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Summary of the Doctoral Thesis

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF METHODS OF
ASSESSING LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES
PERFORMANCE**

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KEY WORDS

Management of local public services performance, local public services system, assessing local public services performance, managerial tools, complaint, notification, suggestion, the manager-citizen binomial.

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It does not matter how slow you are going, as long as you do not stop.

Confucius

The Current Context of Analyzing Perception on Local Public Services Performance

The current context of analyzing the assessment of local public services performance is determined by the time society experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, a situation that required a rethinking of the entire system of local public services both from the perspective of managers, and from the perspective of citizens as beneficiaries of local public services.

The social and economic evolution, starting with 2020, has determined changes in the administrative system, implicitly the managerial one. The need for progress was identified in the natural environment, in the cultural factors of the community, in the political influences at a given time, as well as in the technological and informational engine, which led to changes inherent in the development of a society, a community and therefore a system, that of local public services.

The Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the activity of local public services, brought about by the management of public services, which demanded a high degree of professional training. Resistance to the progress of a society / community was determined by the conservative nature of man, and therefore of public service personnel, as well. We can also understand the resistance to change in the case of an organizational system, as the changes are related to certain human, legislative, economic and political limits, educational factors, socio-economic and political-administrative opportunities.

Organizational activity and life have been and are visibly affected by the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Change for a certain period of time is at the basis of slight or serious dangers, which causes managers to become better or to show weaknesses, which influences their activity and management. The maximum test within organizational structures, during the Covid-19 pandemic, is the ability of the manager and managerial structures to overcome the crisis, with minimal economic losses.

Social changes have led to economic, collective, individual and managerial changes. Preserving one's managerial style has been affected and difficult to maintain, which has led to countless, more or less relevant, opinions and suggestions.

Social isolation and individual social distancing have led to managerial isolation and distancing, by profoundly affecting leadership style, work style, low productivity and minimum wages. Organizational structures seem to be diluted or even to lose their organizational and managerial identity, in the sense that the diminishing and even non-existence of direct interaction with employees, with lower- or higher-level managers, leads to organizational uncertainty and, from a social and psychological point of view, it extends to society as a whole and to its citizens.

Brief Presentation of the Doctoral Thesis

The topicality and opportunity of the research topic is determined by the evolution of community life, which in recent years has undergone changes and adaptations to constantly new economic, social, political, environmental and technological conditions. In this regard, we can emphasize the importance of local public services for their beneficiaries, who are mostly citizens. While citizens want an ever-increasing quality of local public services and are not interested in the legislative, economic and logistical implications of bringing services to a high-quality level, managers must be interested in achieving performance in providing local public services, so that they might then meet the criteria of the management system, as well as the requirements of the local public administration. This aspect compels managers to focus on the management systems and tools of the local public services correlated with those of the tutelary authority and with the different social demands coming from the citizens.

The development of local public services and the excesses of leadership displayed by managers, as well as the rigidity of citizens when faced with major changes in the sector of local public services, may lead to highlighting the analysis of management systems to ensure the correspondence between need and satisfying social need, but this time the focus is on the quality and effectiveness of the management system in a transparent and citizen-oriented manner.

Some management systems have been changed, criticized, adapted and eliminated as a result of the processes of evolution and development of society as a whole, but also as a development of the requirements of both local public administrations and citizens.

All these aspects, which underline the correlation between the performance obtained by the local public services and the demanding requirements, mostly of the citizens, imposed the need to continue research and to identify new methods of assessing local public services performance, by initiating this scientific approach in South-Eastern Romania.

This doctoral thesis aims at identifying a method of assessing the performance of local public services both regarding managers, civil servants / contract staff or local elected officials, and taking into account citizen participation in the evaluation, as beneficiaries of local public services in their home town.

At the same time, by means of this case study conducted in the South-East Region of Romania on a target group made up of local public sector employees and citizens, the author's scientific approach offers other local public services in other regions of Romania the opportunity to use the method of assessing the performance of local public services presented in the doctoral thesis and implicitly the improvement of the service activity by the citizens in the locality of residence.

During the stages undertaken by the author in this scientific approach, representatives of the local public entities participating in this endeavor were interested in the results obtained after finishing research and considered this study to be very important and useful in the development of their work. Moreover, the citizens as direct beneficiaries of the local public services were available and interested in participating in the evaluation of the performances and in the improvement of the activity of the local public services in the town of residence.

The scientific approach developed by the author tackled aspects of evaluating the performance of local public services and analyzed some of the tools used in the private sector and which could be used in the local public sector and correlated to the involvement of service beneficiaries.

The doctoral thesis is structured onto 5 chapters, as follows:

Chapter I – Management of Public Services Performance presents general aspects of local public service performance management and the main modern tools employed to assess performance and which can be used by public services, namely the concept of Balance Scorecard, key performance indicators (KPIs), benchmarking, the performance pyramid system (SPP), the Neely and Adams performance prism model and the public service value model (PSV).

Chapter II - The Current Framework of the Local Public Services System in South-Eastern Romania presents the local public services system in this region, in terms of the establishment, organization and operation of local public services and the presentation of local public entities.

Chapter III - Case study on evaluating the performance of local public services presents the regional context in which the scientific research was conducted and it analyzes and interprets the results of the questionnaire for managers, civil servants / contract staff and other categories of staff in local public services and the results of the questionnaire for citizens as beneficiaries of local public services. How to use the performance indicators and the Balance Scorecard is another issue analyzed in this chapter. The purpose of applying these two questionnaires is to identify the correlation and involvement of citizens, by submitting complaints, notifications and suggestions, but also by citizens' initiative projects to improve the activity of local public services and increase performance.

Chapter IV - Performance modeling within local public services by evaluating the manager-citizen binomial presents the conceptualization of econometric models of methods of assessing the performance of local public services by solving complaints, notifications, suggestions and implementing citizens' initiatives.

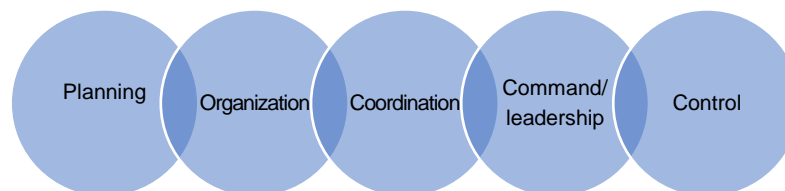
Chapter V - Conclusions, contributions, proposals, research limits and future research interests reflect the results and principles respected throughout the scientific approach, as well as the possibility to use the assessment of the local public services performance by the involvement of citizens. Personal contributions and general proposals at the end of the doctoral thesis suggest, as a novelty, citizen participation in evaluating local public services performance, as a management method, to support the development and improvement of local public services, along with other methods. The limits of research and future research interests are the last part of the doctoral thesis.

The bibliographic references and the annexes are the informational and specialized support for the scientific approach initiated, achieved, analyzed, researched and finalized by the author in the present doctoral thesis.

Chapter I. Management of public services performance

By structuring this chapter as such, we aimed at tackling performance management, public service performance management and local public service performance management, as well as performance evaluation tools, namely Balance Scorecard, key performance indicators, SWOT analysis and matrix, benchmarking, the performance pyramid system, the performance prism model and public service values.

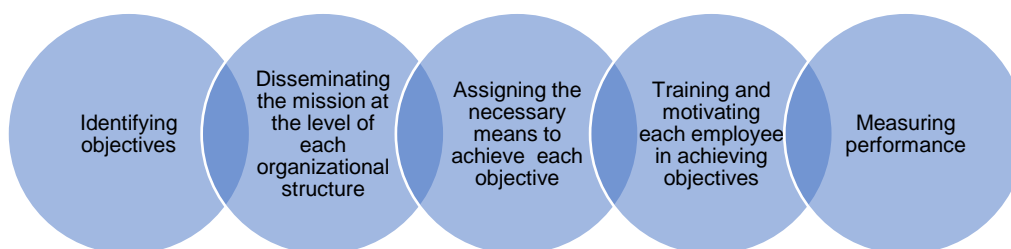
Time has also left its mark on performance management, and it has naturally evolved from the traditional concept of performance management to the current concept of management, by updating each of its functions. Thus, one can sketch the rigid form of performance in traditional performance management, through each managerial function (planning, organization, coordination, management and control), as in the figure below:



Managerial functions in the traditional system of performance management

Source: elaborated by the author

The current outline of performance management is based on identifying objectives, disseminating the mission at the level of each organizational structure, assigning the necessary means to achieve each objective, training and motivating each employee in achieving objectives and measuring performance, as presented below:



Managerial functions in the current system of performance management

Source: elaborated by the author

The traditional concept of performance management considered the conformity of a product, service or work, according to quality specifications. The current concept of performance management not only takes into account quality standardization, but also the performance of the functional system of the organization where the product or the work is produced, or where the service is provided.

Therefore, we are witnessing modernization of performance management, as a result of the era we are going through. The need to ensure measurable quantification of performance to respond to alterations, additions and profound changes in the life of organizations is determined by the involvement of all components and factors of the management system, which will influence

the redesigning of each management subsystem within the organization, based on methodologies tackled.

Adapting to the requirements, requirements, realities and needs of society must be a continuous process, not done in leaps and bounds. However, the accelerating pace of computerization in all sectors and environments of society require each organization should ensure reviewable performance management, in any situation, and lay the foundations for meeting objectives and tasks, but also quantify the costs of each factor and every revised or reviewable element.

We can conclude that performance management is influenced by the economic, social, technological and political approaches of organization managers. These approaches will position the organization in the competitive market of its field and depending on the system of existing or possible values on which it will focus and influence its maintenance, development or elimination from the competitive market. The managerial adaptation of the organization will depend on the external tendencies of the organization, but also on the internal community, by creating a performance-oriented organizational culture. In order to achieve efficient management, the managers must use, as efficiently as possible, the resources they have or the ones they can attract. The resources of the organization are used alternately, in a certain period and at a certain stage that is implemented and that employs a certain function of management.

Capitalizing on basic and specialized knowledge, focusing activities on achieving objectives, reducing and even eliminating the limitations between the activities of the organization and the sectoral, regional, national and international ones, as the case might be, are also the basis of performance management. The efficiency and effectiveness of an organization will be seen as support for performance management, if the actions, training and decisions of managers reflecting on each individual in the organization, are directed towards this purpose of performance, by defining possible actions and choosing the most profitable in the given organizational context.

Public services have supported and allowed the redefinition of performance management. Redefining performance management aims at opening up to the goals and conditions of the public sector but also changes, managerial and organizational adaptations, which have reform potential. Formulating and disseminating objectives to achieve performance must be carried out in stages in all organizational structures, in a pyramidal system. Thus, the larger the organizational structure of the public service, the more the system of objectives for achieving performance has more hierarchical levels and more indicators for each managerial level. The causes that lead to performance achievement and specifying the behavioral characteristics of the managers, but also of the beneficiaries, will make the managers establish a performance measurement system, by rigorously quantifying the particularities of each stage undertaken.

Assessing public services performance and the frequency of such evaluations depend on the nature of the assessment. If the evaluation is done within or outside the public services, the evaluator will be different and will have different tools used to measure performance.

The factors that determine the perception on public services performance are determined by the demographic changes in a locality, by the increase of the demand for public services, by their technological level, by the acquisition of innovative ideas and by the increase of the living standards of the respective public service beneficiaries.

Therefore, the management system can also be extrapolated to services. In this sense, the management system in the public sector can be thought of as the set of elements - regulations, methodologies, tools, techniques, process procedures and decision procedures, which, used in a well-defined structure, and exercising management functions, lead to achieving the purposes for which local public services were established. The public sector takes over, adopts and applies

management models from the private sector, but the management systems become specific to the public administration and adapted to it.

Increasing the performance of public services is a constant concern in identifying, developing and implementing practices starting from the administrative reality and reaching the needs of citizens. The performance of public services aims at improving them in terms of quality, not quantity.

Public services performance can take into account the beneficiaries' access to public services, the beneficiary's choice of a public service, information from the inner and outer environment, restoring a balance between what is offered and what is desired in the field of services and the beneficiary's opinion. The performance of a public service can be conditioned by the living standards of the beneficiaries and of the community as a whole but also by the performance in the respective field, on a national or international level. The management of public services performance consists in a strategic approach that determines the long-term success in their activity but also in the community, using objectives with maximum potential.

The important role that the performance of public services has in the community economy will lead to the reconfiguration of strategies and organizational structures to overcome the limits that ensure the success of public services. On the other hand, the community must also provide a behavior meant to vitalize public services performance, through the prism of three areas of coverage, namely: coherence of public policies and the satisfaction of beneficiaries, efficiency of current actions of public services with regard to the means available and the relationship with managers.

In order to assess public services performance, using tools specific to the public sector and the evaluated field and which would allow them to change the organizational behavior, it is necessary to take into account the well-structured sample of beneficiaries, internal and external evaluation, with a technical and formal approach. Public services performance leads to their development and modernization, and, against the background of legislative and economic changes, it requires adapting the general interest to meet public needs.

In order to perform efficiently, public services must meet the requirements of their beneficiaries and come before them intent on the continuous and growing satisfaction of their needs, given that urbanization with its consequences makes its presence felt in all sectors, through technological developments, the explosion of specialized knowledge, working conditions, fast aging of products, product innovation, changes in the nature of the workforce and demographic structure.

In order for managers to implement performance management, they need to know the expectations of public service beneficiaries, to receive information from users or specialists in the field of that service, to have a broad horizon of past and present experiences of that public service and that field, to alternatively replace possible services and to identify the perception of the role of each actor involved in ensuring the performance of the public service.

Implementing the Balance Scorecard concept in public services is important and must start from the dissatisfaction of managers in being aware of the performance level, viewed from the perspective of public service beneficiaries. Practice has proved the weak and even lack of transparency of the strategy meant to develop a public service, from its beneficiary's perspective. It is necessary that the attention of managers, regardless of the level occupied in the organization, be oriented towards indicators that could assess the degree of satisfaction of beneficiaries, employees, the size of procedures and processes, but also the dynamics of results.

With the intent to develop key performance indicators (KPIs), and measure performance, public sector managers must take into account the means used to achieve performance, the internal and external processes meant to achieve performance, the products, services and goods

subject to evaluation from the point of view of performance, the results and effects of performance assessment, their external socio-economic environment, the interest and influence of political factors, the maturity and institutional managerial expertise, the level and mode of communication in the internal and even external environment, the limitation of using sanctions or rewards at the individual level, as well as the identification and promotion of the self-assessment system in the organization.

In Romania, SWOT analysis is widely used especially in national or territorial structures, less in local structures. The use of the 2x2 matrix of SWOT analysis is experienced in any activity under different forms. As the volume of information and resources is very large, the operational characteristics of the analysis and the particularities of the organization's environments must be taken into account. The last years have imposed guidelines on this management tool, attention being directed towards the management of resources and the organizational way of working.

The current Romanian economic and social environment of local public services is subject to a large and complex process of adaptation, modification, completion or elimination. Local public services are required to impose themselves on the market of services and their beneficiaries, by means of organizational development and adaptation of the development strategy in that field and they have to consider increasing performance, through competitiveness, efficiency, effectiveness and economy. Sources of information and economic-financial analysis are the basis of assessing local public services performance.

The development and socio-economic performance of local public services requires a local capacity, based on the formulation of answers and remarks to questions and attitudes of citizens, as a result of demographic, economic, cultural, educational, technological and social changes.

The development and socio-economic performance of local public services requires a local capacity, based on formulating answers and remarks to questions and attitudes of citizens, as a result of demographic, economic, cultural, educational, technological and social changes.

In order to ensure a social climate conducive to coexistence in a community, a positive balance must be struck between the role of public authorities, by means of local public services, and the role of citizens as direct or indirect beneficiaries of public services.

The legislative framework for public services, including regional ones, is deficient and each local authority must focus its financial and human efforts on setting up, maintaining and developing local public services, against fierce competition from the private sector.

In Romania, benchmarking is very little used, but the European funds financing of some projects that help central or territorial administrative structures introduce this concept is encouraging, as the public sector, regardless of its level, central, territorial or local, wants to have quality public services. For this, it must identify the elements involved in the process of assessing public services performance.

Benchmarking can help local public services, as using this tool identifies best practices in their field, motivates, professionally and non-professionally, the staff involved by developing their activities, reduces or eliminates rigid behavior towards change, identifies and uses the latest technologies.

The demands of the public sector are based on understanding public interest, in terms of decision-making processes and their impact on actions taken to meet the social needs of the community. Therefore, the values of the public service must be delimited from the values of the employees who provide the public service. The delimitation of values must take into account the personal and professional values of employees, executors and managers, their size and diversity, but also their quantification and evaluation of the community made up of citizens, as beneficiaries of public services. The values of the public service, as an organization, are based on legislative,

economic, functional and technical values, and the values of public sector employees are based on professionalism, ethics, equity and motivation. The result of the two sets of values is materialized in the values of the citizen, who must be involved in their activity, as an evaluator of public services and employees' capacities to ensure efficient public services.



Representation of public service-employee-citizen values

Source: elaborated by the author

Value creation will require the approach of a management based on a value system, which is achieved by defining a strategy, by applying change management, by the way of communication and by the evaluation performed.

The purpose of managers, employees, but also of citizens is to identify their common values, which can be embodied in codes, regulations or declarations of value. The correlation of values must take into account the public interest of the institution, the interest of employees and the interest of citizens. Thus, the interest of the public service is to provide citizens with high-standard services, the interest of employees is to support and develop the provision of services to citizens, and the interest of citizens is to benefit from competitive and quality services.

The public interest and the security of public services must intersect with the impartiality and neutrality of employees, but also with the satisfaction of citizens, so values are less focused on procedures and more on achieving objectives.

Chapter II. The current framework of the local public services system in South-Eastern Romania

This chapter deals with the involvement of local public services in the social life of a community and the application of the private management style that determines the combination of notions and concepts between public administration and management.

So that the public service might respond to a social need, it must display several characteristics, which derive from the very nature of social life. Thus, the public service must be of public interest, which means that the social need is a general one and providing it covers a large area of the population whose satisfaction is close to or should be close to the maximum. The service provided to the community is public, if it is regulated by normative acts or administrative acts that stipulate their regulatory framework, giving it the legality of its activity; under other conditions, we are talking about a private service, connected or complementary to the public service. The satisfaction of the public interest is performed as a will of the legislator which confers prerogatives of public power or public power on the entity and its employees.

The public interest determines the continuity and rhythmicity of a public service, based on the material and financial resources of the state or of the public authority that established the respective public service. Moreover, the existence of a public service is not justified if the principle

of equality is not observed for citizens, in the sense that they can equally benefit from the public service and only their option to give it up determines the non-use of that service.

The organization and functioning of local public services, put into practice by its managers, must ensure compliance with legal regulations in the administrative, economic, managerial, commercial, public and private field, meeting the requirements of the community and the special need that led to its establishment, service quality public provided for the community, the operation in conditions of efficiency and profitability of the entire mechanism.

As the tutelary authority of the established entities, the local councils / county councils must ensure the observance of the principles, rules and procedures of organization and functioning. By using material, human and financial resources, support is provided for the development of services, control over the organization and operation and setting policies for applying fees and charges for services provided to the community in terms of efficiency and meeting the needs of the community and satisfying public interest. On the other hand, the entity must take all measures to comply with specific legislation and regulations established by the local public administration and pursue the management of the public service under conditions of efficiency and effectiveness that must respond promptly to requests from recipients of services received, and comply with e conditions established as a result of its delegation.

The factors that directly influence the evaluation of an organization are: the size of the organization, the technology used in maintaining and developing activity, the internal and external environment of the organization, the citizens. Any deviation or change in one of these factors leads to adaptability of the organizational structure and culture.

The effects of economic and social and environmental development in a community have led to the imposition of a management system. Thus, the public service was regarded as and eventually became an instrument of economic strategy but without a substantiated basis, it rather became a coordinator for the private sector, becoming a coercive tool for it. The fundamental difference between management systems and the conditions of occupying the managerial position refers both to the aspects of specific conditions, of flexibility and fluidization, at a certain moment of satisfying the social need, as well as to the civic behavior of the society and to the organizational behavior.

An analysis of local public services in South-Eastern Romania is important, from several perspectives, namely: territorial positioning, organization and functioning, strategies at the level of local public services, human resources / staff within local public services, financial and infrastructure aspects of local public services, cooperation / collaboration and relationship with citizens, e-administration / digitization and the impact of the policy on local public services. Thus, the brief SWOT matrix of the local public services system in the counties of South-Eastern Romania is presented as follows:

| STRONG POINTS | WEAK POINTS |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Strategic geographical positioning, having, on the extent of the region, all forms of relief ❖ Establishment and functioning in each commune, city and county, as an administrative-territorial unit, of deliberative and executive authorities ❖ Implementing the computerized document management system in many public services, especially in urban areas ❖ Staff categories for different local public services: civil servants, civil servants with special status, contract staff, local police officers, teachers, medical staff, local elected officials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Major discrepancies between urban and rural areas, in terms of social, economic, demographic and even political aspects ❖ The local public services, at the level of the communes, are provided by compartments within the executive public authority, respectively the mayor's office, and not by the establishment of some local public services with legal personality. ❖ Low quality of management and execution processes, with negative impact on achieving the fundamental objective of public management |

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ High volume of non-refundable grants ❖ Existence of administrative, medical, educational, cultural, sports, etc. offices. ❖ Existence of the right to petition the deliberative, executive and public services authorities ❖ Existence of IT support for internal and external users of local public services ❖ Functional relations on multiple levels existing between county level institutions with local level ones, but also with NGOs ❖ Political configuration in local deliberative authorities, according to the results of the local elections in the administrative-territorial unit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Mobility of human resources in another field than the one at the basis ❖ Poor or inadequate endowment of local public authorities / public services at the level of some communes ❖ Low interest in setting up and developing sectoral clusters ❖ Low or non-existent addressability of public service beneficiaries to their rights and expectations ❖ Lack of an assessment of local public services performance by citizens ❖ Failure to comply with computer network security policies ❖ Direct or indirect political influences on the activity of local public services |
| OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Infrastructure development in rural areas with external financing ❖ Developing and strengthening the administrative capacity of local public authorities, especially the possibility for smaller or geographically isolated localities to have access to information resources and specialists in different fields of activity of local public services ❖ Criteria for evaluating the staff according to the institutional behavior towards citizens ❖ Existence of European and non-European funding sources ❖ Correlation of annual public procurement plans with real and priority needs of the community ❖ Involvement of associative structures in solving the problems of the local community (LAGs, FLAGs) ❖ Development and frequent use of the right to petition, as an indicator for evaluating local public services performance ❖ Citizens' participation in evaluating local public services performance ❖ Existence of feedback from citizens through IT systems and quantification of improving the activity of local public services, by resolving notifications, complaints and suggestions from citizens ❖ Creating a politically neutral legislative management system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increasing zonal, inter- and intra-regional differences ❖ Marginalization and even disappearance of rural areas through depopulation ❖ Poor local public service infrastructure as compared to the requirements and needs of communities ❖ Legislative changes that are not to the advantage of local public services or the existence of an incomplete, deficient and unstable legislative framework ❖ Increasing local bureaucracy, with immediate effects on providing local public services ❖ Decentralization of public services, without providing funding ❖ Failure to use modern tools in assessing local public services performance ❖ Fierce competition from the private sector ❖ Deterioration of infrastructure without making investments to maintain its functional and development parameters ❖ Low interest from citizens in using the citizens' initiative ❖ Impossibility of assessing local public services performance by citizens, as direct beneficiaries of services ❖ Unclear and inconsistent legislative framework in the field of IT procurement ❖ Politically unstable deliberative authorities, generating conflicts and potential blockages at local level |

Source: edited by the author

Analyzing the system of local public services in the South-Eastern Romania allows us to find that local public services are closely related to the need of the community in which they are established and, depending on the size of the community, they meet social needs. The continuity and rhythmicity of the local public services activity are based on the material and financial resources of the state or of the public authority that established the respective structure. In fact, we are witnessing a change in the role of a public service, a change that is necessary both for citizens and for those who have a decisive role in assessing its performance. The evolution and development of management imposed the adoption and observance of regulations, procedures, performance indicators, etc.

Chapter III. Assessing local public services performance

This chapter aimed at studying the perception on assessing local public services performance and, implicitly, on the methods of assessing local public services performance to answer a series of questions on the involvement / non-involvement of respondents in solving / resolving complaints, notifications and suggestions submitted by citizens at local public entities.

For a local public service to be successful and providing it at high standards, management must be based on:

- 📖 development strategy, in which clear, concise and real objectives are set;
- 📖 present and future economic analysis in close connection with concrete objectives;
- 📖 detailed knowledge of local public services beneficiary sector - citizens, customers, beneficiaries, taxpayers, etc., to whom it provides local public services;
- 📖 the exact and concrete development of the internal processes and procedures, which lead to providing local public services, both for the managerial level and for the execution level;
- 📖 the competences, responsibilities, attributions and abilities of the personnel sector, directly or indirectly involved in providing local public services.

Therefore, the objective character of this concept is based on financial and non-financial objectives, the influence of the internal and external environment of the factors influencing duration as medium and short time, as well as indicators of management and executors.

With regard to the local public services provided by the authorities, the scientific approach tried to identify the frequency of local public services use by citizens, respectively of tingling by the public sector, and, based on all these, we identified indicators corresponding to each category of services frequently used, in order to ensure the correlation in the modeling of the manager-citizen binomial.

Table regarding the frequency of providing / use of local public services to / by managers / citizens

| Local public services | Citizens | Managers |
|--|----------|----------|
| Other services | 31,51% | 40% |
| Conservation, restoration of and capitalizing on historical and architectural monuments, parks, public gardens and nature reserves | 10,61% | 18,82% |
| Social housing or housing units owned or administered by the administrative-territorial unit | 11,86% | 19,41% |
| None | 1,56% | 1.18% |
| Social and community administration services | 17% | 26,47% |
| Culture services | 31,2% | 22,35% |
| Education services | 38,22% | 27,65% |
| People registration services and civil status services | 24,02% | 21,76% |
| Public order services | 23,87% | 25.29% |
| Environmental protection and restoration services | 13,57% | 17,06% |
| Health services in hospital units under local authority | 28,55% | 22,94% |
| Urban development services | 13,42% | 19,41% |
| Social services for the protection of children, the disabled, the elderly, the family and other persons or groups with special needs | 15,13% | 25,29% |
| Community services of public utility: water supply, natural gas, sewerage, sanitation, thermal energy, public lighting and local public transport, as applicable | 62,71% | 25,29% |
| Tax services (taxes and fees) | 36,51% | 20% |

| Local public services | Citizens | Managers |
|---|----------|----------|
| Mountain rescue, lifeguard and first aid services | 4,06% | 11,18% |
| Emergencies | 17,78% | 18,82% |
| Sports and youth services | 23,87% | 25,53% |

Source: edited by the author


In the perception of the respondents among the citizens, as beneficiaries of the local public services, there is frequent differentiated use. Thus, according to the majority of respondents, 62.71% frequently use community services of public utility, which shows the need to ensure a comfortable life by using water supply, natural gas, sewerage, sanitation, heat, public lighting and public transport locally, as applicable. At the opposite pole there are respondents, 4.06% of whom use emergency services such as mountain rescue, lifeguard and first aid, determined by the location of the events, respectively land, sea, naval and air.


In the perception of local public sector employee-respondents, we found that the local public services provided to the citizens, whose financing comes from the local budget but not only, are in different percentages, depending on the specificity of each locality. These services are provided through the specialized apparatus of the mayor, through organizational structures of local interest under the local or county authority, with legal personality. The majority of respondents believe that the high frequency services provided are those related to education, and the lowest frequency services are those of mountain rescue, lifeguard and first aid, determined by their seasonal nature or depending on the needs of the community.


In order for local public services to align with new management concepts and modern management requirements, managers must be concerned with local public services performance and take into account citizens, as beneficiaries of public services, management employees and execution, suppliers, the guardianship authority and the community.

Hypotheses of scientific research

To develop methods for properly assessing local public services performance, we used the modeling of analytical-qualitative indicators designed relying on the two questionnaires applied to employees' managers in local public entities and to citizens. The variables were selected from among the most representative in relation to the purpose of the research and the following working hypotheses:

 Hypothesis no. 1 - the greater the experience of managers and citizens using local public services, the more satisfied their use is with the development of a feedback system for resolving / solving complaints, notifications and suggestions from citizens;

 Hypothesis no. 2 - under conditions of legislative stability, the perception of the response as a consequence of citizens' submission of complaints, notifications and suggestions differs between the two categories (providers and beneficiaries of local public services), regarding the stratification of options according to experience and applicability of rules for providing / receiving the answer, these variations being motivated by intrinsic professional factors and by opinion regulating functions regarding trust in local public authorities;

 Hypothesis no. 3 - regardless of the incidence category of local public services, the usefulness of assessing their activity by citizens is highly perceived formally (procedures, work processes, regulations), but also action-related (providing qualitative service), thus resulting in a direction of action with a view to introducing, at the level of the current instrumentation range, the evaluation method containing citizen feed-back / opinion;

📖 Hypothesis no. 4 - organization management can become a tool to increase local public services performance, if and only if the opinion of citizens is assimilated to a program mean to adjust the indicators of service delivery, in accordance with available organizational resources;

📖 Hypothesis no. 5 - local public services performance can be achieved by using the results of employee evaluations, as a result of resolving complaints, notifications and suggestions submitted by citizens, with reference to human resources involved in providing services if and only if they devise a periodic, non-accusing training tool, which becomes functional / able to be implemented.

Research methodology

To analyze and evaluate the performance of local public services, a quantitative study was carried out based on two questionnaires: a questionnaire addressed to managers, civil servants, contract staff and/or local elected officials and a second questionnaire addressed to citizens, as beneficiaries of local public services in the South-East Region of Romania.

The questionnaire for managers, civil servants, contract staff and other staff in local public services targeted people directly involved in the work of local public services and insiders with knowledge of various categories of issues. Subjects answered 30 questions, structured to identify, as accurately as possible, certain problematic issues and with real possibilities to provide solutions. The questionnaire was distributed in the South-East Region of Romania, to the six county councils of Brăila, Buzău, Constanța, Galați, Tulcea and Vrancea, to the town halls of the county municipalities, which in turn distributed it to the entities organized under the local deliberative and executive public authorities.

The citizens' questionnaire contains 25 questions addressed to citizens in their capacity as direct beneficiaries of local public services and as people who are aware of the various categories of problems in and around their locality. This questionnaire was distributed among the adult population in the South-East Region of Romania.

The two questionnaires were developed and computer-edited using google.forms.com to allow respondents to access them on their phone, tablet, computer and automatically open the questionnaire after installing and opening a mobile web browser such as Chrome. The sending and collection of the two questionnaires to the two categories of respondents was done in the online environment for them to complete and return for centralization and interpretation.

To conduct the research, qualitative and quantitative methods were used in several stages as follows:

📖 The research, in the first stage, was focused on identifying, monitoring and analyzing the literature in the field of local public services and the methods of assessing the performance of local public services (specialized articles, books and treatises of Romanian and foreign authors, official websites of local public entities, legislation).

📖 The second stage of the research consisted of a documentary analysis of local public administration legislation, local public services, methods of evaluating the performance of local public services and categories of staff in the local public sector;

📖 In the third stage of the research, the theoretical and practical involvement of citizens in community life in their locality of residence was identified, as well as the evaluation of the performance of local public services, and the way in which local public authorities collaborate with the beneficiaries of local public services, through the evaluation of their performance and the establishment of criteria for the choice of respondents;

📖 The design and development of the two questionnaires was the fourth stage of the research;

- 📖 The fifth stage of the research consisted in disseminating the questionnaires to the categories of respondents in the South-East Region of Romania;
- 📖 The sixth stage of the research focused on the collection and interpretation of information from the two questionnaires by categories of respondents, as well as mirror analysis and interpretation of some aspects;
- 📖 The final stage of the research is focused on formulating proposals for methods to evaluate the performance of local public services and the drafting of the final material.

Presentation of the research target group:

The research has two target groups of respondents:

- 📖 staff of local public entities in the South-East Region of Romania: mayor, president of the county council or deputy mayor, vice-president of the county council, director-general or deputy director-general, executive director or deputy executive director, director or deputy director, public administrator, if applicable, head of department, head of office, compartment coordinator, head of department, coordinator of a structure without legal personality.
- 📖 adults, beneficiaries of local public services in the South-East Region of Romania.

Public entities of local interest in the six counties of the South-East Development Region of Romania (Buzău, Brăila, Constanța, Galați, Tulcea, Vrancea) are: county councils, town halls of the county municipalities, companies in which the state or local/county authorities are shareholders, autonomous companies in which the state or local/county authorities are shareholders, public institutions subordinated to local/county councils, public services subordinated to local/county councils.

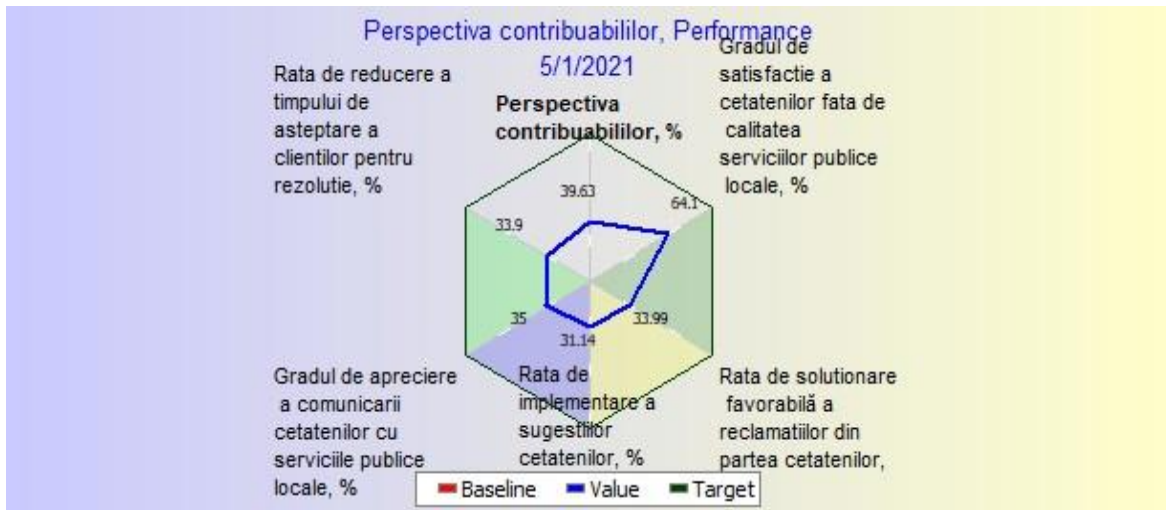
Chapter IV. Modelling local public services performance by assessing the manager-citizen binomial

Following the modelling, we found that improving the performance of local public services through the resolution of complaints, notifications and suggestions is a viable alternative for performance both by the value they bring, if they are constructive and real, and by using this tool to increase the efficiency of employees, improve the opinion of citizens and increase their confidence in the quality of local public services, thus constituting conditions for the action of objective evaluation of local public services performance.

These two poles, the manager and the citizen, place local public service on the input-output range of the local public service production process. Thus, the citizen as beneficiary is the countermeasure for establishing the declarative veracity of the objectives completed at the end of a strategic planning cycle. The declarative path of achievement of performance targets is modified by the extent of the interaction of working conditions (funding) with national or local strategic objectives as appropriate, undertaken through public commitments assigned to events in sequence.

Under the influence of public opinion, performance targets have been centered under different slogans over time, and electoral pessimism has required a change of strategy in this area as well, with the slogan “deeds, not words” increasingly heard in the public arena, proving that the impact of citizen opinion is significant and cannot be ignored as long as the electoral dimension allows citizens to change their opinions on a regular basis.

The figure below shows very low values for four indicators related to the taxpayers' (citizens') perspective, which are not correlated with their rather high level of satisfaction with the services they receive.

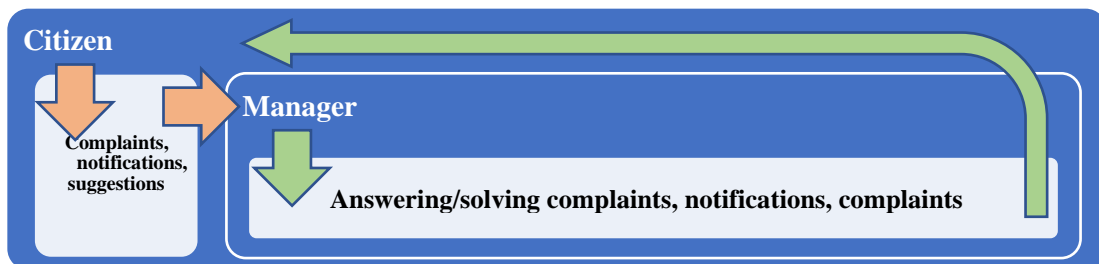


Representation by a spider graph of the performance of indicators associated with the citizens/taxpayers/customers' perspective

Source: elaborated by the author

Based on the above considerations, we have designed, starting from the two questionnaires presented in the scientific approach, a comparative study based on the duality of managerial-citizen opinion on dual indicators indexed on recognition keys in the two questionnaires applied independently and statistically representative of local public sector managers and citizens in the South-East Region of Romania. The criterion for segregating the questionnaires was performance in different forms and citizens' opinion as a means of assessing performance and quality of local public services.

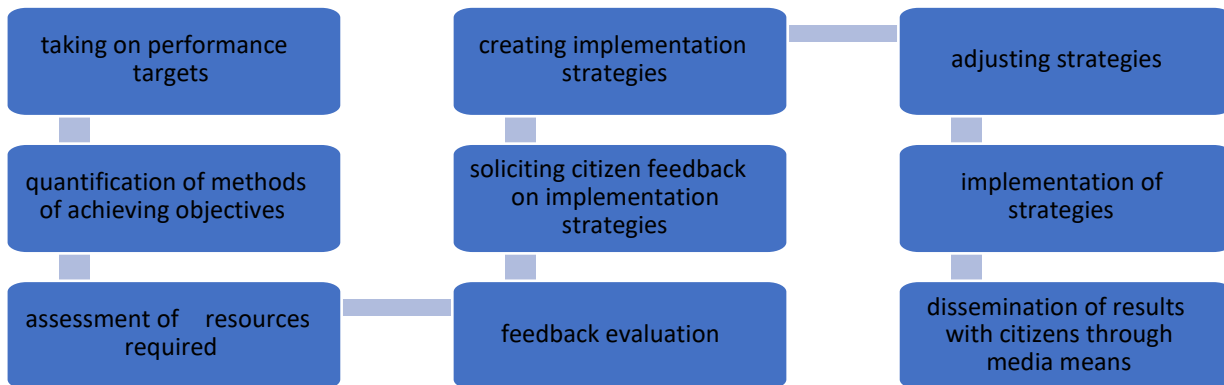
The evaluation of the efficiency of the handling of complaints, notifications and suggestions in terms of the response to citizens' complaints is a particularly important indicator in the evaluation equation of the manager-citizen duality of opinion since, on the one hand, complaints, notifications and suggestions emanate directly from citizens as a response/feedback to certain problems they have encountered or situations they have faced, and on the other hand, the managers' response represents the action of correcting/recognizing the deficiency with direct impact on the performance and quality of local public services. In this case, the interdependence relationships presented can be schematically represented in the figure below:



Flow chart of complaints, notifications and suggestions submitted by citizens to local public services

Source: elaborated by the author

We believe that a methodology for implementing citizen feedback in the evaluation and reporting of local public services should be identified, which should be integrated into both the evaluation branch and the branch for correcting criteria invalidated by feedback. On the basis of the methodology for assessing the dualism of opinion, we can define a logical scheme of methodological implementation as follows:



Logical scheme of methodological implementation of the improvement of local public services through citizen feedback

Source: elaborated by the author

Comparison of the two opinion profiles, managers-citizens, in 17 selected items gives the overall picture of adjustable differences in local public service performance according to the diagram below, which demonstrates citizen pessimism versus managerial optimism with reference to local public service performance evaluation.



Performance evaluation of public services managerial versus citizen profile

Source: elaborated by the author

The handling of proposals, suggestions, complaints and/or notifications from citizens by managers, civil servants, contract staff and other staff in local public services can be a method of evaluating the performance of local public services, so that the citizen, as a beneficiary of the services, becomes a partner of the managers, local public services and the supervisory authorities under whose authority the services operate.

It is noted that the perception of citizens towards the local public sector is to support it, in order to improve the activity and management practiced, through the tools they have in this regard: complaints, notifications, suggestions and citizens' initiatives, thus becoming a reliable partner to strengthen the manager-citizen binomial.

Chapter V. Conclusions, contributions, proposals, research limits and future research interests

This chapter aims at presenting and developing solutions for integrating the resolving / solving of citizens' complaints, notifications and suggestions, as a method of assessing local public services performance, with conclusions on local public services performance, contributions, the usefulness of the research topic and proposals regarding the development of methods used to assess local public services performance.

In order to be able to talk about performance management, we have to tackle the issue of managerial rigor in the sense of in-detail knowing the activities and performance levels that are taken into consideration for local public services. A first step is to identify the performance objectives and then the competencies through which the performance can be achieved, so that through the decisions that will be taken one might ensure the processes through which each activity will contribute to the overall performance of the organization. The compatibility between organization performance and organizational behavior must be achieved unconditionally and based on the values of the organization, in order to achieve performance and, implicitly, a quantitative and qualitative quantification of it.

The functionality of performance management will be focused on the rigor of compliance with the strategy to achieve performance, which requires a conceptual modeling so that solutions adopted and implemented might ensure the survival and success of the organization, by increasing competitiveness internally and externally.

The activity of local public services has a life curve, just like the services and goods they offer. In order for the activity of local public services to have a life channeled towards performance, it must take into account the nature and flexibility of the field, the competitive market, the logistics and the technology used but also the strategies defined. These elements will help local public services to position themselves in the services market alongside the administrative market. Specific tools and their use must take into account the competitive environment and gain leverage, by mobilizing all resources in one direction, towards performance.

Differentiating the services and products offered by local public services from those in the private sector will show the efficient capacity of local public services and their perception in the community, although, due to the monopoly in some areas, we may be faced with a false competitive advantage, as there is only one service provider to the community.

The performance system of local public services must be oriented towards the behaviors of public services beneficiaries, whether they are individuals or legal entities and must be influenced by their expectations, so that through the management of activities they could provide services that meet the beneficiaries' needs, at an efficient level. Approaching, avoiding, using or

abandoning certain categories of public services is a complex phenomenon of assessing their performance or not and managers are obliged to think of policies, strategies, methods, procedures, techniques and methodologies to maintain or change beneficiaries' behavior. The frequency of favorable behaviors towards public services shows their efficient progress, because, by maintaining this type of behavior, a high level of performance is acknowledged, and vice versa.

Citizen orientation is a slogan frequently used by public service managers and in recent years has become a principle underlying performance establishment and assessment. Thus, the public service must address the needs of as many beneficiaries as possible and become actors in the process of maximizing benefits for both parties.

Citizens and local public services become partner-actors in measuring performance and establishing the strengths and weaknesses of public services, which required the introduction of necessary statistical indicators in their work.

The evaluation of public services must be viewed from several perspectives, namely: the evaluation of managers, the evaluation of funding and the actual evaluation of public services carried out by citizens. It helps identify the dynamics and professional development of the human resource and must be related to the zonal specificity of the community and the organization managerial component.

In order to satisfy a public interest of a community, based on public autonomy, there must be a direct link between what the public authority can offer and the specific needs of the community. Thus, the tutelary public authority provides and finances a service of public interest, in correlation with the needs of the citizens. If it takes a different or incomplete decision to provide local public services, it will not be possible to manage it efficiently and the quality of the service will be affected, sometimes from the very beginning, and citizens will realize that one of their public needs is not fulfilled.

Personal contributions

Personal contributions to the scientific approach are theoretical, in terms of identifying and analyzing the concept of local public service performance and methods identified by customizing the assessment of local public service performance, but also of a practical nature, in terms of developing evaluation methods of local public services, as well as the development of methods meant to assess local public services performance within local public services, compared to the resolution of complaints, notifications and suggestions registered from citizens regarding the improvement of local public services activity.

Disseminating research results in the academic and scientific community

✦ **Elaboration and publication of articles in specialized journals and volumes of scientific manifestations (including in ISI Proceedings volumes), as sole author, first author or corresponding author**

📖 Tincuța Vrabie, Geanina Colan, Aura Colan, Monica Răducan, *Quality Management in Public Institutions: Meaning and Implications*, PROCEEDINGS OF THE 13th International Management Conference "Management Strategies For High Performance" 31st October – 1st November, 2019, Bucharest, ROMÂNIA, ISSN 2286-1440, 2019;179-186, WOS:000587901000018, (13th International Management Conference on Management Strategies for High Performance (IMC)). (http://conferinta.management.ase.ro/archives/2019/pdf/1_18.pdf).

📖 Monica Răducan, Tincuța Vrabie, Nicoleta Cristache, Liviu Marian Popa, *A Strategic Approach to Human Resource Management in Romanian Pre-University Education*, Proceedings Of The 13th International Management Conference “Management Strategies For High Performance” 31st October – 1st November, 2019, Bucharest, ROMÂNIA, ISSN 2286-1440, 2019;931-940, WOS:000587901000092, (13th International Management Conference on Management Strategies for High Performance (IMC)).
(http://conferinta.management.ase.ro/archives/2019/pdf/4_15.pdf).

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📖 Tincuța Gudană Vrabie, Angela-Eliza Micu, Public Services Management Efficiency from the Perspective of the Adaptability Degree in the Field of Public Utilities, *Annals of “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați Fascicle I. Economics and Applied Informatics Years XXVII*, 2021;1:17-23, Print ISSN-L 1584-0409, ISSN-Online 2344-441X,
(<https://doi.org/10.35219/eai15840409162>),
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(http://www.eia.feaa.ugal.ro/images/eia/2020_1/Raducan_Vrabie_Colan_Colan_Cristache_Cristia.pdf).


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❖ **Participating in and graduating courses organized within IOSUD Galati – The Doctoral School of Humanities and Social Sciences;**

❖ **Participating in and delivering didactic activities as a collaborating professor within “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration;**

❖ **Being awarded the HONORABLE MENTION within the Scientific Conference of the SCDS-UDJG Doctoral Schools, Section: Economic models and competitiveness strategies, “Perspectives and challenges in doctoral research”, June 2019, Galați, for presenting the paper “The Performance of Public Services and the Need for Continuous Training in Public Administration”, as sole author;**

✦ **Being awarded 2nd prize for obtaining research results as a PhD student within IOSUD-UDJG in 2020, IOSUD, Galați – “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Doctoral School of Humanities and Social Sciences;**

✦ **Cited (in IDB articles) for two articles**

- 📖 Monica Raducan, Tincuța Vrabie, Aura Colan, Gianina Colan, Nicoleta Cristache, Vasile Cristia, The Influence of Management Style and Socio-Cultural Factors on the Education System in the European Union Countries, *Annals of "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Fascicle I. Economics and Applied Informatics Years XXVI, 2020;26(1):115-120*, Print ISSN-L 1584-0409, Online ISSN 2344-441X, (<http://www.eia.feaa.ugal.ro/index.php/archive/2020-no-1>), http://www.eia.feaa.ugal.ro/images/eia/2020_1/Raducan_Vrabie_Colan_Colan_Cristache_Cristia.pdf).
- 📖 Tincuța Vrabie, Geanina Colan, Aura Colan, Monica Răducan, Quality Management in Public Institutions: Meaning and Implications, *PROCEEDINGS OF The 13th International Management Conference “Management Strategies For High Performance” 31st October – 1st November, 2019, Bucharest, România, ISSN 2286-1440, 2019;179-186, WOS:000587901000018*, (13th International Management Conference on Management Strategies for High Performance (IMC)). (http://conferinta.management.ase.ro/archives/2019/pdf/1_18.pdf).

Suggestions to develop methods of assessing local public services performance

- 📖 Use of modern methods of assessing local public services performance, such as Balance Scorecard (BSC), performance indicators (KPIs), bench marketing, performance pyramid system (SPP), Neely and Adams performance prism model and, adapted to local public services, the public service values model (PSV) as well;
- 📖 Creation of a section on the local public services website, accessible to citizens, through which citizens can submit complaints, suggestions and notifications and identify the degree of their participation in institutional performance and how to improve their activity;
- 📖 Carrying out experience exchanges, seminars or courses among local public services in the same field of activity, regarding ways of solving complaints, notifications and suggestions of citizens with a view to developing methods of assessing local public services performance in a unitary way;
- 📖 The use by all local public services of computer programs adapted and designed to deal with a large amount of information coming from citizens and used by managers, to verify and resolve complaints, notifications and suggestions of citizens, but also to adapt them to increase local public services performance;
- 📖 Carrying out analyzes on various topics of complaints, notifications and suggestions, through which we could use the managers’ findings, in order to increase the local public sector performance;
- 📖 Communicating the results of resolving complaints, notifications and suggestions of citizens to the media through press conferences, for better visibility of improving the activity of local public services, as a result of the involvement of citizens with a civic spirit;
- 📖 Regular meetings of all managers within local public services with citizens on various topics, in order to improve collaboration with them;

- 📖 The use of a performance indicator for managers and local public services, regarding the manner of solving the complaints, notifications and suggestions of the citizens and the implementation of the solutions in the institutional development;
- 📖 Active involvement of all public authorities, in order to facilitate the experience exchange in each field of activity of local public services;
- 📖 Encouraging managers, civil servants / contract staff and local elected officials towards professional development, as well as identifying facilities to reduce their reluctance to get involved in solving community issues, which would increase institutional performance and ensure activity without syncope;
- 📖 Establishing and awarding of the Complaint of the Year and Manager of the Year awards at the level of tutoring authorities within local public services, in order to stimulate the collaboration with the citizens so as to improve activity with the managers and vice versa.

These proposals aimed at developing methods of assessing local public services performance can improve the image and credibility of the local public sector, employees and their outcomes in the community, so that public interest is achieved through interdependent manager-citizen collaboration.

Future research interests

Starting from the results of this scientific approach framed by the limits of research, but also by the series of research opportunities, the following future research directions can be outlined:

- 📖 Clear and concrete definition of the indicators regarding the resolution of complaints, notifications and suggestions, in order to improve the activity of local public services;
- 📖 Implementation of new tools meant to manage local public services performance, with special attention to complaints, notifications and suggestions from citizens and solutions by local public service managers, through continuous research of the effects and forms of performance improvement, by resolving complaints, notifications and suggestions;
- 📖 Elaboration and proposal of regulation sets on how to improve the activity of local public services and increase the performance of local public services;
- 📖 Extension of research on local public administration units in other regions of the country and performing comparative analysis of these results;
- 📖 Implementation of new regional projects / programs, which can generate benefits to local public administrations but especially to the community, by involving managers at all levels in resolving complaints, notifications and suggestions so as to improve local public services and quantify each improved activity;
- 📖 Studying the role of the managers-citizens binomial, at the level of communities in other regions of Romania and especially at local level;
- 📖 Creating new performance indicators at the level of local public administrations starting from the need to improve the staff, respectively to increase their abilities, competences, and knowledge in order to respond as efficiently as possible to the achievement of the objectives of the local public institutions.

Ethical considerations regarding research

This scientific approach has complied with national and international legislation on professional and academic ethics and deontology, the protection of confidentiality, protection against harm and equality among citizens and the exclusion of privileges and discrimination.

- 📖 The right to informed consent

The respondents of the two questionnaires were informed about the reason, purpose and objectives of the research topic and were informed about the role of the data and information they communicate and how it will be used. Resubmitting the completed questionnaire emphasizes the respondents' acceptance and the fact that they understood the purpose and topic of the research well.

The right to withdraw at any time during the research

All the respondents of the two questionnaires had the right and the possibility to withdraw at any time of the research, respectively withdraw out of filling in the questionnaires, or after reading the questionnaires, they could decide not to fill them in, without justifying the attitude adopted.

Confidentiality

All data and information in the research have been kept confidential and have not been disclosed to others and have not been published until this material has been prepared. Thus, numbers and information non-related to name / surname / emails or functions / institutions were used to identify respondents or local public entities, in all aspects regarding tables, questionnaires and interpretation of results as a result of them being filled in, as well as at the end with research results. Respondents within the local public sector are under the obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the information or documents that they are aware of in exercising their attributions and competences, in accordance with the law.

Protection against harm

The research carried out by the author aimed at respecting the rights and assuming the obligations regarding the possibility of not harming the life and physical and moral integrity of respondents and non-respondents or for their dignity, as well as avoiding causing any damage to their professional and institutional image.

Minors

In conducting research on the author's topic of interest, no minors under 18 were introduced, although they are beneficiaries of local public services and the number of online environment users to apply the questionnaire is significant among this category of population.

Ethics and academic deontology

The present research carried out by the author complied with the legal provisions regarding the ethical and deontological norms of and within the units and institutions of the national education system.

Ethics and public deontology

In all stages of the research, the legal provisions on professional ethics and deontology of managers, civil servants / contract staff and local elected officials, as well as the public entities of which they are part, were observed.

Equality among citizens and the exclusion of privileges and discrimination

In all stages of the research conducted by the author, equality between respondents was ensured and the legal provisions on the prevention of all forms of discrimination were observed.

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B. Selective Bibliography

B.1. Selective general bibliography

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