lack of formulated objectives.
- Lack of coordination between ministries.
- The unequal distribution of resources and access to training.
- Insufficient needs assessment in relation to available resources.
- Lack of content and impact assessment of training seminars.
- Difficulties in motivating staff, etc.

However, in many countries there is a tradition in this area, probably inherited from the communist era or even earlier, where training is highly valued. However, training should be the first sector to benefit from the development of mechanisms, to formulate and develop a coordinated policy of human resources. Examination of professional public administration should be undertaken by all public sector officials at a certain moment of their career. This is a more practical examination than the one mentioned above and involves a number of management principles and some elements related to EU law. The purpose of this examination is to confirm the professional competence of public sector servants and prepare them to assume duties in the field of general administration. Those who fail, stay in lower positions, where financial benefits are not available. Recently there are held high-level seminars in cooperation with international organizations and foundations. Hungarian system is the most ambitious one in Central and Eastern Europe about the quality of training and level of examination. Some consider that the required professional level remains low and the examination focuses more on mastery of formal knowledge rather than know-how, professionalism. However, Hungary is the only country that has tried to bring its civil service built on global standards and setting foundations for training, which play an important role in career development⁵. In a study conducted on civil service reform in Albania, we concluded that there is conformity between employees education with the working place, especially in private businesses and the largest percentage of respondents were college graduated. From our testing we concluded that in the public administration and private businesses continued qualification training were conducted to some extent, namely 42% of respondents in public administration have this opinion and 45% of respondents in private business. By comparison of the two sectors, it results a slightly higher percentage in private business. And it is justifiable if we accept the spirit of change which businesses face every day. Figure 1 clearly shows this difference.

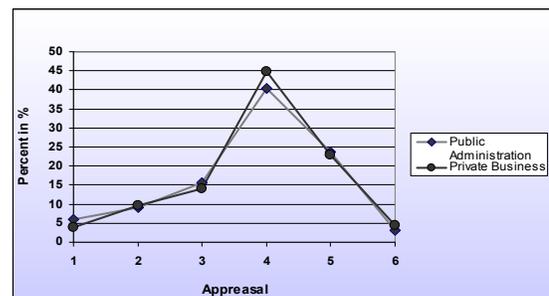


Fig. 1. The trainings' frequency in the public administrate and the private business

⁵ Kettl, D.F. (2000), "The Global Public Management Revolution": A Report on Transformation of Governance"

If we continue further with the analysis we can see that in public administration the respondents were trained 4.13 times during 5 last years, while in private business an average of 3.87 times. Trends are given respectively in figures 2 and 3.

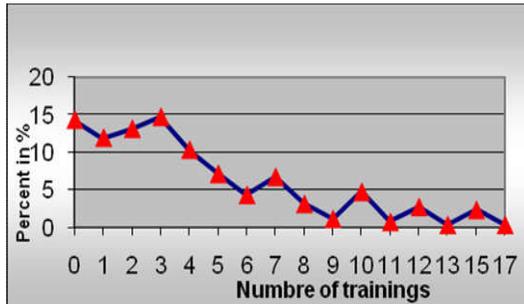


Fig.2. The trainings in the public administration during 5 last years

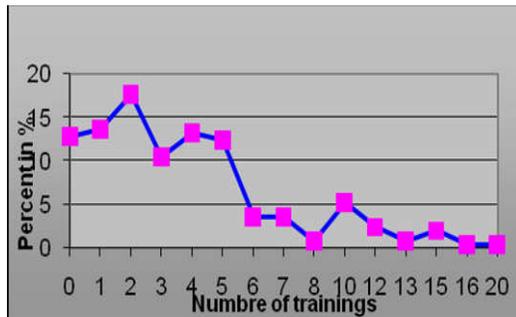


Fig.3. The trainings in the private business during 5 last years

So we see that training is most common in public administration and it shows the conditions of central and local bodies to increase professionalism and quality of services they offer. Regardless the above indicators, it is to be carefully observed what grade the trainees give to training efficiency. For the evaluating grade 1-10, in public administration training effectiveness was evaluated with an average of 7.04 and 7.16 in private business. We'd like a higher grade for the training, but still are far from understanding the proper importance training. In many cases training is seen as a reward for a good job, or as a reciprocal exchange of favors. We believe that a defect of the process is in many cases the absence of measuring the validity of training which to some extent overshadows its importance.

From our study we found that in both sectors, the largest percentage of respondents did not attend training outside the country and their town. Such a thing is typical of private business, in which entrepreneurs are not interested at least in these conditions, to spend on specialists and their managers' training, particularly in small and medium sized businesses. Only 9% of public administration is often trained abroad, while in private business 11.6%, a figure about 2% higher than in public administration. We emphasize that this figure should be reserved to draw conclusions that private businesses have paid more attention on overseas training. As we seek to increase our efficiency of public administration, creating an administrative elite, despite the problems of continuous circulations and when we insist on an administration that best serve the public, we see the study that in 28.8% of cases, training management of public administration are carried out to some extent, 24.4% think there are no such training, 15.2%

of them think that they are very rarely performed, 17.6% think they are performed rarely, 9.6% think they are performed frequently and only 2.8% think that they are performed more frequently. Conditioned by the current situation of training programs for us it is interesting how respondents rated the level of managers in public administration. To draw a correct conclusion we asked the opinion of private businesses. On the evaluation grade 1-10, the average grade for public administration was 6.40 (Figure 4) and 6 from private businesses (Figure 5), a figure above the average that shows the progress of reforms in public administration. While in public administration 23.2% of respondents have assessed the level of managers with the highest grade 8, while in private business the highest grade 5, which is the estimation of 20.8% of respondents.

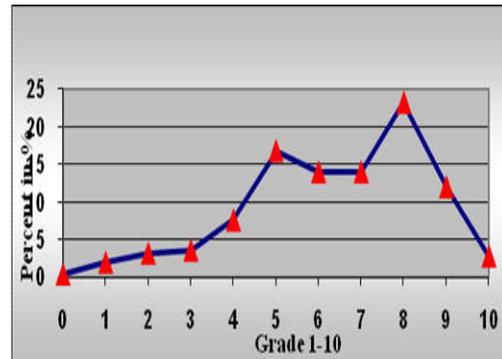


Fig. 4. The level of managers in public administration

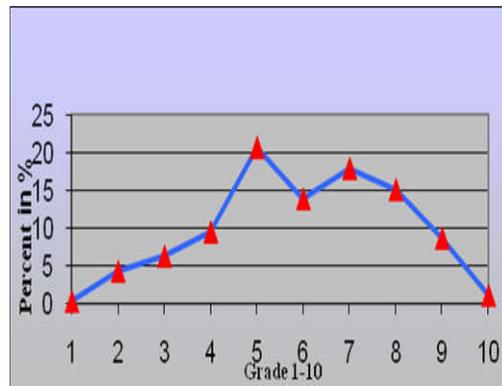


Fig. 5. The appraisal for the level of managers in public administration from the private business

If we add the problems of frequent turnover of managers in public administration and weaknesses in terms of design, implementation and evaluation of training programs, then we can conclude that the civil service reforms will be more effective if we are able to understand the importance of training and the complexity of economic and political factors.

Conclusions

- Directions that should lead the way towards the Public Administration Reform are:
 - Public administration reform is as important as successful.
 - Parts of the programs have achieved what targeted, but there are just some examples of developed

countries, where the main objectives of reform are achieved in a sustainable way. This should strengthen the determination of research to find other solutions.

- In this sector as well as in others, it is always good practice "Simply and briefly principle.
 - Copying "famous" models regardless of environmental changes, is very simple, but leads to failures.
 - Public Administration Reform is a slow process. Trying to speed reforms, long-term sustainability and national ownership are threatened.
2. Albanian civil service system influenced by Anglo-Saxon model tends to be also under the influence of New Public Management. This approach is noted in the civil service model, which tends to be centralized in the personnel management and control of the latter from the central unit but creating opportunities to the departments of human resources management to make their own micro-management of personnel issues.
 3. Despite the problems resulted above it should be praised the fact that the new intellectual capacities have ambitions to move forward in their professional preparation.
 - This phenomenon is attributed to the training programs undertaken by public administration. Specifically we concluded that in public administration the respondents were trained 4.13 times, while in private businesses an average of 3.87 times.
 - The figure shows the awareness of policy reform in terms of conservation and sustainable development of human resources, considered as elements of progressive development.
 - Regardless of what concluded above, we would like to have a higher grade on the effectiveness of training than 7.04 to 7.16 in public administration and private business, but we must accept that we are still far from understanding the proper importance of training. In many cases training is seen as a reward for a good job or as a reciprocal exchange of favors. We believe that a defect of the process is the absence in many cases of measuring the validity of training which to some extent overshadows its importance.
 - From our study we found that in both sectors, greater percentage of respondents have not completed training abroad and outside their town. Such a thing is typical of private business, in which entrepreneurs are not interested at least in these conditions, to spend money on training of specialists and their managers, particularly in small and medium sized businesses. Only 9% of public administration is often trained abroad, while in private business 11.6%, a figure about 2% higher than in public administration. We emphasize that this figure should be considered reservedly to draw the conclusion that private business has paid more attention to overseas training.
 - While we seek to increase our efficiency of public administration, creating an administrative elite, despite continuing problems of traffic and when we insist on an administration that best serve the public,

we see from the study that in 28.8% of cases management training for public administration is carried out to some extent, 24.4% think there are no such trainings, 15.2% of them think they are performed very rarely, 17.6% think they are performed rarely, 9.6% think they are performed frequently and only 2.8% think they are performed very frequently.

Recommendations

- The focus of policymakers in the specific field of action and setting clear, realistic and well defined objectives and during the drafting of reforming policies in the public administration.
- It is normal to accept that the Public Administration Reform takes time and support to develop a long term vision.
- Increase of human resource capacity through training.
- We believe that in addition to training which consist of: Training for public administration and legal issues, institutional management, special training for local government, training on the process of European integration, specific training for human resource management, let us try to find mechanisms for evaluating training programs.
- Preparation of an efficient and effective public administration requires on the other hand, a well studied plan and good training program according to specifications of the field which covers the public sector. This task, along with undertaking studies, such as that of public sector wages, cannot be achieved properly without collaboration with academic institutions where are present not only untapped intellectual potentials in this direction, but also areas of interest and mutual cooperation.
- We believe that training programs focusing on management change and leadership transformation as an essential element of reform should be supported.
- Politicians themselves must take the training not only on politics, but also in management aspect, in order to be prepared for managerial challenges that the potential position offers in the future.

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