

Particularities of Professional Performance Assessment in the Public Administration of Romania

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Abstract

Performance evaluation is an important activity of human resources management with which we determine the degree to which employees of an organization fulfill their duties or responsibilities, by assessing their behavior, level of training and performance. For this reason the employee performance appraisal is the basis of the rewards system of motivation, to improve performance and identify strengths and weaknesses of the employee.

Professional performance evaluation study in Cluj-Napoca City Hall was based on a survey among executive public officials, applying a questionnaire to provide a large amount of information and a great power of generalization. Through the study we proposed three hypotheses of work with reference to some changes from the last performance appraisal, the correlation between the grade obtained and the degree of fulfillment of work tasks, determining the type of interview style as a stage of the assessment process. The results of the study confirm the first two hypotheses and refute the third hypothesis, confirming that the style used mainly in the performance evaluation process is "Share", style through which the manager involves the subordinate in solving problems and, consequently in yielding the best results.

Key words: evaluation, performance appraisal, executive public officials, objectives, questionnaire

JEL Codes: M12

1. Introduction

For the enterprises, the appraisal of performance of employees is a way to identify the current level of a person's work performance, to identify strengths and weaknesses of an employee in order to motivate and reward employees and to provide the basis of their reward according to their contribution in achieving the organizational objectives. "In today's world,

almost every organization whether it is public or private sector, requires a performance appraisal system (PAS) to assess the performance of its employees (Ikramullah, Bahadar et al, 2011, p.92), as there "are human resources that "make the difference" between successful organizations and others" (Gandolfi, 2006, p.203), and to achieve a "high performance culture we have to implement the model of the "seven R's": respect, responsibility and resources, risk taking, rewards and recognition, relationships, role modeling, renewal" (Sethi, 2000, p.172).

Some authors consider the performance evaluation as "the core business of human resource management, conducted to determine the degree to which employees of an organization effectively fulfill their duties and responsibilities (Manolescu, 1998, p.63), a process "which decides how well the work is performed by employees of the company or a specific job" (Pitariu, 2000, p.1). Some bibliographic sources speak about that performance evaluation as a "process called and classified of employees or to evaluate results that consists in assessing the degree to which employees fulfill their responsibilities in relation to the job" (Roşca, Roşca et al, 2005, p.127).

Other authors present the assessment of employees as a set of activities "applied for observing and measuring their contribution (based on the individual characteristics of a person, on effective behaviors that they apply to the situation of work and to the results obtained, expressed through indicators) to the achievement of business objectives" (Charpentier, Deroy et al, 2000, p.479). It should also be pointed out that "the best reason for adopting a personnel evaluation system is to draw attention to employee performance, aiming: fair reward and identifying the ones with potential for promotion or transfer" (Cole, 2000, p.330). The same author states that employee performance evaluation is the task of management factors from enterprises, so that "this task requires a judgment by the management, which means a lot of responsibility, task which is delicate and complex" (Cole, 1996, pp.332-333). Also, "it is necessary that the description of the assessment process to be made in a way to suggest more precisely the goals of this activity, for example, performance improvement and development, progress and planning, joint analysis and action planning, investment in people" (Hudson apud Neamţu, 2007, p.54).

There are a number of methods and techniques by which we can carry out the assessment of employees in enterprises, establishing certain evaluation criteria, including "the most common appraisal criteria are traits, behaviors, task outcomes and improvement potential" (Mondy, Noe and Premeaux, 2002, p.284). We can state here the acquaintance tests or evidence of professional competence, results-oriented system, the objectives evaluation, system oriented to individual qualities, evaluation system in collaboration, interview of evaluation, analysis method of performance standards, technical assessment scales, hierarchies technique, psychological evaluation, 360°feedback (more evaluators' assessment or multidirectional evaluation feedback or multiple times evaluation), etc.

In the current context, in the public institutions, the organization of the management process and coordination of specific activities can be improved using "modern human resources practices that may contribute to the desired transformation of the public service" (Lankeu and Maket, 2012, p.267). At the European Union (EU) level, the legal status of civil servants is regulated by Regulation (CE, EURATOM) no.723/2004 adopted on 22 March 2004. In Romania the work of civil servants is regulated by Law 188/1999 on the Statute of Civil Servants and the National Agency of Civil Servants desires the "development of a professional, well prepared,

politically neutral civil servants body, capable of assimilating the performance standards imposed by the EU with the purpose of improving efficiency in public administration and in the relations between the public administration and its main beneficiaries, the citizens" (www.anfp.gov.ro).

For this reason it is necessary to "redefine the role of public officials through: motivation based on individual performance and its rank function, accountability, training and career development for the performance of attributions" (Achim, Hinescu and Popa, 2005, pp. 245-246). In Romania's public administration, performance evaluation is a basic tool used in the context of career management of civil servants. The performance evaluation process has multiple goals and long-term effects on the career of civil servants evaluated, being a means of monitoring the performance of an individual and contributing decisively to the development of career of the civil servant. Thus, the performance measurement is done on the basis of transparency and objectivity, on criteria established to ascertain the degree to which the objectives have been achieved. "These criteria represent a factor of promotion of the civil servants of only the capable elements, that can manage the requirements of the authorities or the institution" (Berchi, 2000, p.68).

2. Performance appraisal in the Public Administration from Romania

The evaluation of activities and results of each civil servant is governed by Law 188/1999 on the Statute of Civil Servants, which states that the assessment of civil servant activity is done in order to provide appropriate salary based on professional performances, based on criteria developed by the National Agency of Civil Servants. To this end, the National Agency of Civil Servants develops these performance criteria under which there are defined the existing grades within the same category.

At the beginning of each year, the heads of departments notify in writing each civil servant the performance criteria appropriate to their category, grade and class occupied (article 60, paragraph 1 of Law 188/1999). Every public official is found in a filing system within the authority or institution that is working on a safety assessment sheet. The heads of the departments complete and note in the performance appraisal sheet the individual results, giving ratings.

Performance evaluation is not an act of freedom left to the chiefs or leaders. The National Agency of Civil Servants develops methodology for assessing individual professional performance and the way to appeal the grades awarded. This methodology is established annually by Government decision under Article 61, Law 188/1999. Individual performance appraisal for 2013 was based on the Government Decision HG 611/2008 for approval of the organization and career of civil servants.

In order to form a professional body of civil servants, individual performance appraisal of civil servants establishes the general framework under HG 611/2008, Article 106, by:

- a. objective correlation of activity of civil servants and public service requirements;
- b. objective assessment of individual professional performance of public officials by comparing the degree of achievement of individual goals set with the effective results;
- c. providing a motivational system, by rewarding civil servants who have obtained outstanding results, so as to increase individual professional performance;

- d. identification of training needs of civil servants to improve results of work undertaken to achieve the set objectives.

Performance appraisal procedure applies to each individual public official, in relation to individual objectives established under the attributions provided in the job description. Individual performance appraisal of civil servants is done by comparing the actual performance to the performance criteria set for the period evaluated. The individual objectives must meet the following requirements (HG 611/2008, Article 111):

- a. to be specific to the activities involving the exercise of public power;
- b. to be measurable - have a particular embodiment;
- c. to be provided with deadlines;
- d. to be realistic - to be carried out in the deadlines set and resources allocated;
- e. to be flexible - to be reviewed in the light of changes in the priorities of public authority or institution.

The individual objectives may be revised quarterly or whenever changes occur in the structure of authority or public institution. The revised objectives will be reported in the individual performance appraisal report of the civil servant.

The evaluated period between 1 January and 31 December of the year for which the assessment is made. The evaluation period is between 1 and 31 January of the following year of the period evaluated. Exceptionally, individual performance appraisal of civil servants is made during the period evaluated (H.G 611/2008, Article 108, paragraph 3).

Individual performance appraisal of civil servants is governed by the legal regime of juridical conflict of interest on public officials. Individual performance appraisal of civil servants is done by the evaluator (HG 611/2008, article 107, paragraph 2).

The assessment procedure is performed in the following three steps (HG 611/2008, article 114):

First step - completion of the evaluation report by the assessor by: establishing final degree, recording outstanding results and difficulties, establishing training needs and individual goals for the coming year;

To get the mark for achieving the objectives we need to make the arithmetic mean of the grades awarded for achieving each objective, including individual revised targets, if the revision thereof was imposed during the evaluated period. To get the mark given for the fulfillment of the performance criteria we need to make the arithmetic average of the marks awarded for meeting each criterion. The final score is the annual assessment is the arithmetic mean of the marks obtained for individual objectives and performance criteria. The significance of the notes referred to above is as follows: Note 1 – minimum level and Note 5 – maximum level. The final assessment shall be based on the final grade as follows (HG 611/2008, Article 117):

- a. from 1.00 to 2.00 - unsatisfactory;
- b. from 2.01 to 3.50 - satisfactory;
- c. between 3.51 to 4.50 - well;
- d. from 4.51 to 5.00 - very good;

Second step - interview - is an exchange of information that occurs between the evaluator and the public official, in which:

- a. the public officer becomes aware of the records reviewed by the evaluator in the evaluation report;
- b. the report is signed and dated by the evaluator and by the public servant evaluated.

If there are differences of opinion between the public official evaluated and the assessor on the observations, the civil servant's comments shall be recorded in the Evaluation Report. The assessor may change the evaluation report if it comes to common view.

Third step - countersigning of the assessment report. The evaluation report shall be submitted to the counterpart to be signed. In the situation in which the quality of assessor is held by the authority or institution head, the evaluation report shall not be countersigned. Has the quality of counter: the superior public official that is above the evaluator, suitable to the organizational structure of the public authority or institution. Exceptionally, where, according to the organizational structure of authority or public institution, there is no public servant hierarchically superior to the evaluator, one will be appointed as counter and this can be the civil servant with the highest public office of that public authority or institution, and when not possible, the counter will be the deputy head of the public authority or official from his subordination.

Human resources departments within public authorities and institutions shall, by 31 December each year, communicate the heads of compartments the performance criteria established by the National Agency of Civil Servants, which will be the basis of the performance appraisal of civil servants for individuals the next year. At the beginning of the evaluation, the departments of human resources conveyed to the heads of departments the form for assessment reports, and coordinates and monitors the assessment process to ensure correct application of the evaluation procedures. Human resources departments provide specialized assistance to evaluators and public officials that will be evaluated.

At the end of the evaluation period, the reports of individual performance appraisals are submitted to the HR departments for inclusion in the professional records of civil servants. Depending on the content of the evaluation reports, the human resources department plans the participation of the civil servants in training programs. Human resources departments are required to notify the head of the public authority or public institution the situation of the civil servants who have achieved in the annual performance evaluation for the past two years the grade "unsatisfactory". In this case the head of the public authority or public institution will propose switching to a lower position and if the proposal is not accepted, they proceed to the dismissal.

Advancing approved annually by public authorities or institutions shall be communicated within 30 days to the National Agency of Civil Servants in order to update the corresponding database containing records of public functions and civil servants. People involved in the evaluation process are required to ensure the privacy of information to which they have access. Also, in the literature we identify several methodological categories of evaluation interview, the relevant being the scale of styles in the assessment interview made by Maier (in his book *The Appraisal Interview*, 1958), which starts from a relatively autocratic style and ends with a fully participative style as follows: style "Say" or "Communicate", style "Tell and convince", style "Tell and listen", style "Involve" or "Share" (Cole, 2000, pp.338-339).

3. Example of performance appraisal of public servants in functions of execution in the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca

Working method

The study was conducted during January-February 2014 in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) City Hall that is divided into nine divisions, which include 40 services, 14 offices, 7 compartments; mayor's office and its body of control.

To perform this evaluation we chose a sample of convenience, since the number of execution's that operate in the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca is 538. Such a sample, that is not random, it is not usually representative of the whole population and also we cannot say how unrepresentative it is. The services in which the study was conducted were: Enforcement of local budget debts; Follow of local budget debts; Environment protection and sanitation; Finding, assessment and control of legal persons; Finding, assessment and control of individuals.

The instrument used to achieve this questionnaire consists of quantitative methods of social research, namely Survey, conducted by the main instrument of this method, the "Questionnaire", which offers a wealth of information and great power of generalization, a number of 50 questionnaires being applied to the execution civil servants in the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca. The questionnaire sought to establish the following:

- changes experienced by public servants of Cluj-Napoca City Hall, after the last performance appraisal,
- the extent to which the qualification obtained at the last assessment is directly proportional to the degree of performance,
- determining the style toward which the interview of assessment tends, according to the classification given by Maier.

Thus, the three hypotheses in this study are:

1. Executive civil servants in the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca find no changes from the last performance appraisal;
2. The grade obtained at the last performance appraisal of executive civil servants of Cluj-Napoca City Hall is not directly proportional to the performance degree;
3. In the Cluj-Napoca City Hall, the interview stage of the evaluation process tends more towards the style of "Communicate and Listen".

Hypothesis testing and obtained results

The *first hypothesis* has the role to determine the changes experienced by executive public servants of Cluj-Napoca City Hall after the last performance appraisal. The results are presented in Table 1, where it can be seen that about 80% of employees surveyed have achieved the "very good" rating.

Table 1: Rating obtained at the last evaluation

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very good	39	78.0	78.0	78.0
Well	10	20.0	20.0	98.0
Satisfactory	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

As shown, 20% of respondents scored "good" and only 2% "satisfactory". It is important to note that no employee of the respondents have received "unsatisfactory".

Regarding the consequences felt after the last evaluation, 68% of respondents felt no change and a 14% noted a decrease in income (Table 2).

Table 2: Personal consequences experienced as a result of last evaluation

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid advancement in rank	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
merit salary	6	12.0	12.0	18.0
diminishing income	7	14.0	14.0	32.0
none	34	68.0	68.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Also, 12% received merit salary as a result of the qualification obtained at the last assessment, and 6% have had a promotion in rank. However, most of the respondents consider to "a certain extent" or "a little" or "not at all" a shift to the new evaluation (Table 3).

Table 3: The degree of change of objectives for the new evaluation

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid in totality	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
in great part	3	6.0	6.0	8.0
in a certain part	16	32.0	32.0	40.0
in a small part	19	38.0	38.0	78.0
not at all	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The aggregate share of those who consider that the objectives were largely modified or changed entirely represents only 8%.

With the help of the **second hypothesis** we tried to highlight the extent to which the rating given in the last performance evaluation is directly proportional to the performance. To test this hypothesis we have taken into account:

- the extent to which an employee agrees with the rating given,
- the extent to which the rating given at the last evaluation reflects the quality of the employee's work,
- the importance that the seniority has in getting the final rating,
- the extent to which the final grade is affected by the political affiliation of the man who obtained it,
- the extent to which the employee believes that he fulfilled his job duties last year.

Of those surveyed, 34% believe the grade obtained at the last evaluation is largely right, and those who think the rating given in the last assessment as only partially correct and those who consider it as totally accurate is an aggregate share of 56% (Table 4).

Table 4: Assessment of the rating obtained

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Totally accurate	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
Accurate in a big extent	17	34.0	34.0	62.0
Only partially accurate	14	28.0	28.0	90.0
To a big extent incorrect	3	6.0	6.0	96.0
Totally incorrect	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Of the employees surveyed, 30% believe the rating given reflects the quality of work, while 28% are in full agreement with this correlation, and 24% are those who believe that the quality of work is reflected to some extent in the grade obtained (Table 5).

Table 5: Correlation grade - quality of work

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Totally accurate	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
Accurate in a big extent	15	30.0	30.0	58.0
To a certain extent accurate	12	24.0	24.0	82.0
Partially accurate	7	14.0	14.0	96.0
No at all	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

A significant percentage of respondents (40%) believe that seniority in the institution greatly influences the final grade, and at the other end (at a rate of only 8%) are those who believe that the length of seniority influence only little the final rating (Table 6).

Table 6: Influence of seniority on final rating

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Totally accurate	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
Accurate in a big extent	20	40.0	40.0	56.0
To a certain extent accurate	9	18.0	18.0	74.0
Accurate in a small extent	4	8.0	8.0	82.0
Has no importance	9	18.0	18.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

A particular aspect is the political affiliation, which in the opinion of 40% of the respondents totally influences the final grade, while a relatively close percent (32%) think that political affiliation does not change the final average (Table 7).

Table 7: The influence of political affiliation on final average grade

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Totally accurate	20	40.0	40.0	40.0
Accurate in a big extent	6	12.0	12.0	52.0
To a certain extent accurate	5	10.0	10.0	62.0
Accurate in a small extent	3	6.0	6.0	68.0
Has no importance	16	32.0	32.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Regarding to the degree of fulfillment of work tasks only 32% of respondents believe that they have fully met them (Table 8), accounting for over 65% believe that they have largely met their duties; there are employees who consider that they did not fulfill all the duties of employment (2%).

Table 8: The degree of fulfillment of work tasks

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Totally	16	32.0	32.0	32.0
To a great extent	33	66.0	66.0	98.0
Not at all	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The **third hypothesis** focuses on determining the style toward which the interview assessment tends according to the classification given by Maier, respectively in Cluj-Napoca City Hall the interview as a stage of the evaluation process tends more towards the style of "Communicate and Listen". For each of the four styles there was made a relevant question and the results are presented as follows.

For the style "**communicate**" we can see that 56% of employees surveyed believe that the appraiser never happened just to communicate the final grade without further explanation (Table 9).

Table 9: Communication of the final grade with no other information

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid never	28	56.0	56.0	56.0
rarely	11	22.0	22.0	78.0
pretty often	4	8.0	8.0	86.0
very often	2	4.0	4.0	90.0
always	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

However, there were situations when this happened rarely (in proportion of 22%), while 10% of respondents claim that they always happen to be told the final grade without receiving further explanation.

For the style "**Communicate and Sell**" the results obtained show a majority of 56% of respondents who believe that it never happened that the appraiser to communicate assessment results and try to convince them that this way is the best form of assessment, given the constraints of the institution and their performance (Table 10).

Table 10: The relationship between the institution constraints and your performance

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	28	56.0	56.0
	Rarely	17	34.0	90.0
	Pretty often	3	6.0	96.0
	Always	2	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0

A proportion of 34% are those who believe that this happened rarely and only 4% of respondents believe that it always happened that way.

For the style "**Communicate and Listen**" at a rate of 32% the respondents believe that the evaluator always heard their thanks and grievances that they had on the outcome of the evaluation. However, a rate near 26% shows that they believe that this happened rarely (Table 11).

Table 11: Thanks/dissatisfaction with the outcome

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	7	14.0	14.0
	Rarely	13	26.0	40.0
	Pretty often	11	22.0	62.0
	Very often	3	6.0	68.0
	Always	16	32.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0

For the style "**Share**" 46% of respondents believe that the evaluator always has communicated the evaluation result and tried with them to find solutions to improve performance in the future (Table 12).

Table 12: Solutions to improve performance

Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	2	4.0	4.0
	Rarely	6	12.0	16.0
	Pretty often	13	26.0	42.0
	Very often	6	12.0	54.0
	Always	23	46.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0

In contrast, but with a percentage of only 4% are those who say that this never happened.

4. Conclusions

Professional performance evaluation is particularly important for employees, which is a complex and delicate responsibility for managers who are involved in the evaluation process. For this, various methods of evaluation are used and based on the judgment of decision makers the evaluation process may be addressed from the autocratic style to the participative one, through which managers can discuss with subordinates the work tasks and can solve the problems appeared by involvement and empowerment. In a public institution, the performance evaluation process has a greater relevance, given the public function that involves the quality of public services, transparency of administration act and a fair system of rewards for all civil servants.

The study conducted in Cluj-Napoca City Hall wanted to present the facts on the results obtained from the evaluation process of the individual performance of the executive civil servants, as posts from this category of civil servants representing 63.3% of the total of 850 budgeted jobs approved for 2014 in the City Hall.

The first hypothesis proposed for the study was confirmed, where the percentage of respondents who obtained the maximum rating on their last performance evaluation is high (if the rating given reflects tasks and is not affected by the subjectivity of the evaluator), they have not experienced any change in the wake of these results. Conversely, if you were to look at the results, there has been showed a decrease in revenue (for a significant percentage of respondents). Here, an observation would be recommended: lower revenues relate largely to the disappearance of monthly incentives (economic crisis) and not necessarily to the actual wage decrease. Maybe the people who answered the questionnaire had the urge to find a palpable excuse for what is happening with their monthly income. However, it is difficult to understand how it can happen that after getting good results, they do not observe any significant change in the workplace.

The second assumption made is confirmed, unfortunately, it is sad to note that in a public institution the performance appraisal rating received is not directly proportional to the performance. Although to the officials questioned it seems largely correct the grade obtained and considered to have met their duties, the end result is still influenced by the length of seniority in the institution and the political affiliation of the assessed (perhaps this can be explained by the very quality of the respondents, that of being members of the party of which the assessor is also part or on the other hand, not being a member of the same party).

The third hypothesis concerns the appraisal interview style and it has been invalidated. We started with the assumption that the style "Communicate and Listen" would be appropriate, in the belief that it is mainly present in the performance evaluation. However, the evaluation results found that respondents view the style as "Share", style that yields the best results.

By the study carried out in the Cluj-Napoca City Hall we attempted to show the consequences felt by employees (executive civil servants) in the assessment process, whether the result of the assessment reflects their work and which is the style correspondent to the appraisal interview is. Thus, in Cluj-Napoca City Hall there are very few changes after the process of performance appraisal. Perhaps amid the current economic crisis officials do not receive rewards, although they have achieved good performance evaluation, most of the ratings being "very good" and "good". It also appears the officials are not always in agreement

that they are evaluated correctly. They think that the evaluator is influenced by different things and can cause errors in the evaluation process. Many of them think that if you are part of the ruling party you can get a better grade or if you are older in the institution you can receive preferential treatment from the evaluator. Unfortunately there is not moral rewards, namely praises for the good results of the employees, which can have a demotivating effect and can attract the dissatisfaction of employees (who do not have confidence in the assessment process, reaching instead to consider the evaluation as an unimportant factor for their career as civil servants). But despite the negatives aspects, however, the evaluators are willing to talk to the officials when they have problems about the assessment, inform the employee about the progress and seek to find solutions to a better assessment in the future.

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