Development Trends of Human Resources in Public Administration in Slovakia

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Abstract: The paper identifies the critical factors in the development of public administration in Slovakia by 2030, considering human resources development, innovation, and digitization. The aim of the paper is to characterize the mission and functions of the public administration, the most significant trends in human resources development and measures necessary to facilitate innovations and upgrading in the public administration. The paper considers the valid legislation, data analysis and development trends in the public administration sector in Slovakia, including the quantity, quality and competitiveness of human resources potential and the digitization of public administration and the innovations in the labour market. The public administration sector performs the tasks entrusted by the state, framed, and defined by the public interest. The public administration sector has a cross-sectional character and shows intersections with other sectors.

1. INTRODUCTION

In its essence, public administration represents the administration of public affairs, which is implemented as a manifestation of executive powers on behalf of the state. Public administration is carried out on behalf of the public interest and is carried out by subjects as an obligation imposed by legal norms. Public administration ensures the executive function (in relation to the legislative body of power) through governmental and non-governmental institutions.

From an organizational point of view, the system of public administration institutions in the Slovak Republic integrates the goals and functions of state administration and self-government. The central state authorities and the territorial state administration are mainly focused on the implementation of the interests and demands of the state. Self-government institutions, including territorial (regional and municipal) self-government and public corporations, have an autonomous status at all levels of the administrative division of the country.

The main goal of public administration entities is to fulfil the tasks of the state and provide services to citizens. The mission of the territorial self-government is the management of the entrusted territory, provision of services to citizens and investment and development activities of the territorial self-government. In cases stipulated by law, it also performs tasks of the state, which are delegated to territorial self-government as transferred performance of central state administration.

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Human resources in public administration represent human potential, which is made up of all elected representatives and employees in public administration. In addition to the quantitative characteristics of human potential, such as number and structure, human potential also includes qualitative aspects, such as education, culture, morality, interpersonal relations, and others.

2. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SECTOR IN SLOVAKIA

From the point of view of the sectoral distribution of the economy, the basic goal of the public administration sector is to fulfil the main tasks of the state, which are defined by the public interest, through individual parts. Compared to other sectors, the public administration sector is specific mainly because it has a cross-sectional character. This means that it comes to frequent intersections with other sectors, both in terms of the entities it includes and in terms of the tasks it provides. These are primarily the areas that fall under the public sector, especially education, healthcare, and social services. The basic value conditioning the operation of the entire public administration sector is the public interest.

Some sectors, including subjects of the private sphere, are partially connected with public administration. This mainly results from the fact that, in most cases, there is a system of public authorities that regulate the rules of operation of a specific sector (including the private sector) by legal authority. Public authorities, especially central state administration bodies, fulfil a regulatory and control function vis-à-vis the private sphere (e.g., energy, transport, computerization, etc.)

Employment of highly professional and qualified employees must be provided for public administration. To hire and retain employees, the public administration must be particularly competitive and improve the working conditions. Many approaches that are applicable in the management of human resources in the private sector can also be applied in public administration. However, the specificities of public administration, such as the scope, structure, and mission, representing a public policy and public interest, must be considered.

According to Trexima Bratislava (2022) in Slovakia, as many as 169,000 workers are employed in the public services and administration sector (according to SK NACE Rev.2 category "Public administration and defence; mandatory social security"). In terms of the number of employees, the most important employers in the public service sector are large “power” ministries. The largest employer in the sector is the Ministry of the Interior (police officers, firefighters, district office employees, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the employer</th>
<th>Size category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of the Interior SR</td>
<td>30 000 employees and more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defence SR</td>
<td>10 000 – 19 999 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR</td>
<td>5 000 – 9 999 employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Administration SR</td>
<td>5 000 – 9 999 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Insurance</td>
<td>5 000 – 9 999 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison and Court Guard Service</td>
<td>3 000 – 4 999 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development SR</td>
<td>3 000 – 4 999 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Insurance VšZP, a.s.</td>
<td>2 000 – 2 999 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs SR</td>
<td>1 000 – 1 999 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Administration of Bratislava, the capital of SR</td>
<td>500 – 999 employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the age of the employees in public administration, the Human Resource Development Strategy in the Public Services and Law Sector highlights that the sector belongs among the sectors with older employees (47 years old on average), while the share of women is approximately 73%. According to the Ministry of Finance SR (2020), the share of university-educated employees in the sector is more than 70%, and out of the total number of jobs, the positions of specialists and management positions represent a share of 30%. Approximately 42% of employees graduated from the field of education which is optimal regarding the position they perform. Average hourly earnings in this sector in 2021 as stated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR & Trexima Bratislava (2021). According to the ISCP (Information System on the Price of Work) was 10 euros per hour, compared at the same time with the private sector "Information and Communication" where the average hourly earnings were 13.27 euros per hour.

3. EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Human capital, accumulated through education, training, information gathering, investments in health, and investments in personal qualities, represents human potential as an economic investment. An individual's predisposition to a certain group of jobs is achieved by the assessment and compliance of the individual's human capital with the respective requirements of employers.

As stated by Dudová (2022) the concept of competence, as an indication of qualities of human capital, emerged in connection with the transformation of necessary knowledge into individual activities in new forms of work organization. The concept of competence gained significance in relation to the acceleration of changes in the field of work, which require the adaptation of workers to permanent changes, characteristic of the current period.

The concept of competence can be defined as a group of characteristics, attitudes, acquired knowledge and personal abilities (aptitudes) that affect excellent performance. The understanding of competence is no longer tied to a specific qualification but goes beyond it.

Digital competence is one of the eight key competences that are of fundamental importance to an individual. This competence includes self-confident, critical, and responsible use of digital technologies in education, work, and society as a whole, as well as interaction with digital technologies. According to Ferrari (2013), digital competences include information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), security (including digital wellbeing and cyber security competences), intellectual property issues, problem solving and critical thinking.

Skills (part of competences and qualifications) and lifelong learning are key factors in terms of competitiveness, productivity, and innovation. The necessary skills must be acquired during continuous lifelong learning. Adopting digital technologies requires a digitally skilled workforce at all skill levels and across all age groups. European Commission (2020) stated that STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills are essential to use new technologies in ICT and innovation. Cross-cutting skills such as teamwork, critical thinking and creative problem solving are increasingly necessary.

Education and professional development of the workforce is a continuous process of training and upskilling employees to achieve higher performance, and use their skills for the strategic
demands of the company, including training qualified employees, and profiling the professional growth of workers. In public administration, the professional education of officials is a necessity due to the turbulent environment in which they work.

The basic goal of the in-service education of employees in public administration is a high-quality, efficient, and systematic deepening of qualifications within their fields. In public administration, in-service training is a tool that conveys new knowledge and skills necessary for employees in public administration to improve the quality of work.

According to Hamalová et al. (2014), the implementation of systematic in-service education of employees in public administration consists of the following basic types:

a) adaptation education, including adaptation initial study and adaptation preparatory study, intended for employees hired to the public administration from an external environment,

b) deepening of qualifications, aimed at continuing maintenance, improvement and deepening of knowledge, abilities, and skills for the performance of a task in accordance with the employee's job description,

c) specialized qualification study, aimed at the acquisition of special knowledge, abilities, and skills of the employee,

d) retraining represents theoretical and practical training that enables the employee to maintain, increase, expand and change the previous qualification or adapt to technical development for the purpose to retain the employee in the job,

e) functional education, aimed to acquire and develop professional competences necessary for the performance of management activities of senior employees.

The development and focus of the in-service education of managers, employees – specialists and other employees in public administration depend on systemic solutions in human resources management and the setup of institutional, legislative, and financial prerequisites for the implementation of the in-service education.

4. CRITICAL FACTORS AFFECTING HUMAN RESOURCES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

According to the Strategy of Human Resource Development in the Sector of Public Services and Administration by 2030 (2020) the factors affecting human resources in the public administration sector can be classified into political, economic, social, technological, legislative, and ecological.

Political impact in the public services and administration sector is significant. Employees whose activities are politically neutral and focused on professional performance can also be affected by political changes. The problem is the implementation of the personnel policy of representatives of the executive power at central administration state bodies.

Political expectations and demands toward the public administration sector are often contradictory, they change over time, and there is no consensus on the goals and course of public administration development.

In relation to the public administration, there are requirements to reduce expenditures on salaries, cancellation of jobs, while the differences in remuneration compared to the private sector are increasing. Because of that, much professional, sophisticated work, and human resources potential
has been transferred to the private sector. Autonomy of CEOs (top managers) in public administration organizations is low. Therefore, the selection of human resources must be depoliticized.

The economic impacts are mainly derived from the fact that the operation of a public institution is funded by public funding and the distribution of funds between individual budget lines of the state budget. Within the public sector, profit is not a determining factor, but the economic impact is demonstrated in the use of funds that make up the revenue part of the public administration budget. The economic impact is manifested by the limited funding for the adequate remuneration of human resources. The impact of political decisions on the public administration funding is high.

Social effects are mainly associated with demographic development, manifested by a predominance of older workers and a shortage of younger employees in several sectors. There is a risk of a shortage of qualified workforce, following the standard retirement rate of part of the workforce.

Technological impacts are mainly connected with the digitization of public administration, the primary goal of which is to make easier access to services provided by the public sector. Human resources are affected by newly emerged expectations for the skills and knowledge that public administration employees should possess or acquire.

Changes in the expectations of the public (changes in approach, increased degree of digitization and automation of administration) bring pressure on upgrades in process settings, software tools and agenda administration and task management, and problem solving. The population in productive age and the younger generation already understand public administration services as proactive, equipped with a high degree of automation, procedurally interconnected, comprehensible, fast, and transparent, where decision-making should be based on data and evidence. The requirements to increase knowledge and skills at work combined with the command of information and communication technologies, and mastering applications and agenda systems have become necessary prerequisites for occupations in public administration.

There is growing pressure to increase the number of employees with professional knowledge in the IT field. For public administration, the key trends are the technological areas making public administration more efficient. The use of new technologies in public administration can be slowed down by insufficient preparation of employees, financial funding, and technical equipment.

Legislative effects are linked to political factors, international agreements, and EU legislation. The public administration sector is among the heavily regulated industries through numerous legislative standards – laws, decrees, and regulations. Public administration employees are required to know and comply with all relevant legal regulations.

Concerning the ecological impacts of the public administration sector, negative impacts of a secondary nature may arise if the decisions of state authorities and public administration have a negative impact on the environment. Therefore, the control and analytical mechanisms try to prevent direct negative effects on the environment. As regards self-government, citizens strongly perceive the ecological behaviours of self-governments and the field of environmental management.

Important critical factors threatening the competitiveness of the sector include bureaucracy, the length of administration processes, insufficient funding of the public sector, a high share of
small municipalities manifesting in the performance of self-governing competences, the impact of the political cycle on public policies, higher competitiveness of the private sector in the acquisition of human resources, a negative demographic trend towards the increase of older age categories among public administration employees, an insufficient number of professionally trained employees with lower adaptability to new trends, a negative image and low profile of the public sector, the difficulty to improve the reputation of public administration institutions, a high rate of employee turnover and a non-conceptual decrease in the number of jobs.

Positive factors in the public administration development include the nationwide effects of public policies, a sufficient network of educational and training institutions, professionally developed and trained experts and specialists among human resources in the sector, the application of modern principles and procedures of human resources management, the development and implementation of long-term specific projects and relevant reforms extending beyond the election cycle, the improvement of communication, and transparency of public policies.

5. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1. Expected Development of Human Resources in the Public Administration Sector

According to the Human Resources Development Strategy in the Public Services and Administration Sector, an increase in the number of employees in the public administration sector is expected. In the period 2021-2025, the additional demand for employees in the public administration sector should be at the level of approximately 9.3 thousand persons. According to forecasts, the expansionary demand for employees, caused by the expansion of the public administration sector, will decrease and may be zero due to the rationalization of work.

There is a strong share of employees who belong to the over-55 age group. An important challenge will be the replacement of employees, who will gradually retire by new staff. This phenomenon is most evident in the armed forces (policemen, soldiers), where many positions remain vacant for a long time.

The Strategy of Human Resources Development in the Sector of Public Services and Administration by 2030 (2020) stated that the identification of graduates suitable for jobs in the public administration sector is difficult because there are no universities or schools that prepare for the requirements of the public administration sector. However, it is possible to assign types of education to jobs in sectors.

These branches of education also prepare graduates for jobs that are part of other sectors (graduates with broad profiles). According to forecasts, most of the relevant graduates who will enter the labour market in 2021-2025 (approximately 37 thousand) will find employment outside the public administration sector. Therefore, by 2025, a shortage of new graduates entering the sector is expected as the influx of new graduates will be at the level of approximately 3,000 people.

Currently, different regions (counties, districts) have different quantitative and qualitative conditions in the field of human resources. In the overall assessment of human resources potentially usable in the sector of public services and administration at the district level, the influence of a large centre in the district is particularly evident. Districts that include a larger city have higher
potential, especially in terms of demographical development and education. The districts where all regional cities are located, appear to be the most perspective.

Further developments in human resources in the public administration sector will be affected by innovation and technological and process changes. The most significant innovations and innovation trends that will affect this sector are the following:

- the reduction of bureaucracy and departmentalism in public administration,
- digital transformation in public administration,
- new municipal management and new forms of inter-municipal cooperation,
- strategic planning and modern management of human resources,
- multi-channel communication with public administration,
- data integration and the use of big data in public administration,
- automation and semi-automation of processes in public administration agenda,
- smart agenda and network infrastructure development of intelligent management systems,
- shared storage and remote access to agenda and office systems,
- new methods of cyber security provision,
- an increase in cross-border interactions and the increase of single solutions in the EU,
- efficient crisis management.

Innovations that will bring changes to the public administration sector will have an impact on changes in legislation, work content, requirements for employees, the emergence of new professions, inclusion of professions and work content defined elsewhere into the public sector.

However, all changes are conditioned by a high level of normative regulation and the possibility of flexible responses to new requirements. Innovation factors that affect public administration can be divided into three areas – public administration reforms, legislative changes affecting the structure of individual job positions in public administration, external modernization and technological trends and effects.

5.2. Possible Provision for Qualified Human Resources

The basic development trends that will be manifested by 2030 in the field of human resources are based on technological, procedural and innovation changes. The following tendencies can be defined for the field of public administration:

1. professionalization of human resources in public administration,
2. digitization of public administration,
3. the increase of the competitiveness of public administration against the private sector regarding the recruitment, development, and care of human resources.

All innovation changes in public administration are conditioned by a key factor – the professionalization of human resources in public administration, which includes several measures. They include, e.g., the support of the career growth of employees in public administration through the support of internal mobility, the recruitment of the best applicants, the support of ethical principles, the involvement of the results of interdisciplinary research and the application of latest scientific knowledge in human resources development in the segment of public administration.

Furthermore, there is the development and search for talents and leaders in public administration (talent management), the connection of motivational tools (financial and non-financial with
employee in-service education and training), linkage between the requirements of public administration with the education system, the possibility to establish a national educational authority that would cover general education programs for the entire sector of public administration, separate sectoral approach that would focus only on specialized education and trainings, the sharing of qualified human resources in self-government.

Digitization and eGovernment should bring digitization of processes, performance, and service provision of public authority, cutting down bureaucracy of public administration, accelerating, and efficiency of services for citizens and business entities. It can help reduce internal bureaucracy in public administration, which can be accompanied by the centralization of selected service activities.

The process of digitization, computerization and automation in public administration can be divided into four categories – digitization of services for citizens as a tool for quality improvement of public services, digitization of internal processes in public administration and elimination of internal bureaucracy, the introduction of new IT technologies in self-government and automation of repetitive processes.

Human resources must be adapted to the digitization trend. The basis must be a strategy for the adaptation of employees to IT changes with schedule and precise procedures for the introduction of corresponding educational programs. In public administration, demand for experts from the IT sector is expected, and at the same time, it will be necessary to provide employed staff with appropriate courses and training to develop the necessary digital skills.

The public administration sector in the field of recruitment, development and care of human resources must be competitive with the private sector. In economically strong and developed regions, the public sector is confronted with problems such as a higher turnover rate, poor motivation of applicants to work in public administration, or the inability to refill vacant positions.

Therefore, systemic changes, new forms of human resources management, more flexible adaptation to the changes in the labour market, promotion of the motivation of employees in the public sector by interlinkage of remuneration with the promotion of non-financial tools of motivation, effective presentation of public administration entities as future employers (employer branding), regular assessment of employees by superiors, the introduction of work quality management and assessment systems, application of new recruitment methods are necessary.

6. CONCLUSION

The harmonization of the development trends in requirements related to human resources in public administration in the coming years will necessitate supporting the lifelong education of public administration employees, the new job positions in human resources management, the identification of insufficiently filled job positions in public administration, the strengthening of cross-sectional IT skills of employees, the focus of the in-service education of senior employees in the use of modern digital technologies and data in the public policies, the transmission of the requirements of state administration and self-government to the higher education system and update of curricula in secondary schools, involvement of pupils and students in public administration.
The Sector Council for Public Services and Administration defined the demands of individual development trends on human resources and proposed specific measures in the process and system changes, retraining, adult education, higher education (Bc., Master, PhD.), secondary education, educational and career counselling, education in elementary schools, preschool education – in the entire range of public administration institutions. Sectoral measures are interconnected with specific activities that need to be implemented to achieve the above goals.

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