

## Habilitation Thesis

# Managerial reform of public sector and Public Administration education in Romania and CEE

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## Abstract

The regime change which took place in Romania in 1989 had meant not just a major political transformation but also a new beginning for the public sector in its entirety. Even though at the beginning the need for change at the political level was the main focus of the reform process (the shift from a totalitarian to a democratic regime), it became obvious that the reform of the public sector is paramount, due to difficulties regarding the correlation of the democratic discourse with the quality of services provided by the state. The reform of the public sector is difficult and different from the political one due to the following reasons: the public usually does not get excited about it (many measures are rather technical) and will most likely do not protest in the streets in order to get it. What citizens complain about is rather the poor functioning of a certain public service; they get vocal when a catastrophe / accident happens which stresses structural deficiencies long ignored. Rarely public movements which ask for political changes also include requirements regarding the public sector reform (such as New Public Management) or changes regarding public policies. It is hard to imagine a group of people protesting on the streets and requesting the establishment of systems for performance evaluation or the implementation of new measures for strategic planning.

Also, the reform of the public sector implies a certain level of expertise which intimidates politicians, thus offering the bureaucracy the upper hand. The politicians are very careful not to touch upon sensitive areas which may generate negative consequences for

future elections (pensions, health care) even if their poor functioning is obvious and leads to mounting pressures regarding the functioning of the entire public sector.

The communist regime has profoundly influenced, perhaps more than we want to acknowledge, the administrative system from Romania. The paradigms promoted by the communist regime have defined the organizational culture, the way of organizing the public sector, the perception of the role of the state for a long enough period to make changes difficult. This is why a massive and profound change process is necessary in the public sector. The illusion of simple and easy to implement institutional reforms has been demolished by the evolution of public administration in Romania in the last 20 years.

The present document/thesis brings together several fundamental ideas and thoughts concerning the reform of two major fields in the context outlined above: the managerial reform of the public sector and the reform of public administration higher education in Romania after 1989. The two topics are intertwined given the influence academic programs in the field of public administration can have upon the reform process, given their ability to not only train specialists in public administration but to also support decision-makers with regard to establishing strategic reform objectives and drafting policies for certain areas. Both research topics have represented for the author over the last 15 years of academic career central points during his research and teaching.

The topic of managerial reform starts from the existence of a structural dilemma both in Romania and in other Central and Eastern European countries: the challenge of moving from a pre-bureaucratic system to a post-bureaucratic one over a short period of time and in the absence of serious expertise regarding the managerial reform of the public sector. From here stem more or less visible effects:

- Diverse and sometimes chaotic stages of the legal, structural and institutional reforms and an incipient form of the managerial reform;
- The importance of external pressures concerning the strategic objectives of the reform;
- Major deficiencies in defining reform due to lack of knowhow and lack of internalization of reform objectives established under external pressure;
- Lack of coherence at the level of reform strategies and policies;
- Structural dilemmas hard to deal with – politization, corruption, clear vision regarding the role of the state.

The topic of the development of public administration higher education is focused on the importance of the existence of a specialized group capable of providing knowhow in a

field which is lacking and is exposed to specific challenges which exist not only in Romania but also in the CEE countries:

- The lack of a distinct identity of this study field;
- The pressure to define it as a sub-field of more traditional disciplines (economy, law, political sciences);
- The development of its interdisciplinary character;
- The major importance of international cooperation for long-term success and the effects of internationalization;
- Strategic challenges regarding PA programs (students, market, research, community outreach, ITC);
- Strategic advantages of PA programs from CEEE and the effort to identify/build a substantial competitive advantage for them.

The last part of the material examines the career plans of the author which are focused on:

- a) Going more in depth with the research on managerial reform of public administration with a focus on the level of management and strategic planning of the public sector:  
and
- b) Strategic analysis of the development of PA higher education programs in Romania and CEE.

The scientific relevance of the thesis is given both by the topics chosen – important in the context of CEE countries, and the methodological and analytic content of the author's contributions in this field. Also the author offers an approach which integrates the academic perspective in the strategic analysis of the public sector from Romania.