

# MANAGERIAL PRINCIPLES APPLICABLE IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - MEANING AND CONTENT

**Petronela ZAHARIA**

Ph.D. Student, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Doctoral School of Economics and Business Administration;

Assistant, "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Faculty of Economics and Public Administration  
[petronelaz@seap.usv.ro](mailto:petronelaz@seap.usv.ro)

## **Abstract:**

*The running of the management process in local public administration involves compliance with and enforcement of certain principles specific to the work at this level, which set directions according to which the representatives from the local administration take action. In this article we aim to analyze the meaning and content of the principles of legality, managerial autonomy, restructuring, continuous development as well as economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in order to highlight the need for their practice. Overall, as a result of the investigation conducted, we found that without the application of and compliance with these principles it is not possible to have smoothly run management activities in the local public administration.*

**Key words:** legality, autonomy, restructuring, continuous development, economy, efficiency, effectiveness

**JEL classification:** H83

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Smooth management of the management activities conducted at the local administrative structures level involves the application of several key principles. Having mentioned this, our purpose in this paper consists in the analysis of the significance and content of local public administration management principles in order to highlight their need for the sector.

Given the variety of opinions on management principles in public administration, we think that a brief inventory of them will be very useful in this paper.

According B. Connaughton and T. Randma, public administration activity is carried out in accordance with four principles that provide a certain convergence between all national administrations: reliability and predictability; openness and transparency; accountability; efficiency and effectiveness [5].

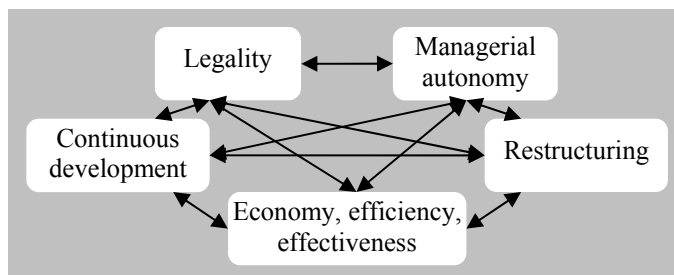
E. Vanags, I. Vanags and I. Vilka believe that public administration is based on the following principles [22, p. 7]: decentralization and deconcentration; separation of strategy formulation from service providing; reducing the gap between democracy and efficiency; increasing citizen participation; creation of entrepreneurial administrations; evaluation; reducing bureaucracy; diversity and possibility of choice; simplifying; improving the quality of public services; improvement of political and administrative culture; integrating various institutions, reforms and activities in the European context.

The opinions of our national experts should not be neglected either. According to I. Petrescu and E. Muscalu, the principles directing the making and implementation of administrative activity [18, p. 90] are: legality, unified leadership, managerial autonomy, flexibility, restructuring, continuous development, ensuring consistency of public management system parameters and the institution characteristics and external environment, participatory management and the principle of effectiveness and efficiency.

In the view of M. Baltador, the management principles applicable in local public administration are: decentralization, local autonomy, deconcentration of public services, relational autonomy, rule of objectives and the correlation of internal factors with the external ones [1, p. 280].

Referring to the specific principles of public management in the local administration, T. Pendiuc, A.-G. Simionescu, C. Petraru and L. Petria mention the following [17, p. 17]: local autonomy, unified management, decentralization of public services, flexibility, legality, restructuring, consulting citizens, continuous development and eligibility of local authorities.

Taking as reference this wide range of approaches, we reckon that a synthesis of the principles of management in local public administration and the interaction between them is as follows (see Figure 1):



**Figure 1. Management principles in local public administration**

Source: author's elaboration

According to the above figure, the principles of management in local public administration cannot be seen in an isolated manner, between them being close connections that require that their approach be done in a systemic way. Implementation and reporting to these management principles reveal their practical utility in guiding and conducting administrative activities from the local level.

In favor of a correct perception of the meaning and content of these management principles in the local public administration, we shall undertake an explanation of each and every one.

## 2. THE PRINCIPLE OF LEGALITY

The importance of this principle for the local public administration management and beyond is undeniable. The explanation is simple. All management actions undertaken at the local public administration level should be based on law. Law is the public administration assessment reference both as an activity and as an organization system. [2, p. 232] As an activity of organizing the effective implementation and enforcement of the law at local level, local public administration is, in this respect, a law instrument.

But law enforcement should not be perceived by management representatives from the local public administration as an end in itself, but they must organize and conduct the management process to meet the highest possible share of the local needs, in compliance with the corresponding legal regulations. Organization, development and management of local administrative work should be done in a legal form whose coordinates are strictly defined by law, which expressly formulates the attributions of local public administration authorities (Law no. 215/2001 on local public administration), their powers (Decentralization Framework law no. 195/2006), the rights and obligations of elected representatives (Law no. 393/2004 on the Statute of Elected Representatives), the rights and obligations of civil servants (Law no. 188/1999 on the Statute of Civil Servants).

In such a defined legal framework, management representatives of local administrative structures set the objectives, identify and implement optimal the best ways of action to achieve them, and, finally, to meet the needs of the community on whose behalf they act.

Therefore, we should remember that the impact of the legislative factor in this area is significant [14, p. 81]. In other words, in local public administration management applying and reporting to law is an unquestionable fact.

### 3. THE MANAGERIAL AUTONOMY PRINCIPLE

Managing public affairs at the local administrative system level is not possible without acknowledging the autonomy of the management representatives in this area. Under autonomy, local authority leaders, on their own responsibility and relatively independently, organize the public affairs and administration [9, p. 527].

Managerial autonomy gives the leaders of the local administration system freedom of decision and action in public affairs management at the level of their administrative-territorial units, and also responsibility for everything they do to meet local community needs. If local public administration problem solving were only based on orders and approvals from the central public administration authorities, this would generate phenomena of bureaucracy, lack of initiative, which would have negative consequences for the administrative activity and civil society as a whole [8, p. 57]. This justifies the need to give local public administration authorities exclusive powers in solving local interest, excluding the intervention of other authorities in the local administration process.

Thus, after a period of centralized management, Romania decided to return to the principle of autonomy through decentralization and transfer of responsibilities to local communities [3, p. 258].

Both the Constitution and Law no. 215/2001 place the principle of autonomy in the organization and functioning of local public administration. According to Article 3.1 of the Law on Local Public Administration, local autonomy denotes the right and effective capacity of local public administration authorities to address and manage public affairs on behalf and in the interest of local communities that they represent.

Taking this into account, managerial autonomy in local administration is conceived as a free power of decision and action on the manner the local public administration activities are run and on how to satisfy local interests by the representatives of management in this sector. Thus, by applying local autonomy on local administration, central authorities are relieved of issues concerning local communities closely, leaving their resolution within the remit of the administrative-territorial units, who know local interests better [13, p. 66] and therefore can find and identify the best solutions for their resolution.

From another angle, managerial autonomy in local administrative system ensures operational adaptability to environment and its active influence it [15, p. 38]. Efficient management of the local administration is possible by appropriate adaptation of managerial actions and processes to the state of affairs existing in the local community and the needs of the people in that very local administrative-territorial unit. Good knowledge of a specific situation of a local community and its needs derived from local public environment can underpin effective management actions and decisions which will ultimately lead to high levels of satisfaction of local interests. For this reason and because locally one can see things differently and it is easier to find solutions, the local public administration management representatives should be provided with a broad managerial autonomy, respecting the legal framework of reference.

### 4. THE PRINCIPLE OF RESTRUCTURING

A good-functioning of local administration is possible by restructuring the administrative system in a rational way, adapted to the reality of the territory of competence.

To build an effective local administrative apparatus, responsive and adapted to local community needs, its restructuring is necessary, both in terms of organization and functioning. The number, variety, complexity and difficulty of problems to be solved determine the size and structure of the administrative apparatus. [4, p. 23]

Restructuring local administration system the unnecessary structures and actions will be eliminated; it will also facilitate the avoidance of both the oversizing favoring bureaucracy, involving additional expenses and reducing promptness in solving problems and the under sizing

which is likely to lead to an overload of tasks of each department of the local public administration system with negative implications on operational performance of business and, ultimately, on the quality of local public service provision in line with local needs and preferences.

In this register, it must be said that there are recent various efforts to reform public administration (according to Chapter 19 - Public Administration Reform Governance Program from 2009 to 2012, one of the objectives aimed at: “Restructuring of central and local public administration, through measures of raising institutional efficiency, simplify administration, reduce current expenses and increase transparency in relation to citizens“ [20, p. 69]) through the restructuring of local administration system aiming at applying the decentralization measures [10] of powers to local public administration authorities in various fields, such as state pre-university education, public health, public order, culture, welfare, agriculture, environmental protection; application of an unitary salary system in the public sector [11]; coordination by public managers of programs, projects and activities designed to modernize local public administration [16], in order to increase the quality of administrative and public services provided to citizens.

## **5. THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT**

The importance of this principle is fundamental as M. S. Feldman and A. Khademian clearly point out. In their view [6, pp. 489-490], the world is constantly changing and problems are also constantly changing; as a result, solutions too must change continually. This means that management must be seen as an ongoing experiment in which its representatives always consider the needs they serve, how they change and what they can do to respond.

Under the current reforming context of local public administration inevitably falls the improvement of management actions and processes undertaken in this area. In addition, increased responsibilities and complexity of the tasks assigned to local public administration authorities by transferring jurisdiction in the process of decentralization require management representatives to identify and implement the most efficient modes of action necessary to implement decentralization measures.

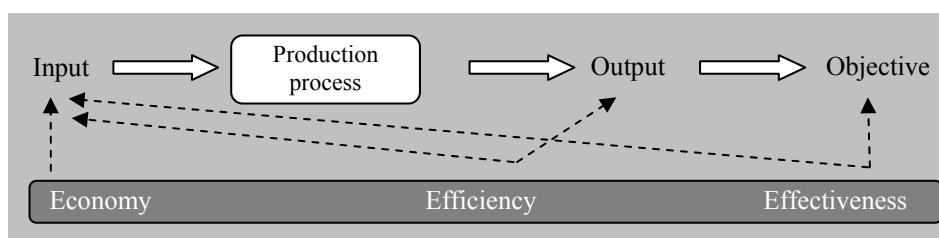
In other words, to adapt and cope with the changes generated by reforming public administration and, ultimately, to meet the requirements of local community members, the leaders of authorities and local public institutions must continuously improve the management concept applied that has to be directed towards finding and implementing the most effective management techniques [19, p. 49].

Everything leads us to emphasize that the success or failure of management in local public administration depends on improving the management processes by applying rational and effective methods and techniques, appropriate to the variety and complexity of the objectives of local officials in order to better serve the needs of the community.

## **6. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE 3 ES: ECONOMY, EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS**

According to this principle, management representatives in local public administration should conduct administrative activities so as to ensure a better use of local resources (human, material, financial) so that their objectives are achieved successfully.

A schematic representation of the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness is reflected in the figure below (see Figure 2):



**Figure 2. Schematic approach to the relationship between the 3 Es**

Source: Roos, M., "Performance management within the parameters of the PFMA", 2009, p. 24

Good local governance is not possible if these three rules are applied in isolation, separately from each other. The explanation of the link between the 3Es could be the following [21, p. 24]: the mission for which local administrative structures are organized and function is to have a positive impact on the local community (outcomes); to achieve these outcomes local public services are provided (outputs); to generate these outputs financial, human and other resources (inputs) are needed.

Economy concerns the good management of taxpayers' money belonging to the local community.

Efficiency can be expressed as the ratio of outputs (outputs) in the form of local public services and resources/inputs used to produce them.

Effectiveness concerns the fulfillment of the stated objectives of an activity and the relationship between the programmed results and the actual results achieved, [12] reflecting the local public administration's capacity to produce local social welfare [15, p. 40].

Having said that, we emphasize that without respecting the principle of the 3Es, good local resource management is not possible and, consequently, an increase in the level of satisfaction of community needs cannot be achieved either. It is not enough that public resources are used in compliance with the legal framework of reference, but they should be used in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness to maximize the social and economic effects of local administrative activity.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

All in all, we conclude that the application of management principles applicable to local public administration - legality, managerial autonomy, restructuring, continuous development, economy, efficiency, and effectiveness ensure good management activities in this sector.

As a consequence of the investigation conducted, being familiar now with the meaning and content of the management principles in local public administration, we found that the literature in the field offers us a wide range of approaches in this direction, based on which we performed a systematization of them. This gives us support when claiming that it is imperative and useful to follow and apply these management principles that outline guidelines for the management representatives to run their activities at this level, and for the organization and functioning of local public administration as a whole. Our study done on this topic makes us state that without respect and application of these principles it is not possible to increase the efficiency of local public administration, with implications on serving the local community and meeting its interests.

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