

INTEGRATED HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITIES - THE SOLUTION FOR PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT IN ROMANIAN PUBLIC SECTOR INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The paper discusses the relationship between human resources management activities and civil servants' workplace performance and presents the results of an extensive empirical research regarding human resource management activities in Romanian public institutions. The empirical research is based on two questionnaires, each of them addressed to a certain category of respondents. The first one was filled in by 34 HR specialists and the second one by 178 civil servants – the beneficiaries of HR policies. The data collected was analysed using quantitative methods available in SPSS such as descriptive analysis, univariate and bivariate data analysis, cluster analysis and One-way ANOVA. Civil servants' profiles are designed based on their satisfaction with the quality of the performance appraisal activity. There was determined a lower motivation level among employees in central public administration compared to those in local government.

The paper is addressed both to academics and practitioners in the field of human resources and provides evidence-based solutions for performance improvement in Romanian public sector institutions that can be of interest for specialists from other Central and Eastern Europe countries as well. Unlike previous studies that have analysed the influence of singular HR practices on employees' performance, the present paper approaches HR activities in an integrated manner and emphasises the positive effects generated within by the effective coordination of elements related to recruitment, skills development and career development, performance appraisal, reward and motivation.

Keywords: civil service; human resources management; motivation; performance management; public institutions

1. INTRODUCTION

Public institutions need to reconsider their human resources policies in order to successfully face the arising challenges, especially in developing countries such as Romania, characterised by unpredictable political, economic and social dynamic (Chitescu and Lixandru, 2016). An important step towards increased public sector performance is to acknowledge the strategic role of HRM and the need to integrate it with the organizational strategy (Armstrong, 2006; Berman et al. , 2013). By designing and implementing the appropriate HRM solutions and methods, public institutions will ensure civil servants' continuous development, encourage initiative and proactive attitude and create the premises to achieve organizational objectives (Compton, 2016).

The positive and cumulative relationship between HRM and performance, the fact that several and more efficient human resources activities are associated with competent and flexible employees, increased commitment, workplace satisfaction and motivation has been proved empirically (Boselie et al. , 2005; Millmore et al. , 2007), including in the particular case of the public sector (Vermeeren et al. , 2008).

In this paper, we analyse the quality of the main human resources activities and their influence upon civil servants' performance and motivation in Romanian public institutions, a developing country where stakeholders' request for increased performance has become more and more stringent. The aim of our endeavour is to make available to public manager alternative ways of dealing with the difficulties of establishing medium and long-term strategies, high personnel turnover, frequent reorganizations or personnel cuts specific to the Romanian space, as well as to the administrative systems from other developing countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

2. STATE OF ART

2.1. *The relationship between human resources activities and employees' performance*

The relationship between human resources management and performance has been the focus of specialists' intensive research in the area for the last decades (Saridakis et al. , 2016), but in spite of all efforts it continues to be a complex and unclear link (Powell et al. , 2014). It was often referred to as the 'black box' due to the lack of clear understanding and empirical evidence explaining how the utilization of HRM practices leads to organizational performance, as well as to the theoretical and methodological challenges raised by its study (Latorre et al. , 2016; Muduli, 2015; Albrecht et al. , 2015).

The essence of HRM consists in managing the HR function as a whole made of aligned and compatible practices (Price, 2004; Lepak and Gowan, 2010) where each activity plays an important part. Selecting the right persons to occupy vacant positions, equitable performance assessment and reward, motivation and permanent personal and professional development orient institutions towards individual and organizational performance (Pinnington and Edwards, 2000).

Recruitment and selection are especially important as the better prepared the attracted candidates are, the more likely it is to bring high performing individuals into the organization (Hays and Sowa, 2010). In addition, when performed without observing certain rigours, recruitment impacts negatively upon the other HR activities (Llorens, 2011).

Career development is also a complex process in which participate both the civil servant, who should set clear professional objectives and accurately assess their development potential, and the organization that should offer adequate development conditions, adapted to their needs and expectations (Androniceanu, 2012; Song, 2016).

Efficient performance appraisal helps management communicate their aims and objectives to employees and stimulates them to improve individual performance (Rolle and Klingner, 2012). Weak performance appraisal represents a continuous challenge for the organization (Merritt, 2007; Gardner, 2008), and the price paid is low employees' work satisfaction, low level of commitment towards the organization and the wish to leave the institution (Brown et al. , 2010). Employees' involvement in performance appraisal ensures a fair assessment, increased employees' acceptance and satisfaction with the activity, especially in public institutions where its results impact upon individual's career, self-esteem and psychological equilibrium (Roberts, 2003).

Motivation is another determinant of employees' productivity and of the quality of the work done (Aires and Ferreira, 2016). Re'em (2011) distinguishes between the intrinsic factors that influence employees' motivation (such as commitment, responsibility, autonomy, interesting and important work, contribution, fairness) and the extrinsic ones (such as reward, recognition, feedback, interpersonal relationships, career development and promotion, work environment). The literature is divided between the specialists who consider that employees' motivation in the public sector is mainly influenced by extrinsic motivational factors (Miller, 2005; Prendergast, 2007), and those who consider that the intrinsic factors are the most determinant ones (Vandenabeele, 2007; Langbein, 2010; Perry et al. , 2010; Piatak, 2016).

The study of Ludviga et al. (2016) has shown a strong relationship between job satisfaction and career growth possibilities, work environment, attitude of a direct manager, reward system as well as social security, while the results of the study performed by Aires and Ferreira (2016) have indicated that civil servants' satisfaction and motivation are mostly influenced by factors related to reward, recognition, professional development and the service performed.

The mixed research results determine us to conclude that human resources polices should be approached contextually. Performance improvement of the personnel activating in a specific context cannot be attained by simply applying an universal formula or a general model (Brewster, 2004; Marchington and Wilkinson, 2008) that has not emerged from their needs and has not been adapted to the internal and external factors that shape their environment (Common, 2011).

In what follows, we discuss recent changes performed in the area of HR in public institutions from CEE countries, and particularly from Romania, and analyse how specific activities are put into practice.

2.2. Human resources management in public institutions in CEE countries

HRM in the CEE countries has registered different paths of evolution since the 1990s, even if they are commonly perceived as a uniform group due to their common socialist heritage and subsequent transition to the free market economy (Kazlauskaitė et al. , 2013). Employment relations and HRM in these countries have undergone massive changes, not only in the private sector where the HR function gained more legitimacy and moved

towards a more strategic and value adding orientation (Dickman et al. , 2016), but also in the public sector which underwent consistent reforms in order to comply the EU accession criteria (Nemec, 2014; Staroňová, 2017).

Even if the recent developments facilitated a relative robustness of HRM in the CEE countries when hit by the financial crisis of the early twenty-first century (Dickman et al. , 2016), specialists are more sceptical when the discussion narrows down to public institutions. Paul et al. (2014) consider that the lack of the capacity to develop and make the institutional environment more flexible is a weak point for these countries. High quality governance institutions implies performing human resource and, unfortunately, the civil service systems in CEE states remain in compatible with the principles of professionalism and neutrality (Staroňová, 2017).

The analysis performed by Meyer-Sahling (2009) regarding civil service in the CEE countries that accessed to the EU in 2004 shows that only the Baltic States have continued reforms in this area in a constructive manner. Hungary and Slovenia have maintained a medium fit with the European principles of administration, while Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland have been reversing the previous reforms and departing further from compliance with these principles, mainly because of the lack of a comprehensive reform programme in the area (Staroňová, 2017).

However, the CEE countries have taken measures aimed to help them handle more easily current challenges and directed their efforts towards implementing mechanisms of strategic HRM. In states such as Poland or Slovenia, HR planning has been formalised and performed coherently and systematically in all public institutions (EUPAN, 2013). Numerous CEE countries have implemented changes in the area of HR recruitment and selection since 2008 and introduced laws regulating this activity to ensure transparency, fairness and equitable access to civil servant positions (Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Latvia)(EUPAN, 2014).

In the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Poland, performance assessment results and qualifications are the determining factors in employees' promotion on higher positions. Professional experience is considered in Hungary, Slovenia and in the Czech Republic but only for secretarial and technical staff (OECD, 2012).

Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland have made some changes in the motivation systems as a consequence of crisis, but also in order to prevent drain to private section, to improve career and salary system, work efficiency, to postpone retirement, to set balance between family life and work, to widen the room of self-management (EUPAN, 2014). The rewards used in the CEE countries are not limited to monetary ones, but also include non-monetary practices that can enhance morale and productivity. For example, Slovenia uses different non-monetary rewards for managers, such as: recognition for good management, additional training, special medical examination. In Estonia, the main non-monetary measures consist in better development and training programme for top managers with more individual approach(EUPAN, 2014).

In what performance management is concerned, Slovenia implements the typical model which consists in periodic discussions regarding performance and formal appraisal based on certain criteria. In Poland, performance management covers three areas: individual development and training needs, payment according to performance and personnel decisions (EUPAN, 2013). Performance appraisal results are highly connected to career promotion in Slovenia, to contract renewal in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Poland, to establishing bonuses and salary rights in the Czech Republic and Slovenia. In Hungary, assessment is of medium importance to career advancement, contract renewal or remuneration (OECD, 2012).

2.3. *Human resources activities in Romanian public institutions*

HRM in Romanian public institutions has represented priority reform areas in the context of the EU accession and again when the 2014-2020 budgetary period was initiated. However, as with other CEE countries, after joining the EU, the rhythm of the reform has slowed down (Gheorghe and Common, 2011), mainly because of the financial crisis and the political events which followed the accession, but also because European Union organisms ceased to monitor the evolutions registered by our country (Androniceanu and Ciobanu, 2012).

Matei (2013) considers that the measures taken to modernize the Romanian civil service did not produce the expected results because they were not properly adapted to the HR issues faced by public institutions and, in addition, had to be implemented by the weak HR departments.

Even if each public institution develops an annual Manpower plan, it is only a reference tool for how employment will be made based on the maximum number of positions approved for the institution and the foreseen number of retirees and promotions. The plan is not based on the necessary competences and does not include planning for recruitment, skills development or training. Thus, there is no correlation between the institution's needs to exercise duties and the necessary personnel (EUPAN, 2013).

Recruitment and selection in Romanian public institutions is highly problematic due to the "insufficient attention to assuring that the necessary skills and competences are linked to the institutions' mandate and functions" (World Bank, 2011:19). A recent analysis performed by the National Agency of Civil Servants (NACS, 2016) has concluded that the processes of filling in public positions candidates' competences are not tested, and that the ability to memorize and their knowledge of applicable regulations are rather verified.

The research conducted by Androniceanu (2012) in central public institutions of the Romanian Government reveals that difficulties are faced in planning and managing civil servants' career. The professionals involved in this activity lack the necessary competences to assess personnel training needs, to use performance appraisal results or to establish the requirements and criteria for personnel promotion on different positions.

Through the legislative changes adopted shortly after the EU accession in the area of performance appraisal, the Romanian authorities intended to introduce performance management principles in the civil service. Even so, the annual performance appraisal activity is rather generic, not so much job- and task oriented, does not reflect employees' job performance and is seen more as an administrative burden rather than a tool to assess output and improve civil servants' performance (World Bank, 2011).

A study conducted by NACS, in 2013, showed that training and development are important motivator factors for civil servant (EUPAN, 2014). The appropriate use of non-monetary rewards can be an important motivator, even in the absence of monetary resources, and can be used to retrench civil servants' low motivation level (EUPAN, 2014). However, unless the precariousness of human resources policies in Romanian public institutions is removed (Cristescu et al. , 2013), civil servants will continue to lack the motivation to get involved in achieving organizational goals.

The Romanian public administration continues to face serious difficulties in developing a coherent HRM approach due to the lack of transparency in recruitment, demotivating performance appraisal, career development or compensation system (Matei, 2013; NACS, 2016). The studies performed by specialists in the area or by experts of international organisms have shown that this situation is triggered by the lack of sound HRM policies and tools. Given that those analyses are mainly based on the expertise and knowledge of the involved specialists, we have considered it is necessary to perform an evidence-based analysis of the current situation of HRM in Romanian public institutions and grant civil servants the opportunity to express their opinion on the quality of the human resources activities.

3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON HRM IN ROMANIAN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The objectives of the empirical research are to gain thorough knowledge on how HRM activities are planned, organized and performed in Romanian public institutions, to identify strengths and weaknesses and to provide evidence-based recommendations that will serve as reference for improvement in the area. The research focuses on the quality of essential HRM activities following the accession of our country to the European Union: recruitment and selection, career development, performance appraisal and motivation.

Based on our literature review we formulated the following research hypotheses:

H1. Civil servants recruitment and selection in Romanian public administration are still characterized by inflexibility and traditionalism and focus mainly on satisfying current staff needs.

H2. Civil servants' career development system is weakly connected to performance appraisal as it largely relies on seniority and less on professional results, development or merit recognition.

H3. Civil servants' perception of the quality of performance appraisal is influenced by the hierarchical level of the position they occupy within the institution, the graduated studies, seniority within the civil service and the administrative level of their employer.

H4. Intrinsic motivators exert greater influence upon Romanian civil servants performance than extrinsic motivational factors.

The data was collected in the period February-May 2015 using two questionnaires, each of them addressed to a certain category of respondents. The questionnaires were disseminated both in hard copies and in electronic format (via Google docs platform) within central, territorial and local public institutions in Romania. 48 official letters were sent to local institutions – city halls of all Romanian county capital cities, with the request to return one questionnaire filled in by a civil servant from the HR department and five questionnaires filled in by civil servants working in other departments. A 50% rate of response was registered for the questionnaire addressed to the civil servants specialised in HR and a 54% rate of response for the questionnaire filled in by the other civil servants. Electronic requirements were sent to civil servants working in seven ministries and three territorial institutions and only after they had previously accepted to fill them in. We opted for this alternative because civil servants are generally reluctant to participate in surveys. In this case, the rate of response cannot be calculated.

The control variables are public institution administrative level and number of employees, civil service position, highest academic qualification and civil service seniority.

3.1. Research sample

The research sample is made of two categories of personnel. A dedicated questionnaire was designed in order to collect the necessary information from each of them. The number of persons that filled in each questionnaire is as follows:

- the first sample - 34 HR specialists from Romanian public institutions;
- the second sample - 178 civil servants from other departments of the public institution, namely the beneficiaries of HR policies.

We opted for the first sample given the major role HR departments play in a sound and efficient HRM, in adopting flexible strategies, accessing opportunities and avoiding threats. This sample was formed using theoretical sampling. The respondents were chosen rationally ensuring the representativeness of the sample for the reference population based on an essential characteristic (Andrei, 2001), namely that they perform HRM tasks in their institutions. The opinions expressed by the 34 civil servants specialised in HR were considered representative for the population of civil servants working in HR departments of Romanian public institutions formed of 2516 persons (D. R. G. no. 650/2016).

TABLE 1 - PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS INCLUDED IN THE EACH RESEARCH SAMPLE

Variable	Feature	The first sample		The second sample	
		No. of respondents	% within variable	No. of respondents	% within variable
Public institution administrative level	Central public administration	9	26.5%	39	21.9%
	Territorial public administration	1	2.9%	10	5.6%
	Local public administration	24	70.6%	129	72.5%
	Total	34	100%	178	100%
Civil service position	Management position	14	41.2%	25	14%
	Executive position	17	50%	129	72.5%
	Special attribution position	3	8.8%	23	12.9%
	No answer	0	0	1	0.6%
	Total	34	100%	178	100%
Highest academic qualification	High school degree	0	0	14	7.9%
	Bachelor degree	5	14.7%	53	29.8%
	Master degree	24	70.6%	86	48.3%
	Advanced studies diploma	4	11.8%	22	12.4%
	PhD diploma	1	2.9%	2	1.1%
	No answer	0	0	1	0.6%
	Total	34	100%	178	100%
Civil service seniority	Less than 3 years	2	5.9%	28	15.7%
	Between 3 and 5 years	2	5.9%	14	7.9%
	Between 5 and 10 years	8	23.5%	47	26.4%
	Between 10 and 15 years	13	38.2%	44	24.7%
	More than 15 years	8	23.5%	44	24.7%
	No answer	1	2.9%	1	0.6%
Total	34	100%	178	100%	
Public institution dimension	Less than 50 employees	1	2.9%	7	3.9%
	Between 51 and 100 employees	0	0	8	4.5%
	Between 101 and 150 employees	3	8.8%	18	10.1%
	Between 151 and 300 employees	14	41.2%	92	51.7%
	More than 301 employees	16	47.1%	53	39.8%
	Total	34	100%	178	100%

Source: data processed by the authors.

The civil servants included in the second sample work in various areas: economic development, budget and finances, investments, public policy, European funds, IT&C, communication, legal, public procurement, public relations, statistics etc. This sample was built using the quota sampling method, which ensures the representation of relevant categories of the researched population based on its main characteristics (Andrei, 2001). In our case, the sampling quotas were established taking into consideration the hierarchical level of the position occupied by the respondent (management, executive, special attribution position) and the administrative level (central, local or territorial public institution). Considering the data provided by the NACS (2015), the representativeness of the research sample for the surveyed population was reached by reference to the level of the occupied position, and was not reached in terms of the administrative level, given civil servants' reluctance from central and territorial institutions to answer our questionnaire. The disproportionate distribution of the respondents in the second sample compared to their actual distribution is one of the limitations of our research.

Detailed information on the distribution of the respondents included in each research sample is presented in Table 1.

Respondents' distribution by administrative level is relatively similar in both samples. The percentage of management civil servants is higher in the first one given that it is formed of experienced professionals capable to express relevant opinions.

3.2. *Research methodology*

The two questionnaires included mainly closed questions. The data collected were processed in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and analysed using quantitative methods, such as descriptive analysis, univariate and bivariate data analysis, Chi-squared indicators (χ^2), Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability, cluster analysis, One-way ANOVA method, the Post hoc test, the non-parametric Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

3.3. *Research results analysis*

Civil servants recruitment and selection

The 34 civil servants specialised in HR were asked to assess to what extent certain aspects are taken into consideration in recruitment and selection planning in public institutions, using a 1 to 5 evaluation scale (1=not at all, 5=very much). The average of the responses received shows that *the areas lacking specialized personnel* (3.74) and *the results obtained in different domains* (3.56) are the main aspects taken into account in that process. Some attention is also paid to *the professional competences the institution will need in the future to ensure qualitative public services*– the average of the responses received is 3.22. *Changes in the labour market* are taken into consideration only to a small extent in personnel recruitment and selection planning, aspect proved by the fact that the average of the responses received for this statement is 2.29.

67.6% of the civil servants specialised in HR consider that public institutions face real challenges in recruiting and maintaining highly specialised staff. In their opinion, the main causes generating that situation are the rigid and toilsome recruitment procedures, the selection based on candidates' seniority and education, and not on the evaluation of their competences, the budgetary restrictions, and the lack of financial incentives.

Regarding the methods used in personnel recruitment and selection, the HR specialists consider that too much importance is granted to candidates' ability to memorize methodologies or legal provisions at the expense of analysing, synthesizing, interpreting ideas or supporting their own points of view. The average of the answers received is 3.94 (on the 1 to 5 scale evaluation where 1=not at all and 5=very much).

These findings are in line with the opinions expressed by other specialists or international organizations regarding civil servants planning, recruitment and selection (EUPAN, 2013) and confirm the first hypothesis of our research. HR planning in Romanian public institutions focuses mainly on current institutional needs. There is not an instrument in place to ensure the strategic planning of the workforce based on the trends on the labour market, the professional competences the institution needs or the changes in external social and economic

environment. The methods used to recruit and select civil servants in Romania are inflexible. Candidates' ability to memorize is tested and seniority is verified, rather than their competences and fitness to the position they apply for.

Civil servants career development

The 178 civil servants included in the second sample were asked to express their agreement with five statements regarding career development in the Romanian civil service, using a 1 to 5 evaluation scale (1=little agreement, 5=strong agreement). The statements assessed and the answers received are presented in Table 2.

The mean of the answers received show that promotion on higher positions is influenced to some extent by performance appraisal results (3.06), and it is grounded rather on seniority (3.49) than on the principles of merit recognition and performance reward (2.65). Corroborating this finding with the opinion expressed by the civil servants specialised in HR that seniority represents a main criteria in personnel recruitment and selection also, we can conclude that the career system in the Romanian civil service is seniority based.

TABLE 2 - RESPONDENTS' OPINION REGARDING CIVIL SERVICE CAREER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Statements assessed by the survey participants	Descriptive Statistics					Bivariate Pearson's r correlation				
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation		administrative level	civil service position	academic qualification	civil service seniority
Performance appraisal results influence promotion on higher positions	174	1	5	3.06	1.234	Pearson's coefficient	.325**	-.203**	-.308**	.126
						Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.007	.000	.097
						N	174	174	174	174
Promotion on higher positions mainly relies on civil service seniority and less on professional results	170	1	5	3.49	1.028	Pearson's coefficient	-.076	.010	-.040	.100
						Sig. (2-tailed)	.323	.898	.606	.193
						N	170	170	170	170
Promotion on higher positions is grounded on principles such as merit recognition and performance reward	172	1	5	2.65	1.162	Pearson's coefficient	.235**	-.111	-.232**	-.064
						Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.147	.002	.402
						N	172	172	172	172
Professional development is achieved through horizontal and vertical mobility within the institution	174	1	5	2.83	1.173	Pearson's coefficient	.349**	-.186*	-.279**	-.020
						Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.014	.000	.789
						N	174	174	174	174
Professional development is achieved through continuous training and tasks diversification	174	1	5	3.17	1.148	Pearson's coefficient	.388**	-.233**	-.190*	-.013
						Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002	.012	.867
						N	174	174	174	174
Valid N (listwise)	165									

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: data processed by the authors.

The values of the Pearson correlation coefficient indicate a direct and statistically significant relationship (Cohen *et al.* , 2000) between the independent variable *administrative level of the public institution* and respondents' opinion regarding current career development system, for 4 out of 5 analysed statements (see Table 2). Thus, we have further analysed the distribution of the respondents depending on the administrative level for the statements for which Pearson's coefficient rendered the highest correlation values.

The results have shown that civil servants working in central government institutions consider that their opportunities to professionally develop through internal vertical and horizontal mobility are very limited (66. 7%), while only 32% of the civil servants working in local government share the same opinion. 38. 4% of the respondents in local government agree and strongly agree that their employer provides the necessary means to develop their career through horizontal and vertical mobility, while only 7. 7% of the civil servants working in central public administration share this opinion. The remaining respondents, 25. 6% of those working in central government and 29. 6% of those from the local level, partially agree that they dispose of the adequate means to professionally develop through internal horizontal and vertical mobility.

In addition, more than half of the civil servants working in central government (58. 9%) consider that professional development opportunities through continuous training and tasks diversification are limited, while most of the respondents working in local public administration (49. 6%) agree and strongly agree that their employer ensures the necessary conditions to professionally develop through these means.

The results of our research reveal that not all civil servants are dissatisfied with the professional development opportunities offered by their employer. Unlike professionals working in central government institutions, civil servants from local level do not consider the promotion system to be a flawed one, as described by the experts of the World Bank (2011).

The career development system in the Romanian civil service is differently perceived by the persons working in central government and those working in local public administration. These findings validate the second research hypothesis only in what civil servants from central public administration are concerned as civil servants from local public institutions are mainly satisfied with the quality of the career development policies implemented by their employer. Civil servants' different perception on the career development system depending on the administrative level of their employer shows the need to tailor customised HR policies and practices in order to be able to successfully meet individual, as well as organizational needs.

Civil servants performance appraisal

Performance appraisal has been analysed based on the views expressed by the 178 civil servants included in our second sample. The 3rd research hypothesis has been tested using hierarchical cluster analysis. Respondents have been divided into three groups, depending on their satisfaction level with how their

professional performance is assessed. The satisfaction level has been established using respondents' answers to 5 questions regarding performance appraisal. These questions were subjected to the Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability which rendered the value . 813. In addition, the Inter-Item Correlation Matrix showed that there are no correlations higher than . 90 among the questions, which would indicate their overlapping and the need to eliminate them from the analysis.

By dividing the respondents into clusters, 3 groups resulted: the 1st group comprising 63 respondents satisfied with the quality of the performance appraisal activity (38. 7%); the 2nd group comprising 45 respondents more or less satisfied with the quality of performance appraisal (27. 6%); the 3rd group comprising 55 respondents dissatisfied with the quality of performance appraisal (33. 7%). The difference between the percentage of respondents included in the 1st and 3rd groups is not significant (5%). Thus, we continued our analysis by examining respondents' distribution based on the control variables. Detailed information on the distribution of the three groups of respondents depending on the research control variables are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3 - THE PROFILE OF THE 3 GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS

Variable	Feature	Group no. 1 (%)*	Group no. 2 (%)*	Group no. 3 (%)*	% of total valid answers
Public institution administrative level	Central public administration	18. 4	23. 7	57. 9	23. 3
	Territorial public administration	0	55. 6	44. 4	5. 5
	Local public administration	48. 3	26. 7	25	71. 2
	Total	38. 7%	27. 6%	33. 7%	100%
Civil service position	Management position	48	20	32	15. 3
	Executive position	41. 4	28. 4	30. 2	71. 2
	Special attribution position	13. 6	31. 8	54. 5	13. 5
	Total	38. 7%	27. 6%	33. 7%	100%
Highest academic qualification	High school degree	36. 4	63. 6	0	6. 7
	Bachelor degree	56. 5	19. 6	23. 9	28. 2
	Master degree	31. 3	26. 5	42. 2	50. 9
	Advanced studies diploma	33. 3	33. 3	33. 3	10
	PhD diploma	0	0	100	1. 2
Total	38. 7%	27. 6%	33. 7%	97%	
Civil service seniority	Less than 3 years	26. 9	23. 1	50	16
	Between 3 and 5 years	46. 2	30. 8	23. 1	8
	Between 5 and 10 years	35. 6	24. 4	40	27. 6
	Between 10 and 15 years	42. 5	27. 5	30	24. 5
	More than 15 years	44. 7	31. 6	23. 7	23. 3
	Total	38. 7%	27. 6%	33. 7%	99. 4%

* The percentages presented in columns "Group no. 1 (%)", "Group no. 2 (%) and "Group no. 3 (%)" represent percentage of total valid answers received, that is 163 of total 178 respondents. Source: Data processed by the authors.

The Chi-Square tests indicate statistically significant correlations (Cohen *et al.* , 2000) between the groups formed using cluster analysis and the following control variables: public institution administrative level (p-value=. 000), civil service position (p-value=. 029), highest academic qualification (p-value=. 048). Based these findings and the respondents' profile presented in Table 3 above, we emphasize the following aspects:

- the percentage of civil servants working at local level satisfied with the quality of performance appraisal (48. 3%) is significantly higher than the percentage of those dissatisfied (25%); for central public administration, the reverse is true: the percentage of civil servants dissatisfied with performance appraisal quality (57. 9%) is significantly higher than the percentage of those satisfied (18. 4%);
- the majority of the management (48%) and executive civil servants (41. 4%) are satisfied with the quality of the performance appraisal process; it is worth noting that a significant percentage of those who occupy a special attribution civil service position (54. 5%) are dissatisfied with how this activity is implemented;
- regarding the highest academic qualification, most Bachelor studies graduates (56. 5%) are satisfied with how this activity is implemented, while most Master studies graduates (42. 2%) are included in the group of those dissatisfied with the quality of performance assessment.

The descriptive analysis of the 3 groups formed using cluster analysis is presented in Table 4. There are also displayed the statements regarding the performance appraisal activity evaluated by the respondents using a 1 to 5 scale (1=very little agreement, 5=strong agreement).

TABLE 4 - PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN THE OPINION OF THE 3 GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS

Descriptive Statistics						
Ward Method		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Group 1	It is an opportunity to receive feedback from their manager	63	2	5	4. 24	. 756
	It is an opportunity to discuss with the manager and establish the objectives for the following period	63	3	5	4. 48	. 535
	It has a significant impact upon professional activity	63	3	5	4. 27	. 545
	It is an equitable and transparent activity	63	3	5	4. 35	. 544
	It influences remuneration level	63	1	5	3. 14	1. 522
	Valid N (listwise)	63				
Group 2	It is an opportunity to receive feedback from their manager	45	1	5	3. 16	. 852
	It is an opportunity to discuss with the manager and establish the objectives for the following period	45	1	5	2. 89	. 982
	It has a significant impact upon professional activity	45	1	5	2. 91	. 821
	It is an equitable and transparent activity	45	1	5	3. 09	. 949
	It influences remuneration level	45	3	5	3. 58	. 690
	Valid N (listwise)	45				
Group 3	It is an opportunity to receive feedback from their manager	55	1	5	2. 95	1. 096
	It is an opportunity to discuss with the manager and establish the objectives for the following period	55	1	4	2. 67	1. 072
	It has a significant impact upon professional activity	55	1	5	2. 42	. 854
	It is an equitable and transparent activity	55	1	4	2. 11	. 786
	It influences remuneration level	55	1	2	1. 27	. 449
	Valid N (listwise)	55				

Source: data processed by the authors.

Our research results show that civil servants perceive the quality of the performance appraisal in a different manner, some being more and others less satisfied with how that activity is performed. That finding is not completely in line with the opinions expressed in the literature that performance appraisal is an administrative and inefficient activity (World Bank, 2011).

Based on the above, we conclude that the civil servants satisfied with the quality of performance appraisal work in local government, occupy a management or execution position, have a Bachelor degree or have graduated advanced studies. Civil servants, who are not satisfied with the quality of the performance appraisal work in central government, occupy a special attribution position and have graduated Master or advanced studies. These findings show that the 3rd hypothesis of our research is confirmed with respect to three out of the four analysed criteria, that is civil servants perception regarding the quality of performance appraisal is influenced by the hierarchical level of the position they occupy within the institution, the graduated studies, the administrative level of their employer, and not by seniority within the civil service.

It determines us to underlie the necessity to tailor human resources policies according to the particularities of each institution and to the needs, desires and expectations of its employees.

Civil servants motivation

The information regarding civil servants motivation has been collected from the 178 civil servants, beneficiaries of the HR policies. They were asked to evaluate to what extent 10 motivational factors influence their work performance and motivation using a Likert scale of nine levels (1=no influence, 9=very influential). The resulting hierarchy of the motivational factors is presented in Table 5 below.

TABLE 5 - FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WORK PERFORMANCE AND MOTIVATION

No.	Motivational factor	Nature of the factor		Number of respondents
		intrinsic	extrinsic	
1.	Superior's leadership style	✓		153
2.	Work environment and conditions		✓	150
3.	Level of work independence and responsibility	✓		146
4.	The content of the performed activity	✓		145
5.	Job security		✓	144
6.	Institutional impact on society	✓		135
7.	Training opportunities		✓	132
8.	Career development opportunities		✓	119
9.	Remuneration level		✓	114
10.	Results of the individual performance appraisal process	✓		90

Source: data processed by the authors.

The factors that exert the greatest influence are the intrinsic ones: superior's leadership style, tasks independence and responsibility, the content of the performed activity. At the end of the hierarchy, the aspects related to training opportunities, career development, remuneration or performance appraisal results are to be

found. Based on these findings we can state that the fourth hypothesis of our research is verified. These findings are in line with the opinions of the specialists who consider that the intrinsic motivators exert a more important influence upon civil servants than the extrinsic ones (Perry *et al.* , 2010; Piatak, 2016).

TABLE 6 - THE RESULTS OF ONE-WAY ANOVA

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The content of the performed activity	Between Groups	8.903	2	4.452	7.073	.001
	Within Groups	105.740	168	.629		
	Total	114.643	170			
Level of work independence and responsibility	Between Groups	14.849	2	7.424	10.280	.000
	Within Groups	121.338	168	.722		
	Total	136.187	170			
Work environment and conditions	Between Groups	2.860	2	1.430	2.098	.126
	Within Groups	116.565	171	.682		
	Total	119.425	173			
Institutional impact on society	Between Groups	4.004	2	2.002	2.304	.103
	Within Groups	145.107	167	.869		
	Total	149.112	169			
Superior' s leadership style	Between Groups	12.827	2	6.414	10.466	.000
	Within Groups	104.178	170	.613		
	Total	117.006	172			
Remuneration level	Between Groups	6.218	2	3.109	1.822	.165
	Within Groups	290.094	170	1.706		
	Total	296.312	172			
Training opportunities	Between Groups	19.413	2	9.707	9.930	.000
	Within Groups	164.213	168	.977		
	Total	183.626	170			
Career development opportunities	Between Groups	4.043	2	2.022	1.476	.232
	Within Groups	235.671	172	1.370		
	Total	239.714	174			
Job security	Between Groups	9.332	2	4.666	5.832	.004
	Within Groups	137.616	172	.800		
	Total	146.949	174			

Source: data processed by the authors.

Considering the differences previously identified in how civil servants perceive HR activities depending on the administrative level, we have further analysed if civil servants performance is influenced in a different way by the motivational factors and compared the three groups of subjects (from central, territorial and local government) using the inferential parametric method One-way ANOVA with a single factor intergroup. The normal distribution of the data within the studied population was verified using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on each of the 3 groups of subjects. The results showed that the data respects the criteria of normality within the studied population. The results of One-way ANOVA (Table 6) show that there are significant statistical differences between the analysed

groups in terms of the extent to which professional performance is influenced by the content of the performed activity, level of work independence and responsibility, superior's leadership style, training opportunities and job security.

The results of the Post hoc test for the groups for whom One-way ANOVA showed significant statistical differences indicate that the subjects in central government are less influenced by these 5 factors than those working in local government. The mean difference between how much each of the five factors influences the performance of civil servants working in central government and of those working in local government is displayed below:

- the content of the performed activity: mean difference = -. 535, p-value=. 001;
- level of work independence and responsibility: mean difference = -. 719, p-value=. 000;
- factor superior' s leadership style: mean difference = -. 408, p-value=. 015;
- training opportunities: mean difference = -. 810, p-value=. 000;
- job security: mean difference = -. 557, p-value=. 003.

These results reveal a lower motivation level among employees in central government compared to those in local government, which determined us to conclude that motivational policies are less efficiently used in central public institutions than in local ones. This situation shows the need to analyse the motivational policies, to revise and adapt them to employees' needs and requirements.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of all the reforming endeavours undertaken along the last decade, the results of our research have shown that the Romanian civil service continues to be affected by the lack of a strategic approach and of an action line for the medium and long term. Based on the research findings, in our opinion, the main recommendations for the improvement of HRM in Romanian public administration are:

- **To empower public institutions to design their own human resources policies according to organizational needs and employees' expectations.** This recommendation is based on the findings that HRM activities are perceived differently by civil servants working in central public administration from those working in local government. Putting this recommendation into practice implies:
 - to consolidate the position of the HR departments within the organization and strengthen their capacity to strategically plan human resources, to design recruitment and selection, career development and motivation policies, according to the institutional needs and employees' expectations;

- to reduce the intervention of the National Agency of Civil Servants in civil servants' recruitment, selection and promotion.
- **To redesign the career development system based on performance management principles.** This recommendation emerges from the finding that civil servants' career system in Romania is based on seniority. Even if, on the short term, this type of career system involves reduced time and financial costs due to its repetitiveness, on the long run it does not encourage performance and affects employees' motivation. Putting this recommendation into practice implies:
 - to design and implement a transparent performance appraisal mechanism;
 - to improve line managers' knowledge and abilities to communicate, to conduct a fair and equitable performance assessment, to manage and monitor employees' performance along the year, to identify potential and competences that need to be developed, to offer professional development guidance;
 - to consolidate the connection between performance and extrinsic rewards, though the introduction of performance related pay, by ensuring training, mobility and career development based on the proved potential.
- **To integrate human resources activities with one another by correlating the elements of recruitment, competences and career development, performance appraisal and reward.** This recommendation is based on the finding that HR activities are approached in a fragmented manner by public institutions. In addition, seniority represents a main criterion in recruitment and career development, rather than competence and professional results. The implementation of this recommendation implies:
 - to correlate the recruitment process with training and competence development;
 - to strengthen the connection between performance appraisal and competences development through the proper identification of the training needs;
 - to strengthen the connection between performance appraisal and career development through a fair and actual evaluation of employees' development potential and their professional results;
 - to strengthen the connection between performance appraisal and reward through performance related pay and recognition of professional merit.

Taken individually, the HR activities do not increase civil servants' performance in the same way they would if approached in a coordinated manner. We consider that, at individual level, the integrated implementation of the HRM activities ensures the necessary prospects for professional development within civil service system, by connecting the elements related to recruitment, skills development and career development, performance appraisal, reward and motivation. At organizational level, it ensures the horizontal and vertical alignment of HRM

within public institutions and increases its contribution to the achievement of improved individual and organizational performance.

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