

ТЕОРІЯ ТА ІСТОРІЯ ПУБЛІЧНОГО УПРАВЛІННЯ

UDC 005.332.1:352

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32840/1813-3401.2023.2.1>

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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Currently, the notion of "performance" is steadily infiltrating public management as well. More and more frequent are the attempts to attribute concrete qualities to the performances recorded by the management of the local public administration, in order to identify some possibilities for quantifying these performances. The article tries to specify what the performance itself entails and, subsequently, to identify the qualitative criteria that are relevant for the evaluation of these performances. In order to establish the criteria, it was taken into account both the legal prerogatives of the local public administration, which assume the assurance of increasing the quality of life in the local community, as well as the needs and expectations of the community, for the simple reason that the objectives of civil servants must necessarily be correlated with the needs of the community.

The present study presents a theoretical analysis but, above all, a pragmatic approach regarding the definition and evaluation of the concept of performance in local public administration. To prepare this material, I studied the specialized literature, the legislation in the field and outlined my opinion based on my experience in local public administration. The evaluation of performance in the activity of local public administration authorities must be analyzed theoretically but, considering the deeply applied nature of public administration, the analysis of performance in administration must be carried out, mainly, through the prism of results based on the achievement of objectives with efficiency and effectiveness. An aspect that I consider important is related to the fact that citizens, as the main beneficiaries of the entire activity of the local public administration, are less interested in administrative, bureaucratic mechanisms or the efforts made by the authorities to achieve an objective; citizens want the operative achievement of all assumed or conjuncturely imposed objectives, by carrying out a legal, high-quality administrative act, under conditions of decision-making transparency.

Performance evaluation in local public administration must be carried out at the level each local community through the lens of achieving a set of objectives defined both through the prism of the attributions of local public authorities established by law, but also through the prism the strategic and electoral-political objectives assumed by the democratically elected public authorities.

In order to increase the accuracy in the performance evaluation process in the activity of the local public administration, it is necessary to have correct, operative and direct communication with the local community and, as far as possible, whenever necessary, to adjust the activity current based on feedback taken from citizens.

Key words: performance, management, local public administration, criteria, evaluation.

Introduction. The trends to modernize the local public administration management imposed by the major changes in society, as well as by the new approaches to public management, require the public authorities to implement performance measurement procedures in order to ensure their continuous improvement. Numerous efforts have been and are still being made to

achieve performance in the public sector in order to improve the quality of services offered to citizens, ensure a healthy and safe living environment, as well as the sustainable development of administrative-territorial units. But most of these attempts were not successful. At the international level, the performance of a country's public services correlates with the level of trust of the population

towards the public administration, the dexterity of carrying out the activities of the economy and, obviously, the standard of living of the population. Connecting these things to the Republic of Moldova, there is an urgent need for action in the direction of increasing and multiplying the management skills of the local public administration in order to ensure economic prosperity, cohesion and social well-being.

The problem of performance transfer from the management of the local public administration on the development of the rural space is studied not only at the level of the Republic of Moldova, but also at the world level. At the same time, we found a deficiency at the level of measuring these performances, as well as at the level of their general perception, for the simple reason that the performance is identified with some special, clearly superior results of an action compared to the results of a similar action. Performance is an attribute that can be treated with subjectivity, it being perceived by different people in a different way, thus, for the inhabitants of the developed states in the EU area, the performance of the local public administration is perceived in one way, and for the inhabitants of the countries in transition – it is perceived in a completely different way, and here we refer to the minimum level at which we can state that the local public administration has or has not performed.

Improving the management of local public administration institutions is a process of particular complexity. The professionalization of the management team involves multiple changes, aiming at aspects related to the development of skills in the field, the acquisition of communication techniques, the implementation of innovations in the field of management in day-to-day activity and, of course, the promotion of civic spirit among civil servants. In other words, increasing the management performance of the local public administration is an intrinsic requirement of the development of the rural space and the local community, as well as a guarantor of the development of society as a whole under the conditions of European integration.

The managerial current constituted the seeds of the development of a new branch of public management, in particular, and of management science, in general, known today as "performance management" or "performance management", a branch that managed to gain significant importance in the academic environment, being still undeciphered to the end. The establishment of this new branch was particularly favored by the orien-

tation of management towards such values as efficiency, adaptability, probity or continuity – values that many scholars consider as derivatives of a single term – "performance".

Even the OECD Report of 1990 suggests that "efficiency in the public sector must be improved, public management in public institutions must be goal- and result-oriented, and public managers must be valued according to their ability to solve general and specific social problems" [2, page 41].

At the current stage, the notion of "performance", which has its origins in the private sector, is confidently making its way, also infiltrating public management. In order to identify the impact of the noun or adjective performance/performing on public management, we propose to clarify the conceptual area of the term "performance".

The etymological analysis of this concept denotes a wide semantic diversity, performance being easily attributable to both sports activities and economic and mechanical ones (result obtained by someone in a sports competition; special achievement in a field of activity; the best result obtained of a technical system, of an apparatus (explanations suggested by the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language).

As trite as it may sound, the term performance is used for the first time to express the exceptional results obtained in a horse race, giving it the qualification of competitiveness from the start. At first glance, the implications of this term in the economic sphere seem strange, but this qualification, or rather, the spirit of competition, favored the acceptance of the term performance in the economic field as well.

We must mention that one of the barriers to defining the term performance is the bivalent meaning of this word, so some researchers perceive performance as an action, expressed by a verb, others believe that the noun performance should be seen as an event or a result. Another barrier is the subjective nature of the performance imposed by the perceptions of the subject who approaches it.

If we are to analyze the performance of local public administrations, we can claim that the increase in the share of local taxes for the local public administration would constitute an element of budgetary performance, in order to increase the revenues collected, and for the community it would constitute a reason for dissatisfaction, in other words non-performance. The subjectivism of the concept of performance is also argued

by the definition given by Rob Paton, according to which "performance is that which the people involved in the process agree either implicitly or explicitly to accept as performance" [8, page 90]. This certainly distances us from the views that performance measurement systems are objective, reliable and sufficiently scientifically based. It is already evident that the notion of performance has kept pace with the evolution of the notion of management in general, assigning new and new qualities according to the orientations of the current administrative regimes.

It is also obvious that the given term continues its evolution at the current stage, being impossible to formulate a notion of performance that is unanimously accepted. However, in order to outline a general picture of what performance represents, we propose to confront the definitions given to this term by several scholars. For example, Angela and Corneliu Popovici start from the notion given by Chemla-Lafay and Deleplace according to which performance is "the ability to achieve the set objectives, expressed in terms of socioeconomic efficiency, service quality or management efficiency" [9, page 28] and conclude by stating that "performance can be defined as obtaining results, compared to one or more objectives that signify the level of prior expectations" [9, page 29]. These definitions continue the idea advanced by Alan Burland who qualifies performance by the "level of achievement of objectives".

Also in this direction are the definitions given by Devine who claims that performance means "the degree of success in achieving the stated objectives", as well as Noye who states that performance consists in "achieving the goals that were given to you in convergence with the company's guidelines" [3, page 23]. Definitions oriented towards the achievement of objectives refer to unquantifiable terms, a fact that includes the defined term, i.e. "performance" in the list of subjective terms. To balance the balance between quantifiable and non-quantifiable, the notion of performance is approached by many authors from the point of view of efficiency and effectiveness, also involving elements of competitiveness. The Romanian scholar Gheorghe Băileșteanu, in his work "Economic Semiotics", defines performance as "a state of competitiveness (of an economic agent, a manager, etc.) achieved through a level of effectiveness and efficiency that ensures a sustainable presence over time" [1, page 427].

We consider this definition incomplete because

it does not make clear and concrete reference to the reporting limits of this level of competitiveness, that is, it does not identify the desirable level. Performance approaches based on efficiency and effectiveness were also analyzed by the researcher Alina Caradja [4, page 24–25], who, starting from the definitions given by Verboncu and Zalman, according to which performance represents "a special result obtained in the field management, economic, commercial, etc. that imprints characteristics of competitiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of the organization and its processual and structural components", as well as by Niculescu and Lavalette who consider that performance is "a state of competitiveness of the enterprise, achieved through a level of effectiveness and efficiency that ensures a sustainable presence on the market", concludes that the performance is "an exceptional result obtained in an activity, superior compared to the average data, able to ensure the competitiveness and, implicitly, the sustainability of an organization".

The author wants to mention this definition precisely because it contains elements of comparison of performance with other recorded results ("average data"), reporting being, in the author's opinion, one of the basic characteristics of the concept of performance. At the current stage, the performance achieved in the economic field is defined according to the value brought to the company or the economic agent, the value being identified with the general perception of the quality/price attributed to a good or service. And if the activity of an economic agent is oriented towards obtaining profit, which is later distributed to shareholders through the payment of dividends, it is normal for the value to be measured by such indicators as profit per share or profitability. The question arises in the performance situation obtained by the local public administration.

What does value mean for local public administration? Here we aim to identify the value according to the purpose of local public administration, which consists in promoting the general interests of the people/members of an administrative-territorial unit. And the interests of the people, in our opinion, boil down to ensuring a decent standard of living, ensuring decent living and working conditions, ensuring the right to health and education and, obviously, ensuring a healthy living environment. Analyzing all these views on the meaning of the term performance, the author identifies some indispensable attributes, among which are found:

- the term "performance" must be seen as the result of an action, but not as the action itself;
- performance must be oriented towards achieving a goal or objectives;
- performance effects must be comparable and sustainable;
- the value of the performance must depend on the proposed goals and objectives, as well as on the perception of this value by the final beneficiaries of this result.

Making use of the aforementioned attributes, identified as a result of the analysis of the definitions given by several researchers in the field, the author dares to define performance as "the special result of an action, compared to other results of many similar actions, characterized by the achievement of the goals set in conditions of maximum efficiency and effectiveness, with lasting effects and orientation towards the creation of identifiable value and recognized as significant by the final beneficiaries of the result of this action".

In search of those criteria that would have an "identifiable value" and "significant" for the beneficiaries of the services provided by the local public administration, we will refer to the statement of the researcher Florin Cazacu, according to which "the performance in the local public administration is obviously related to the activity local public administration authorities from a territorial administrative unit in order to increase the quality of life in the local community" [5, page 22]. We would like to add in this vein that the transposition of sustainable development principles into local policy documents is the prerogative of local public authorities, because, according to the Law, the attribution of "approving socioeconomic development programs" rests with the local council.

Given the attributions of the local public administration related to the provision of communal services (sewage, sanitation, aqueduct, etc.) and social (education, youth and sports, culture, supporting the socially disadvantaged, etc.), we consider the quality of these services as a basic indicator for evaluating the performance of local public administration management, or their quality speaks for itself about the level of development of a locality, greatly influencing the quality of life in a rural locality. And if we are still talking about the local public administration's prerogative to approve local development strategies and programs, then we would like to mention that the quality of these plans has a direct impact on the development level of the locality. The estab-

lished objectives must be correlated with the needs of the community and with the individual objectives of the civil servants.

But, in this chapter, we must note that a good part of the town halls of rural localities do not have strategic development plans, limiting their activity only to the elaboration of operational plans, or today's strategic approach can ensure our future tomorrow. A special contribution can be made to the development of rural localities, including by attracting economic means from European funds, funds that can be accessed thanks to the association agreements to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. We believe that the amount of funds attracted is a performance indicator of local public administration management with a significant value, which is also measurable and comparable if we relate it to the number of inhabitants.

In the current conditions, in which citizens' trust in local elected officials is fragile, the focus should be slightly shifted towards ensuring the provision of quality services under conditions of increased decision-making transparency. The citizen wants and must be involved in community activities, he wants and must be regularly informed about the activity carried out by the local public administration. In this sense, placing information of common interest on the official pages of the town hall, organizing thematic meetings with people from different age groups in order to identify their grievances and needs, permanent questioning of residents in order to accumulate feed-back regarding the quality of services or other community development activities and, why not, the participation of community members in evaluating the performance of the management of the local public administration in their capacity as the main beneficiaries of all the activities started by the local public administration are welcome.

And since all good and beautiful things are done with people and through people, the significant contribution of human resources to enhancing the management performance of local public administration is evident. For these reasons, another relevant criterion for evaluating the performance of local public administration management is the quality of the human factor active in the field. At the current stage, only in this category there are clear regulations for establishing the performance of civil servants with the delimitation of performance criteria, referred to in the Framework Regulation on how to establish the increase for the performance of the staff in

the budget units, approved by the Government Decision on the implementation application of the provisions of the Law on the unitary salary system in the budgetary sector [7].

As a result of the above, we dare to identify the following qualitative criteria, relevant in the opinion of the author, which would serve as a basis for evaluating the performance of local public administration management:

1. Quality of strategic planning.
2. The capacity and quality of the services provided:
 - communal services (sewerage, gasification, aqueduct, sanitation, public transport, street lighting, road maintenance and management of green spaces);
 - social services (education, youth and sports, culture, health, social services, enhancement of historical monuments, parks, reserves, contribution to greening the locality);
 - administrative services (quality, efficiency and price for the issuance of various authorizations, certificates and the manner in which emergency situations are managed by local public administration).
3. Financial capacity:
 - the quality of the management of public funds;
 - ability to generate income and attract funds.
4. The permeability of community involvement and the transparency of the decision-making process.
5. Quality of human resources.

Conclusions. A periodic evaluation of the management performance of the local public administration, or even a self-evaluation that refers only to the evaluation of the degree of achievement of the objectives, will constitute a significant step towards the improvement of the local public administration, and the involvement of the community, as an evaluator, will also determine the vulnerabilities of local public administration management.

For these reasons, we believe that the performance evaluation of local public administration management must be implemented at the level of each rural locality, based on legal and unanimously accepted principles, evaluation that must be centered on the level of achievement of strategic, operational and even electoral objectives, as well as on

the quality and ability to fulfill the duties of the local public administration established in a legal basis. Under these conditions, we can only state the sad reality by stating that "if the villages were destroyed by the state's irrational policy, the whole state has the moral and financial obligation to bring them back to life, even if the state is currently organized on other principles and led by other politicians" [6, page 108].

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Furculița T. T. Управління ефективністю місцевого державного адміністративного управління

Нині поняття «результативність» неухильно проникає і в державне управління. Усе частішими є спроби приписати конкретні якості показникам, зафіксованим керівництвом місцевої публічної адміністрації, щоб визначити деякі можливості для кількісної оцінки цих показників. У статті зроблено спробу визначити, що передбачає сама продуктивність, і, згодом, визначити якісні критерії, які мають значення для оцінки цих продуктивностей. Для встановлення критеріїв було враховано як правові прерогативи місцевої публічної

адміністрації, які передбачають забезпечення підвищення якості життя в місцевій громаді, так і потреби та очікування громади щодо просто тому, що цілі державних службовців обов'язково повинні бути співвіднесені з потребами громади.

Це дослідження представляє теоретичний аналіз, але, перш за все, прагматичний підхід щодо визначення та оцінки поняття результативності місцевого державного управління. Для підготовки цього матеріалу я вивчив спеціалізовану літературу, відповідне законодавство та виклав свою думку, виходячи з досвіду роботи в місцевому державному управлінні. Оцінку ефективності діяльності органів місцевого публічного адміністрування необхідно аналізувати теоретично, але, враховуючи глибоко прикладну природу публічної адміністрації, аналіз ефективності в управлінні має здійснюватися, головним чином, через призму результатів, що базуються на досягненні цілі з ефективністю та результативністю. Аспект, який я вважаю важливим, пов'язаний з тим, що громадяни, як головні бенефіціари всієї діяльності місцевої публічної адміністрації, менше зацікавлені в адміністративних, бюрократичних механізмах чи зусиллях влади для досягнення мети; громадяни хочуть оперативного досягнення всіх поставлених або кон'юнктурно нав'язаних цілей, шляхом виконання законного, якісного адміністративного акту, за умов прозорості прийняття рішень.

Оцінка діяльності в місцевому державному управлінні повинна проводитися на рівні кожна місцева громада через призму досягнення набору цілей, визначених обома крізь призму встановлених законом повноважень місцевих органів публічної влади, а й крізь призму стратегічні та виборчо-політичні цілі, поставлені демократично обраною державною владою.

Для підвищення точності процесу оцінювання діяльності ОДА необхідно мати коректний, оперативний та безпосередній зв'язок із місцевою громадою та, по можливості, у разі потреби коригувати діяльність поточний за відгуками громадян.

Ключові слова: результативність, управління, місцеве державне управління, критерії, оцінювання.