

The Civil Servants Career Development

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***Abstract.** The current economic and financial context, influenced by the crisis, as well as the need of meeting the European Union standards, make the permanent restructuring of the workforce, combined with career staff development an extremely important line of action. Career consists of succession of positions in a hierarchy, resulting from a series of experiences, correlated with each other, through which any person pass along life. Career or professional development is a process more complex than training, aimed at acquiring useful knowledge, both in relation to the current and future positions, along the life span and development of a person. In the Romanian labour market conditions, organizations need to find the most appropriate way to identify, attract and maintain, with maximum efficiency, performant human resources with exceptional skills and/or professional experience. The choice of specialization has become a component of education. A well-determined vocational guidance system may allow for that choice of specialization which directly answers to the market requirements.*

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1. Professional career

The speed of economic changes leads to a dynamic of professions and implicitly of the professionals' careers, the trend of which is currently hard to predict and define.

The relevant literature indicates several definitions of the concept addressed.

Career is an evolutionary succession of positions, roles, tasks and professional experiences which a person or an employee has been confronted with in an organization over a period of professional activity (Arnold et al., 1998).

Douglas T. Hall and Philip H. Mirvis (1995) are of the opinion that a career is seen more as a sequence of several shorter learning cycles, or mini-stages that extend throughout the lifetime as an employee of a person rather than a systematic long accumulation of experience.

The concept of career is associated with the idea of advancement of a person in a particular field or in an organization.

The career is also often synonymous to the profession or occupation and represents the period in which a person activates in a particular field, i.e. the position in society, or a phase in social or professional hierarchy (Manolescu et al., 2007).

Gary Johns, in his book "Organizational Behaviour" (1995), presents the career as "an evolutionary sequence of activities and professional positions that a person reaches, and attitudes, knowledge and skills developed over time".

Other authors see the career as a sequence of positions in ascending order

of prestige, based upon a pre-established algorithm, through which passes the employee. Other specialists (Barley S.) defined career as a succession of roles in the work of an individual or as a separate series of experiences, correlated with each other, by which any person pass along life.

A similar definition is given by David J. Cherrington (1991), which sees the career as a sequence of individual experiences related to work which are acquired by a person along its professional life.

The career can be defined as an individual and subjective perception of the sequence of attitudes and behaviours, associated with work experiences and activities over the professional life of a person (Hall, 2003). The option for a particular career can not be equalled with the choice of a profession or job. Career management refers to the attempts to influence the nature of own career or the career of another person.

Career management represents the design and implementation of goals, strategies and plans process that allows the organization to meet the needs of human resources and individuals to meet their personal career goals (Klatt et al., 1985).

Armstrong M. (2006) believes that career management is planning and modelling professional development of a person in accordance with the organization needs and with the individual performance, potential and preferences. Nowadays, we are witnessing a trend of active involvement of a person in managing its own professional careers.

Radical changes in the labour market have major implications on professional careers management.

Careers are more diverse and more difficult to administer, which determines giving increased importance to different professional and life experiences of a person, materialized in the development of its own quality and competence.

2. Characteristics of professional career

Career planning is a process identifying the needs, aspirations and the career opportunities within an organization and the implementation of human resources development programs, to support the respective career (Myers, 1986).

A career can be long or short, and an employee can have multiple careers, consecutive or simultaneous.

Individual career includes both professional and family life, and the links between them. Wishing to control the two components of existential activity, any person develops a concept through which it evaluates its own qualities and values.

This process is dynamic and takes place throughout life.

Individual career develops through the interaction between existing skills, the desire for professional achievement and work experiences provided by the organization.

An individual will develop himself and be happy with his career as the company will be able to provide opportunities to promote different levels and positions,

which highlight his knowledge and develop his skills.

In carrying on his activities, a person crosses along his career a number of successive stages among which: exploration; stabilization; advancement; preservation; end of career.

Exploration is the confrontation between the often unrealistic visions formed in adolescence and the real world. An individual learns about and chooses among the roles explored.

Meanwhile, the person discovers and develops his talents, skills, interests and values. It is an important moment in the formation of professional identity and choice of activity for the future.

Stabilizing or fixing on a career is to acquire an adequate degree of knowledge, expertise in a given field.

Considering that he has demonstrated his competence, the employee passes the relationship of dependency to self activity, being continually tested on his aptitudes, knowledge, skills, to find if they match or not the initial choice.

Advancing and preserving the profession, opted for, follow the stabilization in different occupational roles and involve the focusing on realistic, key objectives of the career.

This stage may include several directions, namely: development and advancement, preservation, decline. Often, it requires an assessment of achievements and, where appropriate, to decide the change of goals, and even the style of work.

Completion or end of career could mean a period of continued increases in

status and influence in the organization, or a period at the highest level of responsibility and status.

There are specialists (Perlmutter, Hall, 1992, Levinson, 1978, Super, Super, 1999) who believe that after 65 years there is a maturity of age, when the individual feels satisfied with the life he has, with his choices and actions.

It is the moment of detachment, characterized by decreasing involvement in work, the tendency of becoming an observer rather than a direct participant in the activities of the organization.

3. Stages of developing a successful career

A successful career is conditional on the involvement of the organization leadership through the human resources department, which has a decisive role in career planning, career management, and counselling.

From this perspective, the company must implement a program of organizational insertion to ensure presentation of the rules and working procedures, and the right familiarisation with values and behaviours needed for a rapid and efficient integration.

However, it is desirable that the initiation of new employees be made by a mentor or a guide from within the organization.

Thus, a person who is responsible, who knows “how things are going on” in the institution, will share the wisdom gained and will help the newcomer to integrate, to cope with potential problems.

In any organization, managers face a number of issues concerning career development. In the current labour market, the increasing importance of the career development, both for the employee and the employer, is becoming more and more evident.

On the one hand, the career development shall provide the employee with the opportunity to accede to the statute that it wants in the context of the requirements determined by various changes, and which confirm the recognition of its merits, as well as the belonging to a specific team of professionals, along with the desired salary.

On the other hand, career development for the employer is an important factor to motivate its employees with potential, which enables it to capitalize effectively and ethically on their value and thus to maintain them in the company.

Given the benefits that the employee can get through his career development, it is understandable that it is necessary to value every opportunity, identify and remove obstacles which could jeopardize the achievement of assumed objectives.

Starting from these premises, career development is a process that involves going through several stages:

- *setting goals* which have to be realistic;

- *developing skills* necessary to achieve goals through sustained involvement in work or related activities, through participation in training programs and a greater preoccupation towards personal efficiency growth;

- *periodic evaluation of progress achieved*, allowing identification of possible delays from the original plan and of any impediment and those subjective or objective factors which have led to delays;

- *removing subjective factors* that prevent achievement of the objectives laid down, lack of consistency in pursuing the goals proposed, passivity, superficiality, etc.;

- *adjustment of the set targets*, if certain objective factors or unpredictable elements require it - the employee discover he has new talents, his organization goes through a reorganization process, changes in legislation governing the area where the employee performs activity etc.

Getting through these stages is designed to effectively exploit opportunities for career development.

At the same time, it is however, necessary to pay attention to the obstacles which could have a strong negative impact on career development:

- *Occurrence of unforeseen changes* in economic environment, family, etc. To counteract their effect, the employee must show flexibility, adaptability and openness to new.

However, such an attitude must not be exacerbated or turned into opportunism. In this context, the employee is recommended to avoid systematic change in very short periods of time.

- *The danger of excessive focus to the future*. Concentrating on obtaining the desired results, the employee may focuses all its attention to achieve them and thus, often, miss satisfactions that present can

offer and reaches a state of discontent, of frustration.

The ideal situation is fully enjoying the current success, while also focussing on the future development.

- *Neglect giving due attention to family duties*. For example, some jobs may require an employee to go on extended work program, to travel and/or work during weekends, inter-organizational and geographical mobility, which could have negative effects on family life.

Some people may be more interested in combining efficiency in work with personal life, rather than in rising on the professional hierarchy.

Therefore, linking aspects of the career to the family aspects permits to avoid conflict situations which generate tension.

Besides all the above issues, career development also involves valuing the idea that “there is always something to learn” – continuous training and upgrading skills and knowledge to generate new ideas and thus keep with change.

Harmonious combination of these elements, together with much passion and dedication, offer the employee all the chances to build a successful career, and ensure an upward evolution.

4. Civil servants career

Government Decision no. 611/2008 stipulates the possibility of civil servants to develop their professional skills within a genuine career.

A career in the public function includes all legal situations, and the effects deriving

there from, that occur, under the law, from the beginning of the activity of a civil servant to the cessation of these respective relationship.

Among the principles underlying the organization of civil servant career, we can mention (GD no. 611/2008):

- *jurisdiction* requires that individuals wishing to enter or promote to a public function, hold and confirm the know-how and skills necessary for the exercise of the respective public function;

- *competition* the confirmation of the knowledge and skills necessary for the exercise of public functions is done through competition or examination;

- *equal opportunities* the career in the civil service can be pursued by any person that meets the conditions established by law;

- *professionalism* effective performance in exercising public power prerogatives;

- *motivation* the authorities and the public institutions are required to identify and apply, in the respect of law, instruments of moral and material motivation of civil servants, and to support initiatives for professional development of the individual;

- *transparency* authorities and public institutions are required to provide all interested parties, information of public interest related to career in public function.

In accordance with this government decision, the career management in the public service is provided through:

- The National Agency of Civil Servants, by developing the legal framework and the required instruments for the organization and career development in civil service;

- Authorities and public institutions, by applying the principle of equal opportunities and motivation;

- Civil servant itself, through a consistent application of the principles of competence and professionalism in order to secure individual improvement.

A particularly important step in the civil servants career consist in the individual and the working teams' assessment on both the results obtained and the possibilities to work better in the public interest.

Evaluation and appreciation of a civil servant is an important potential source for career development that may affect the person's motivation to work and professional satisfaction for the results obtained.

In this respect, it is necessary to use correctly and precisely set out criteria for the respective function.

In order to maintain high professional civil servants, it is necessary that they enjoy stability in the career, but in respect of legal responsibility for breach of service obligations.

In general, the career of a civil servant consists in two periods: until the age of 45, there is a continuous process of professional achievements, providing business efficiency and growth in labour productivity. Follows the second part of the career where one can see there is stagnation; efficiency in performance is due to the accumulated experience.

The civil servants are required to learn continuously to meet new developments and legislation in the field they operate.

Professional competence must be therefore maintained and continuously upgraded in order to fulfil efficiently and in good conditions their attributions. Promoting quality management comes in support of the civil servant by improving the individual and collective activity, with direct impact on the quality of services provided and, increasing citizens' satisfaction.

In this way, one contributes to achieving the public institutions goals and especially to improve relations with citizens to solve favourable the personal or public problems for which they call support.

Achieving this goal begins with professional preparation and periodic training of civil servants.

In this context, it is necessary that they know in detail the activities to be carried on, the working procedures, the behaviour requirements towards the citizens, the methods of investigation and analysis, the techniques of communication, the access to databases and the legal framework for the solution of citizens' requirements.

5. The need for an institutional reform

An important role in the development of civil servants career has the institutional reform, which should aim to change current mentalities, and the existing complex processes and structures.

It is therefore necessary to proceed to the training and the development of a stable and professional civil servants staff, to help streamline the system and to improve

relations between administration and citizens.

We believe that the system of values on which the institutional reform should be based requires the following:

- professionalism and performance that any civil servant should prove;
- transparency of the administrative act and of the activities of the administrative structures;
- ethics of civil servants enshrined in a code of ethics;
- dignity on professional and extraprofessional behaviour, i.e. the civil servants should abstain from actions and behaviours that affect the prestige of the public function, as well as the public institution in which they activate;
- team spirit, which is absolutely necessary in order to increase the functionality of public institutions.

However, the motivation of civil servants should not be addressed globally, but as a process with a strong individual character, because it is complex and has a number of particular features.

In addition to high wages or other material benefits, the motivation also involves safety of person and job security, possibility of expressing own views and formulate proposals, access to more information relevant to work, a honourable social status, based on esteem and consideration, etc.

Appropriate answers to personal interests of civil servants in line with the objectives of the institution can only be achieved by promoting a realistic and dignified conduct as regards the use of existing staff.

On the one hand, most of the managers are of the opinion that it is more efficient and safer, to seek to capitalize on existing staff – as they are – than to appeal to people from outside, recommended or recruited through competition, but which could create problems in the future.

On the other hand, for the institutional reform it is necessary to reduce the civil servants expenditure, which will require an assessment of their work so as to maintain only specialized employees, highly skilled, able to provide quality services to citizens in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Actions to reduce the number of civil servants have been until now sporadic, slow and fragmented, even in cases of employees that proved to be insufficient in training to meet the requirements of the job.

In addition, we noted that until relatively recently there were no clear rules on civil service and the public management has been empirical.

The reduction of personnel expenditure in institutions, the need that the private sector enter into partnership with a modern and flexible public administration, as well as the expansion of the introduction of modern computing techniques in order to respond efficiently to the citizens applications represent major requirements of the institutional reform in Romania.

To accomplish these goals, it is necessary to adopt and implement a government strategy on public administration reform to define and ensure professionalizing civil servants, improving recruitment and selection system, and developing mechanisms that result in

increased mobility and specialization in the performed function.

The concept of public function identifies with the public authority and includes the persons invested with public power prerogatives.

At the same time, the concept evokes the status of any person exercising a public function prerogatives, regardless of the type of institution or the level at which it occurs.

In this context, one should mention that there is a distinction between civil servants and contractual employee. Thus, the *civil servant* has public authority and its legal regime is governed by the public law rules, while the *contractual employee* is an exponent of some activities corresponding to its profile and its specialty, subject to the rules of labour law.

At the level of the central public administration, it is necessary to maintain a flexible, restructured body, which have the capacity to intervene effectively in its own program.

Bureaucracy need also to be reduced so as the increase performance and delegation of authority to ensure greater efficiency in the administrative mechanisms.

Within the limits of resources allocated and the strategy adopted, the civil servants should have the freedom to choose the tactics and procedures on the condition of periodic assessment of the relationship “resources – strategic objectives – results”.

Romania’s integration into European Union requires reforming the public administration, as well as economic, social and cultural institutions, developing local

autonomy, in line with the principles of the European Charter of Local Autonomy.

Decentralization should be a primary dimension of institutional reform, aiming at increasing awareness and involvement of local communities in managing local and regional issues. This means the gradual transfer of competence and authority from the state to local communities.

Ministries would thus become more flexible, with a small number of staff, but highly qualified and able to develop

policies, strategies and monitor national programs.

It is also necessary to pursue the decentralizing of both decision and administrative action, from the central level to territorial service.

To achieve these goals, it appears necessary to maintain and promote honest and responsible professional civil servants, since they are in direct contact with citizens and on how they perform their duties depends largely the institution image.

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