

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT (HRM-HRD) AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: INTERNATIONAL TRENDS AND STAKES

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Abstract:⁹⁰ *The paper focuses on the role of HRM and (mainly) HRD in Public Administration. It emphasizes the current international trends concerning civil servants' capacity building-reskilling and the role of the above mentioned in the administrative capacity and subsequently in the development of effective daily practice in Public Administration (PA). It initially raises definitional issues concerning the relationship among governance quality, public sector efficiency, HRM and HRD and capacity building in PA, taking into account cross country analysis and comparative studies' findings. It focuses on the Competency Management (CM), in order to present and analyze the new trends towards the competence-based HRM & HRD approach (within the context of NPM), which is developing worldwide, due to the transition from the rather legalistic administrative tradition ending in the "classical career model" to more flexible modes of administration responding to the increased complexity of institutions and ending in "hybrid" (in terms of Demmke, Henökl, and Moilanen) models and patterns of HR Systems in PA. Within this context, it synthesizes the requirements and determinants of this approach. Issues of centralization/decentralization, training modularization and impact assessment, training plans' development, capacity building's relation to the overlapping perspectives in Public Administration are raised and analyzed.*

Keywords: *Public Sector Capacity, HRD, Competency Framework, Public Administration, Civil Servants' competence-based capacity building*

1. Preliminary remarks.

Issues of civil servants' capacity building and reskilling are of vital importance for an effective Public Administration (PA). Emphasis is gradually laid on civil servants' training. According to F. Cardona (2009), one of the main common characteristics of civil service in EU Member States is that "predictable career paths exist and civil servants receive appropriate training during their career" (Cardona, 2009: 2). Public Administration (PA) and subsequently public organizations "are professional organizations providing public services. These public services are multiple (they must do justice to different values) and are rendered in co-production (in cooperation with third parties)" (Bruijn, 2002: 3). Undoubtedly, good and

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⁹⁰ The present paper is mainly based in the following, which is further developing and arranging:

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- Papadakis, N. (2015), Human Resource Development within Public Administration: Civil Servants' Capacity Building-Reskilling towards an Ethical Behavior and an Effective Daily Practice in PA, in *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume 3, Issue-3, December 2015, pp. 502- 514

effective governance is directly aligned with efficient and effective patterns of HRM and HRD. Administrative reforms' success is related (even more depended on) the human resource policy, for the Public Administration Human Resources are any reform's potential mainstreamers. Quality and effectiveness of Human Resource Development (HRD) is a critical determinant for viable structural and institutional changes.

Given the critical role of the degree of (de)centralization of HR systems to national HR policies and reforms and their overall relation to governmentality, the key question arising is how a capacity-building framework could contribute to ethical behavior and effective daily practice in PA. Even though there is a clear tendency, internationally, towards the shift from the old PA approach-paradigm (the more bureaucratic one) to a new one, based on NPM (New Public Management), Public Administration Reform (PAR) is "not a simple story" (see Demmke et al., 2008: 16). Modernization of PA as such is quite an ambiguous notion, since "much depends on which meaning of "modernization" is at issue" (Hood, 1998: 195). Taking that into consideration, we should focus on what PA capacity is and what it consists of. Via a cross-country analysis, Hwang and Akdede (2011) traced a "*positive relationship between a country's governance quality and public sector efficiency in policy areas of administration, infrastructure, and stability*" (Hwang and Akdede, 2011: 738).

According to Charles Polidano (2000), Public Sector Capacity is the combination of three substantial elements:

- "policy capacity (the ability to structure the decision-making process, coordinate it throughout government, and feed informed analysis into it),
- ...implementation authority (the ability to carry out decisions and enforce rules, within the public sector itself and the wider society).
- Operational efficiency, referring to the cost-effectiveness of the internal operations of the public sector and the quality of the services it provides to the public" (Polidano, 2000: 810).

Capacity building towards Public Sector Capacity is of vital importance within the abovementioned context. In addition, it cannot ignore either the fact that Public Organizations are Learning Organizations. They "*create knowledge on their own or as part of a network of similar organizations but they can also use knowledge created by consultants or academic researchers*" (Van Helden et al., 2010: 83-84), or the active and substantial relationship between institutional building and capacity building. This awareness calls for attention in the the management of civil service reforms. This precise management process "*requires a balance between stability and adaptability or, in other words, a sound combination of job security and internal mobility around administrative settings, a traditional feature of career-based systems. It is more difficult to find such a combination in traditional position-based systems* (OECD & EU/SIGMA, 2010: 7). Within this context, upgrading the skill profile of civil servants has a critical role to play in rejuvenating public administrations (OECD & EU/SIGMA, 2010: 6).

A comparative study of the UNDP/RCPAR (2011) on the "Economic Crisis Responses from a Governance Perspective in Eastern Europe and Central Asia", concludes in that "*institutional capacities in the public sector and civil service professionalism must be strengthened in order to provide the support governments require in crises such as this*" (UNDP/RCPAR, 2011: 28). This is even more important in cases such as the one of Kazakhstan, where the role of the State has been increased aligned with the strengthening of the regulatory framework and the increase of social spending (aiming at supporting the anti-crisis plan), within the economic crisis period (see UNDP/RCPAR, 2011: 4, 7, 9, 26).

2. HRD IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THE TREND TOWARDS COMPETENCE-BASED CAPACITY BUILDING IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Institutional capacity is substantially aligned with human resource development and capacity building, since “*the practice of HRD is about agency in a pluralistic, relativistic and interpretative world*” (Lee, 2004: 21). We should take into account, at this point, that the development of effective training systems of civil servants is one of the five key determinants of the administrative capacity as such (see Adomonis, 2009: 3). HRD in PA should be based on and further enhance the four administrative principles that “...*are widely recognized as of fundamental value for building modern public administrations and professional civil services... (namely)... a) Rule of law, ... b) Openness and transparency, ... c) Accountability, ... d) Efficiency and effectiveness*” (Cardona, 2009: 1-2).

According to EU 2020 strategy the objective regarding competences⁹¹ is “*a more productive and efficient pattern of human resources’ up-dating of job-related skills combined with the development of new competences in order to be able to adapt to changes*” (Papadakis, 2010). At the end of 2006, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (see European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2006: 11-18). The competence approach in learning and training, within the new LLL paradigm, “*does not replace educational content. It is a way of working which deepens learners’ capacity to apply knowledge in meaningful situations in their daily and working lives. Most or even all of the key competences can be developed in most or all areas of any traditional curriculum. Developing competence occurs not only through the medium of educational content, but also, through the methodologies devised to address that content*” (E.C. KCs Cluster, Prague PLA, 2009). At this point it is worth mentioning some of the major stakes concerning civil servants’ capacity building and reskilling, which could be summarized as follows:

- ✓ The achievement of a targeted Capacity building framework, in order to facilitate the transition from traditional performance and career systems to more objective- based ones.
- ✓ The training outcomes’ contribution to the reform of the existing qualifications and job profiles, in order to make the learning outcomes and the skills developed fit the Public Administration needs.
- ✓ Improvement of the civil servants’ career prospects and satisfaction at work, to relieve the labour shortages and to raise the performance and efficiency rates.
- ✓ Increase of the social partners’ participation in tripartite agencies/councils entrusted with the development of human resources (see analytically Moustakatou, 2008).

Regarding trends in HRM and HRD within PA, a UNDP/RCPAR (2010) comparative study in 10 different countries in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, titled “Challenges for Public Sector Human Resources Management in the Recent Economic Downturn”, has highlighted several common trends concerning HRM and HRD in PA, including significant changes in the the level of politicization of the civil service, low levels of decentralization of policy planning in the field of HRM, low impact of the social partners (even though they are “*have in many cases been more active during the crisis*”), low integration of research data in HRM policy planning (thus, lack of evidence-based approach), under-development of “*the culture and practice of communication... both internally in the public sector, between management and*

⁹¹ A competence “*is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context*” (OECD, 2005: 4).

staff, and externally, towards the public”, lack of significant innovation in HRM (UNDP/RCPAR-Vintisa, 2010: 34). On the other hand, remarkable developments towards the modernization of HRD and training in PA are taking place in transition countries. I.e, in the case of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a comparative study conducted by N. Papadakis and N. Rava for the Academy of Public Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, titled “*Comparative Review on International Trends. Recommendations for Capacity Building for the Academy of Public Administration of Kazakhstan*” (2012), ascertained that: “i. *The objectives of the retraining and advance training of civil servants derive from broader strategic documents (such as the Strategy 2030) as well as from the recent Conception of the Academy for Public Administration. Overall, there is a general intention to ensure new competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities, behavior) of civil servants across administrative levels and sectors for dealing with more complex and demanding tasks in the context of systemic transformation and development in Kazakhstan. Retraining and advance training is understood as an integral part of the work of civil servants and is considered as a main precondition for institutional performance.* ii. *The approach is very systemic and all-encompassing – namely, there are well elaborated and learning-intensive programmes which target the whole of the civil service.* iii. *There are specific requirements in both the Law on Civil Service, Rules of retraining and advance training of civil servants and related normative acts which provide a solid.... Framework for retraining and advance training*” (Papadakis & Rava, 2012: 16). It is evident that the Academy of Public Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan moves in the right path. The impact of the mega project, titled “Civil Service Reform and Modernisation of the Government of Kazakhstan (CSR)” was very positive, as well as constructive, enhancing the capacity of the Academy and further enabling it to cope with the challenges, set by the overall Civil Service Reform.

In terms of competences’ needs identification & forecasting, existing new models and trends on skills’ and point out that the needs-in skills assessment is essential for an effective HRD and training. Early identification of skill needs (aligned with CEDEFOP’s SKILLNET approach to skills development – see CEDEFOP 2006) to provide the ability to investigate: a) whether new skills required are durable or not; b) whether they cover a broad field the public agency; c) whether the Agency itself requires completely new skills, further development or enhancement of existing skills or a combination of different skills. Moreover, anticipation of skill needs refers to forecasting skill needs (i.e. the expected future tasks and domains in the Public administration, and “their particular skill or qualification requirements”- CEDEFOP 2008:3). Skills’ forecasts “are carried out in several countries at national or regional levels or both (focusing on different levels- domains of the economy and the labor market, including the public sector). They are mostly based on macroeconomic projections of sectoral production, productivity and employment (jobs), broken down by occupations and/or skills/qualifications, using advanced methodologies. Often several variants or scenarios are calculated, which – based on alternative assumptions – provide a range of the number of future jobs and their particular skill requirements” (CEDEFOP 2008: 3).

All the above mentioned document that future-oriented policies should be based on the following recommended seminal steps: a) defining and validating skills, knowledge and competences, b) implementing them in curricula, training regulations, qualification standards, c) using them for vocational guidance of the civil servants and d) involving policy-makers, social partners, public administration staff, practitioners and researchers in the discussion of research methods and civil servants’ training outcomes.

3. CURRENT TRENDS AND STAKES CONCERNING HRD IN PA.

3.1 THE CASE OF THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

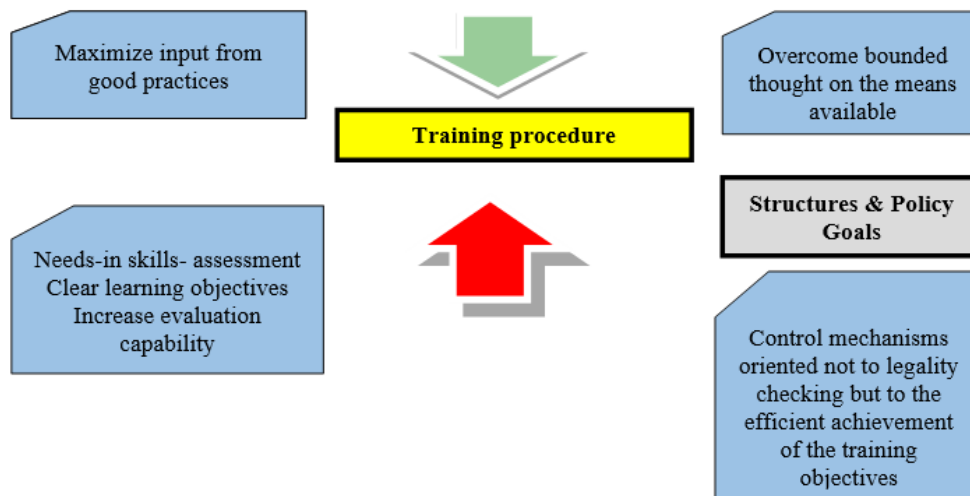
Competency Management (CM) is gradually becoming an international trend in Public Administration, at a worldwide level. CM was originated in the 80s in the private sector of the US and the UK and got introduced in the public sector (mostly position systems) since the early 90s (see Bossaert, 2010: 3). Its role was highlighted, during the 00's, for CM was correlated to the general EU trend towards LLL and Key-Competences based learning and work. The general trend is in front of the transition from the status-based management to management based on performance, competencies, target-setting such as is the case in the private sector (see Bossaert, 2010: 3). A Competency Framework is correlated with the development of a culture of common government and corporate identity (see Limbach-Pirn, 2010: 6). The focal point of the competence- based approach on HR is the extent of target group's commitment (see Limbach-Pirn, 2010: 6).

Within the context of “performance and strategic management”, a competence-based HRM & HRD approach is developing worldwide (Bossaert, 2010: 3). This international trend is not developing in a restraints-free context. At 2010 and 2011, the UNDP/ RCPAR conducted (in close cooperation with members of the Western Balkans Community of Practitioners), a research ending in a report, titled “The use of competencies in job design and recruitment” (see Rava, 2011a). Among the other findings there are several ones related to the restraints against competence- based HRM & HRD at least in the case of the Western Balkans. Such constraints can be summarized as follows: *Low degree of internalization and sophistication/ Deficits in terms of understanding the use of competency/ Lack of performance orientation/ Prevailing legalistic approach/ Reforms may be centralized but not transformative and comprehensive (formal qualifications still dominant; job descriptions still broad and not operationalized etc.)/ Lack of assessment tools (evidence)”* (Rava, 2010: 7, see analytically Rava, 2011a: 13 & 31- 32 and Rava, 2011b: 11 & 33, as well). These types of restraints, forming a reform- resistant context, are not equally met in every national case. Hence, several of them are still present in many different cases and prevent (even undermine) effective policy implementation in HRM and HRD.

3.2 KEY DETERMINANTS OF A COMPETENCE-BASED APPROACH IN HRD.

In order to tackle with the effects of the legalistic administrative traditions or trends, a competence- based HRD and subsequently training perspective should focus on the establishment of concrete criteria to choose among options in the PA daily life-efficiency and flexibility. Therefore:

Figure 1: Substantial Determinants of an Effective HRD in Public Administration



Source: Papadakis & Pechlivanides, 2010: 16.

Given the abovementioned, the major determinants of the paradigm shift requested towards a competence- based HRD in PA are the following:

- ✓ To define the problem space (definitional issues), develop a mutual zone of understanding and operationalize the new conceptual framework.
- ✓ To define:
 - the strategy,
 - the model,
 - the correlation between the implementation and the exact target-group.
- ✓ To correlate from the very first step (recruitment process) Human Recourses Management & Development with both job profiles and career paths (taking into consideration the relevant career system indicators).

As highlighted by an EIPA survey on Civil servants' career system indicators and performance in different administration traditions, competences are related both to HR management and civil servants' performance (see EIPA, 2007 cited in Prohl, 2008). According to EIPA (2009) there are certain strengths and weaknesses at both decentralized and centralized approaches to HRM & HRD (see Bossaert, 2010: 10 & 18). In fact, what is at actual stake is the effective check-n-balances between a) the two abovementioned approaches and b) broader issues. National cases provide food for thought, best practices as well. I.e. the Estonian approach in competence development and assessment is a quite innovative one, combining innovative competences' assessment tools with workshops and targeted training programmes, as well as individual feedback meetings with superiors, in a rotation-driven perspective (see analytically The Estonian Government-Office proposed Flow Chart on Competences development & assessment cited in Limbach-Pirn, 2010: 9 & 11). Belgium, implementing CM as well, emphasizes competences' analytical Clustering, integrated in the broader CM context of HRM & HRD in PA (see analytically EIPA 2009 cited in Bossaert, 2010: 13).

There are several typologies of Civil Servants' Competences that could end in a contextually embedded CM via clustering. Two are the most usual ones. Both are tripartite: a) Generic/ Specific/ Horizontal and b) Core organizational/ generic behavioral/ technical-functional.

4. TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY FOR COMPETENCE- BASED TRAINING OF CIVIL SERVANTS

The challenges rising from the operational interface between HRM and HRD, could be clustered as following (see Papadakis & Pechlivanidis, 2010: 23 as well):

a) Generic

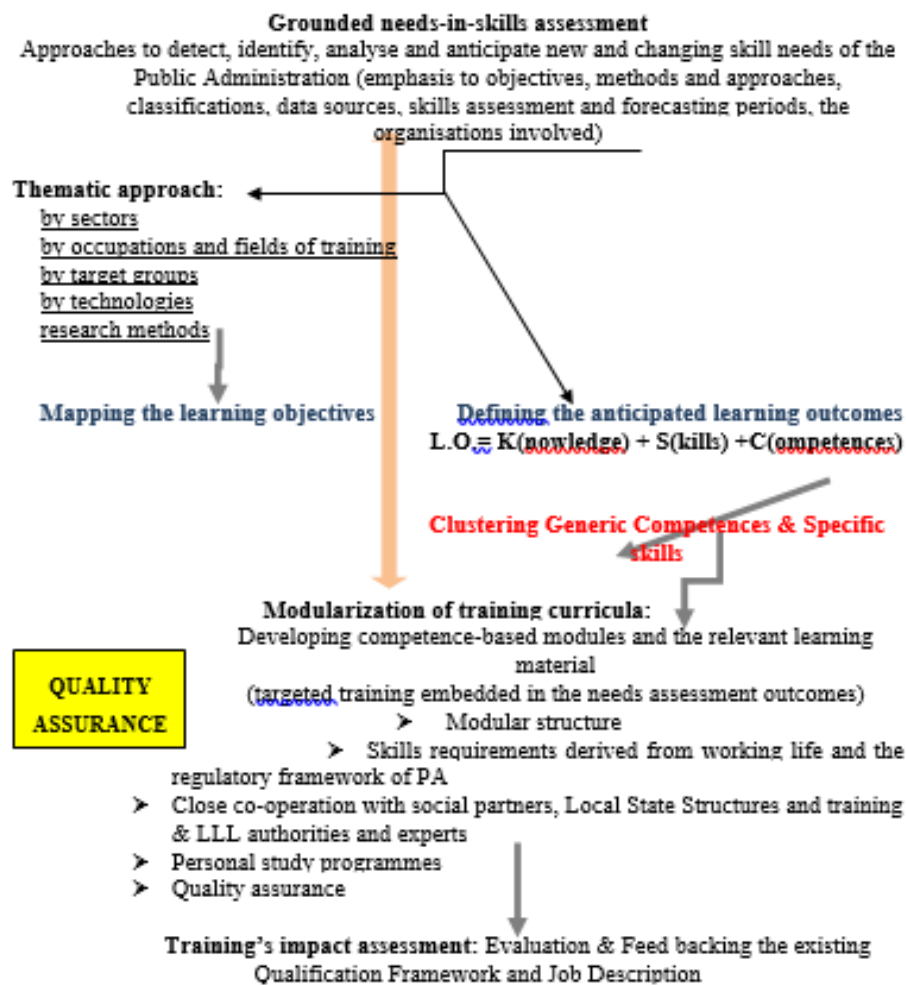
- Mixture of centralization and decentralization (based on good governance & better regulation principles).
- Creation of a transparency (see Rava, 2011a: 25) & evaluation culture combined with culture of LLL in civil service.
- Awareness of the need for a culture of contextually-embedded governmentality.
- Development of a “mutual zone of understanding” (“common language”) among the top executives, the different types and levels of personnel, the social partners, the stakeholders and the State on competences and Human resources in order to facilitate their application and implementation at legal, administrative, operational and practical level.

b) Specific

- Use Competency Frameworks and Operational Assessment Tools for the personnel, in order to increase the individual added values and the organizational capacity (see Rava, 2011a: 8, 9, 11, 22, 31 and Rava, 2011b: 28).
- Develop HR linkages with the real organizational goals, culture and structure (linking job profiles of CM and both of them to generic organizational goals- see Bossaert, 2010: 23).
- Determine the competences-verification level and set-up professional HR departments (see Bossaert, 2010: 23).
- Promote patterns and techniques capable to make horizontal implementation systems, vertical enough to work efficiently (i.e. implement pilot projects on HRM & HRD issues and facets before proceed in overall implementation- see Bossaert, 2010: 23).
- Enhance executives’ commitment and involve stakeholders (and their know-how) in all the abovementioned tasks.

Taken all the abovementioned into account, we can attempt to develop a methodological strategy, aiming at the development of a Competence-based HRD & Training in the public sector.

Figure 2: A competence-based HRD framework (see additionally Papadakis, 2008: 23 and Papadakis, 2010: 17)



It becomes crystal clear that such an approach requires a Needs-in-Skills & Competences Assessment. Its aim is to identify the main deficiencies in knowledge and skills that inhibit the development of administrative capacity and legalize administrative burden while simultaneously they might undermine a prospective administrative reform. Flexibility in “training needs’ scanning mechanisms” is of vital importance (see Moustakatou, 2008: 2). Defining and even more measuring the educational- training needs of the target group (in the public administration Unit where the training intervention is designed for) enables the new training programmes (based on specific training plans- as explained in the next chapter) to adapt to actual needs as well as to changes in the broader context (i.e. policy improvement, simplification of the procedures, better regulation etc.). Within this context, a *Step by step Development of Training Plans*, includes the following (see analytically Papadakis & Pechlivanides, 2010 31 & 33):

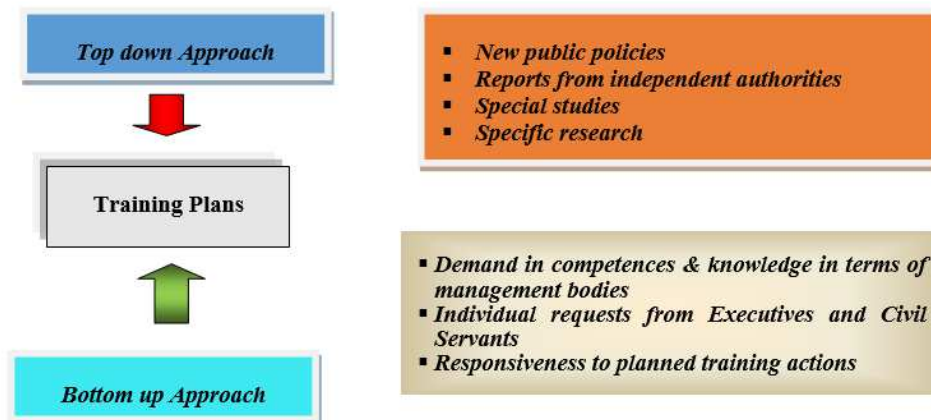
1. Defining a Training Plan (TP): An organized, multi-dimensional re-skilling framework, the set of the required training actions for an Entity of the public administration within a specific time horizon, which occurs as a result (output) of the identification of its training needs, in order to compensate for the lack of knowledge,

attitudes and skills of the human resources, so that it can meet its actual and future operational requirements of the Entity.

2. Developing a TP: TPs should a) include measurable *indicators* at the level of the objectives of human resources development and of their achievement, b) be associated with a *particular timeframe* in which they might need updating – reviewing and c) have sufficient documentation as to *why* each training action provided is necessary, what either specific or generic competence and *whom* it concerns (see Papadakis & Pechlivanides, 2010: 31).
3. Facilitating the implementation of a training plan: Modulization of training, use of e-learning, individual training passport, accreditation process ending in certifications and ex-ante evaluation of the training process can significantly contribute (see analytically Papadakis & Pechlivanides, 2010 and Moustakatou, 2008: 11).

Training plans’ development requires a holistic and balanced approach to training. A bottom up feedback is required, **while** the public policy complex, the existing regulatory framework, the general training paths and the State priorities on Public Administration ensure the check and balances on the training procedure, providing Civil Servants’ Training Institutes and Units with the necessary top-down institutional knowledge, **in order** the combination between bottom up and top down to provide the HRD Units and Training Organizations **with the requested middle out approach to civil servants reskilling.**

Figure 3: Tools & Determinants for Each Approach-Towards the Middle-Out Outcome



Source: Papadakis & Pechlivanides, 2010: 33.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: ON THE CAREER/ POSITION DIVIDE AND THE STAKE OF AN EFFECTIVE AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN PA

As Demmke, Henökl and Moilanen point out “at the beginning of the 21st century, (there is) no longer a civil service model that could be described as a ‘classical career model’. Today, pure career or position models simply no longer exist. Instead of clear-cut categories, there seems to be a trend towards hybrid systems that combine elements of both pure systems” (Demmke, Henökl, and Moilanen, 2008: 10). The classification of the EU Countries’ HR systems in PA, “using a 60% mark of all career-system indicators in order to draw the line between career-based and position-based systems” (Demmke, Henökl, and Moilanen, 2008: 10), ended in the finding that the vast majority of EU countries have rather career-based HR

systems. Just 10 out of the 27⁹² tend towards a position-based system (see Demmke, Henökl, and Moilanen, 2008: 11). The career/ position divide is related to the transition from the traditional approach in HR to the modern era of PA. The (traditional) perception of civil servants as agents, supposed to uphold the Rule of the Law in order to implement public policies.

That was the main hypothesis for many decades, substantially affecting the perception of ethical behavior, namely as a “*result of specific organisational features*” (Demmke, Henökl and Moilanen, 2008: 23). That choice had a certain impact on HR systems, resulting in quite hierarchical and centralized organizational structure, while “*clear and rigid career paths, lifetime tenure, seniority, etc were introduced in order to reduce as far as possible the danger of too much political influence, corruption, misconduct, the exercise of private interests and instability of government*” (Demmke, Henökl and Moilanen, 2008: 23). Is that enough to prevent corruption and ensure an effective and ethical behaviour in PA and civil service? Let us take into consideration that civil servants are primarily “managers” rather than “executors”, operating in a multi-tasking way within the context of working for the common good-public interest. In our times, things have changed: “*Public servants are more accessible, more transparent, accountable and assume more responsibilities than ever before*” (Demmke, Henökl, and Moilanen, 2008: 23). This is undoubtedly a chance and a challenge towards the promotion and enhancement of ethical behaviour in daily practice. According to Merton, there is a strong connection between organizational structures in PA and behaviour (Merton, 1987: 112). In fact behaviour was considered directly influenced by the organizational structures. But later on, several researchers put the traditional view of the typical bureaucrat into question (see Allinson, 1984. It is obvious that, contrary to Merton’s perception, the traditional bureaucrat is out of the (rapidly change) PA context.

In order to take advantage of that “window of opportunity” and use efficiently the (already analyzed in this paper) new trends and tools in HRM and capacity building, aiming at further promoting- building an ethical and effective behavior in PA, we have to contextualize these objectives in their broader context of values and objectives in PA.

Table 1: Key objectives and civil servants’ values. A taxonomy

KEY OBJECTIVES	CIVIL SERVICE VALUES
goal achievement	fair and standardized treatment,
fulfillment of duties	neutrality
working for the common good	stability
	hierarchy & impartiality
NEW OBJECTIVES	
flexibility & innovation	morality & ethical standards

Civil servants ex definitio serve the public good-interest and subsequently exercise important societal functions, while “they appear to be catalysts for the building of social capital in society at large” (Brewer, 2003: 5), since their behavior and performance affects the public/ citizens’ trust to the institutions. Such tasks require ethical behavior and integrity as a consitute a conditio sine qua non, while they raise public/ citizens’ expectations on civil servants’ behavior, performance and operation. This expectation depends not just from the code of practice/ ethics. Integrity cannot be taken for granted. Ethics is always a complicated and multiparametric issue, influenced by many factors (such as type of work, motivation, organizational culture,

⁹² The research was conducted before Croatia entering-accessing the EU.

personality, trust and social capital, civic attitudes etc.). In fact it requires the constant development of the relevant competences and skills.

An HRD framework aiming at capacity building and competences' development against corruption and towards ethical behaviour, making rational use of the already analyzed notions, trends and tools (CM, competence-based training, modularization of training curricula and training plans, needs-in-skills assessment, etc.) can provide such a balance. Within this a context, such a capacity building can support and facilitate institutional building, while increasing the overall Public Sector (Administrative) Capacity. Let us not forget that in nowadays a better balance is needed between rules and standards on the one hand and contextually- embed flexibility on the other.

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