

THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COMPARED TO PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND OTHER SCIENCES

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Abstract: In this paper we try to analyze the meaning of the public administration term. In our opinion it is necessary to be able to define exactly what public administration means but at the same time to clearly distinguish it from the other sciences. This is due to the fact that very often confusion is made between public administration and public management, public administration and bureaucracy or public administration and policy.

Throughout this paper we hope to clarify some of the aspects related to what exactly distinguishes public administration from the above mentioned sciences and what are its own particularities.

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The Concept of Public Administration

The public administration term has a latin origin and comes from the latin „administer” which means servant, or from another point of view, instrument. The verb „administro” means to lead, direct or lend a helping hand. The word „administer” almost synonymous with „minister” – which means: servant, care-taker, helper was formed from the root „minus”-„minor”, which means „less” and the prefix „ad”, which point direction, „sensul” and highlights the state of inferiority related to „magister”, translated as the one who orders, the superior, the boss – word that was formed from „magis”, which means more (Matei, 2006).

In the Romanian dictionary, administration refers to the activity of administrating, leading, directing, as well as to the total of administrative organs in a country or section of an institution encharged with administrating that institution.

The Ilustrative Oxford Dictionary defines administration as business management, public affairs management, governing.

In the Public Administration Dictionary (Fox & Meyer, 1996) is shown that administration involves performing activities by persons encharged with comun objectives.

Some authors believe that administration means public affairs management or the way in which a country functions in exerting government duties (Maheshwari, 2002).

Administration is the most obvious part of governance, it is the governance itself, it is the executive side, the operational one, the most visible part of governance, and it is of course, as old as the governanace itself (Pestrit, 2005).

Of all the numerous meanings that the term of administration can have, the accent is predominantly put on what public administration means, having as purpose to clarify the meaning the later has.

Most of the times there is a tendency to confuse the terms, although at a closer examination, the aspect that diferentiates administration and public administration is the purpose and the method of organizing activities.

Defining public administration is necessary, firstly in order to establish the general boundaries and to express the main concept of discipline and practices of public administration, secondly in order to help including this area in a large political, economical and social context, and third to be able to show that by considering the major definitions of public administration there are three major approaches for this field (Ioan, 2007).

Public administration, as many human efforts, is difficult to define, but people all have given a sense to it, although there are different opinions on how it could be achieved (Ioan, 2001).

A simple approach of public administration is that it refers to two distinct, but close activities: a professional practice and an academic area. On one hand, it refers to administering or management of the aspects related to society, politics and its subparts that are not private, familial, commercial or individualist, and on the other hand, it refers to the disciplined study of these aspects (Marini, 2000).

In spite of the apparent similarities, nowadays public administration is an entirely different organism from the public services in the past. It is wider than before and is still expanding. It is much more complex than in the past and it continues to grow each day. It has more responsibilities towards the citizens and it still needs to handle the increasing demand of the population. It needs more qualifications, but more than before, it needs to restrain activities and to reach the standards of equity, justice, social justice and most of all of assuming responsibility (Vigoda, 2002).

Public administration is the activity that consists in using managerial, political and judicial processes and theories, in order to achieve legislative, executive and judicial government mandates, to ensure the regulations and services for society in its ensemble, as well as for its segments (Ioan, 2007).

Public Administration and Politics

Public administration has frequently been understood through the political analysts point of view or the point of view of political researchers. Alternatively, it was considered to be a specific field of the management science. Meanwhile the origins of administrative processes are firmly identified with political science, political studies and managerial construction of public institutions, it would be inaccurate to show the nature of public administration strictly referred to these aspects (Vigoda, 2002).

Eran Vigoda (Vigoda, 2002) shows in „Public Administration An Interdisciplinary Critical Analysis”, the main approaches of various American authors, which refer to the connection between politics and public administration as follows:

-„the political approach of public administration made by Rosenbloom shows the value of representativity, of political responsibility and of the responsibility towards citizens through the officially elected persons”;

-Wallace states that in fact, public administration represents „a problem in political theory. It operates with the responsibility of administrative and bureaucratic agencies as opposed to the officially elected, and through them, towards the citizens”;

-Shafritz and Russell mention a few definitions of public administration, oriented towards politics: „it is what Government does, it is a phase in the politics cycle, it is a first tool in implementing public interest and achieves in a collective manner what cannot be achieved individually”.

Although seldom mistaken for politics in general, public administration is different. The delimitation is superficial as each definition of public administration contains both terms that refer to administration and terms that refer to government, to the political process in general (Cziprian-Kovacs, 2005). The boundary between the public, the private sector and the volunteer sectors has a crucial importance in the understanding the future course of public administration (Fenwick & McMillan, 2004). Delimitating politics from administration, reformers believed that scientific rationality would eliminate the political conflict (Rabin et al., 2007). However, there is a dichotomy between politics and administration (Rosenbloom & O'Leary, 1997). If this mechanism, composed of politics and public administration, could be compared, it would resemble a human body, with politics as the head and public administration as the body (Cziprian-Kovacs, 2005).

Public Administration and Bureaucracy

Very often, the terms „administration” and „public administration” are mistaken for bureaucracy. In the eyes of the public, the governmental administration is „bureaucratic”; the private administration is „expeditive”; governmental administration is „political”; private administration is „apolitical”; governmental administration is characterized by „formality”; the private one is not (Simon et al., 2000).

In Max Weber's vision, bureaucracy is a social and political phenomenon, whose characteristics were defined as the following: (Weber, 1997):

- a strict definition of upper- and subordination, meaning the authority relationships;
- a high work division according to the specialisation of the human factor;
- a complex system of rules, converted for each post and person, part of the system, as related to rights and obligations;
- impersonal interpersonal relationships, which exclude subjectivism in interhuman intra- or extraorganizational relationships;
- selection and promotion of personnel by strictly professional criteria;
- a series of procedures for the work done.

Administration, as related to bureaucracy is a subspecies, meaning that it is higher than bureaucracy. The definition of administration is wider than the one of bureaucracy. In other words: all bureaucracies are administrations, but not all administrations are bureaucracies. (Cziprian-Kovacs, 2005).

Public Administration and Public Management

Another interesting debate is the referring to the connection between public administration and public management. As long as the sector was small, public management was defined as administration, the exercise of public authority in accordance with a fixed system of rules. The accent was placed on the administrative action, the formal decision-making process and the implementation according to the established procedures (Matei, 2001). At the same time with the increase of public sector dimension, with service functions more important than administrative functions, the relevance of public administration has started to be deformed. As opposed to public administration, often mistaken for bureaucracy, public management (Păunescu, 2008), is not limited to following the procedures (although it includes them), but it also involves focusing on results, on establishing strategies (short and long term ones) and attention to the environment, depending on the external evaluation of services, especially by the citizen. The idea that public management is based upon is related to the concern for the quality of public services that are offered to the citizens and for their satisfaction. The failure of implementing governmental

programs was due to the focus on the results of public programs, instead of focusing on the behaviour of government agencies and their employees (Sindane, 2004). Public management wishes to be reformed by the New Public Management and by the New Government. The paradigm of change The New Public Management, or the theory of the most recent paradigm of changing the way in which the public sector must be governed (Lane, 2002), involves a reformation of the public sector based on the model of the private sector, meanwhile the New Public Management (Păunescu, 2008) has as a basis the idea of a partenerial collaboration between the private, the public and the volunteer sector and of producing value for the citizen. There are no successful economies without successful administrative states (Ellison, 2007), some authors believe.

As a result of all the above mentioned, public administration, having the role to actively participate in achieving the general interest, expressed by law, represents the activity through which law is organised, executed and its execution is guaranteed up to the material facts (Negoiță, 1993).

CONCLUSION

The public administration is one of the often mentioned fields of study, in the specialized literature. Its complexity is due to the fact that government actions have implications for all inhabitants of a state and also to the many changes in this area over the time, some of them due to a historical context of each country.

In our opinion, public administration is the activity exercised upon by the government, for the welfare of its state citizens, an activity which inspires itself from the procedures of management and public management, trying to limit, at the same time, the influence of politics and bureaucracy in its field of action.

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