

**MODELING OF THE TRAINING APPROACH
OF THE EMPLOYEES IN THE UNITS OF THE LOCAL
SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE SOUTH-WEST MACEDONIA**

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Abstract

During the last decade, Republic of Macedonia has been faced with overall changes in the sphere of the public administration, where the stress has been placed on the professionalism and competence of the government employees, which leads us to identifying the human resources as a key component of the reforms.

Hence, the reform of the public administration in the Republic of Macedonia, from its beginnings until present day, is oriented towards constructing a capacity of the public authorities which will place them in a position where they can deliver their services effectively and efficiently. Thus, they can change the existing bureaucratic culture into a service directed culture.

Having in mind the experience of the western, highly developed countries, where training is a systematic activity for all the employees and is realized from the beginning until the end of their working years, a great effort has been made lately in the investments in human resources through realization of numerous trainings. At the same time, the understanding of the meaning of the training has changed. In accordance with many sector reforms (judicial, economic, financial management) and reforms and activities among sectors (decentralization, public administration, equality in presence, corruption), a great number of trainings have been realized so far.

The process, in its early stage, started by identifying the necessary skills and knowledge that the government employees should possess in order to enable them to take an active and successful part in policy creation, as well as their effective and efficient performance. Basically, this is the important stage in the modeling of the training.

In the frames of the above mentioned reforms and realized activities, in the contents of this work we will present a study of the method of modeling of a part of the trainings held in some of the

units of the local self-government in South-west Macedonia, with a special stress on their efficiency and sustainability, as well as the needs and possibilities for their alteration.

The period from 2005-2007 will be presented and analyzed in the study, when a large number of trainings connected to the decentralization of the government in the Republic of Macedonia were organized.

Key words: public administration, reforms, models of training, local government

1. Introduction

The transitional process in the Republic of Macedonia, generally determined as establishing the democracy, governing of the law and a model of market economy, means redefining the role of the public administration. The efforts to be accepted in the EU, besides the principal processes of reform adjustment, have additionally placed specific demands which are related to the process of approaching and accepting the responsibilities which result from the membership.

In the frames of these changes and challenges which the public administration is faced with, the state faces yet another challenge-the decentralization. The introduction of the local self-government has resulted in many new tasks, new roles and increased responsibility on a local level, which have to be carried by the public administration employed in those institutions.

The condition, the perceived needs and the estimated abilities of the local public administration, in that period, lead towards the necessity of realizing continuous training, as a way of improving the abilities of the employees and strengthening the capacities in direction of development of a mutual culture which will instigate a cooperation and exchange of information and the best practice among the sectors.

The systematized approach towards this serious topic called TRAINING meant creating and development of legal and institutional instruments for implementing a coordinated policy in the area of the professional training of the public officials and public administration in a wider sense. This kind of approach towards the training is perceived as one of the most important components of development of the capacities of the human resources, in direction of achieving "a small, professional, democratic, service-oriented public administration" (i.e. state administration), as it is determined in the Strategy for reform of the public administration [2].

The reform of the public administration as a whole and its adjustment in direction of the EU membership are two mutually complemented processes which need an integrated and strategic approach. The experience so far has shown that the reform of the public administration is an essential activity which crucially influences the success, the dynamics and the process of adjustment of the state-applicant for EU, and this is directly dependent on the kind and quality of training realized in the public administration.

However, the alteration of the individual and the social behaviour of the employees in the public administration take a lot of time and demand a great deal of efforts in the organization itself [5].

According to the legislature in the Republic of Macedonia, the state officials have a right and a duty to go through professional training and development, respecting the principle of equal access to training for all the state officials and the public administration employees respectfully. Thus, the training and the professional development are essential elements for permanent development and prosperity of the public administration.

Nevertheless, fact is that in the previous system, the training had ad hoc character and it was considered an informal spoils system. Training was looked upon more as a reward and a privilege than as an instrument which is necessary to better the individual and organizational performance. Training was traditionally characterized by absence of relevance and connection to the aims of the organization. As a result of this, there was often an absence of a visible and effective connection among the training of the state officials, the needs of the organization in which they work and the contribution of the training for more effective realization of the functions of the sector. Thus, the training in the Republic of Macedonia, during the first years of transition, with a small exception in the last few years, can be described as "spontaneous and disorganized activity due to the absence of nationally defined training policy and the uncoordinated processes of human resources management" [10].

When we say uncoordinated and spontaneous we start from the well-known attitude of the theoreticians that when we define training "there is an inevitable imposing of the necessity of a greater stress on the demands of the workplace and the actual skills which have to be owned by the employees and point out that all the management skills, including physical, financial and human resources management, are vital for the performance of the public administration." [5].

Hence, an outlook of the types of training models will follow as well as which of them are used in the Republic of Macedonia. We will also present an outlook of the condition of the training and the way training is chosen in the local self-government in the Republic of Macedonia in the period from 2005-2007.

2. Meaning and significance of training

In the past, the most prominent demands and values were directed towards the general knowledge and skills in almost all the areas of life. Today, in the conditions of transition and fast changes, in the area of work a separation and utmost development of a determined and specific cluster of human potentials-knowledge and skills for a particular workplace.

In this situation, training, as well as education, receives a different meaning because it ensures increase of individual abilities for certain skills which originate from the

individual and are necessary to successfully complete specific tasks on a specific workplace.

Unlike education which is more widely focused on gaining general knowledge, training, in content and in function, is focused on concrete preparation for a particular job. It is mostly a structured process in which people are helped to achieve particular aptitudes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) for a particular job and in this way they will improve their work performance. Due to the fact that training is focused on efficiency, neither it is as formal as education, nor does it have such a long time frame.

When we say “training” in the frames of this paper we mean: diagnosing the needs; delivery of training; connecting to outer organizations-experts for delivery of training; evaluation of the process.

The knowledge and the skills, which can greatly differ in content and in size, represent a functional system necessary for social existence. Hence, today we perceive training as part of the development process of an organization in which the knowledge and the skills of the employees, needed for efficient realization of the tasks, are innovated. Training is always an investment which ensures competency of performance in the future tasks.

The organizations are becoming aware that training contributes the increase of the abilities of the employees in the process of solving problems and recognition of their needs to adapt to the rapid changes which characterize a particular workplace. So today, training, as part of the learning of the particular needs of the workplace, is becoming a large component of the organization budgets.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, the decisions that concern training (who will take part, what will they learn and how) are made by the organization rather than the individuals for whom the training is arranged by the organization [4].

Because of this, there is an increasing interest to find effective models of training which will provide sufficient effectiveness as well as effectiveness in the spending of the money for training, where an aimed direction of the training would be ensured, towards the needs of the organization as a whole, through achieving aimed direction towards the specific needs of the employees on a particular workplace.

Thus, the following problem is imposed: *“How to increase the effectiveness of the training which is delivered?”*

In view of this, first we have conducted a survey with a sufficiently representative number of surveyed, employed in the administration in the local self-government in a determined geographical area in the Republic of Macedonia. The analysis of the received data undoubtedly confirms our view in respect of the superiority of certain models, explained further in the text. Our effort for their further improvement is based on the

concept of creative problem solving, as well as the standardized SCITOP¹ methodology for organizational changes [6].

3. Models and forms of training

The experiments, in our case, move through study and testing of a few known models: the Extrend's method [3]; the Annette's method [3]; the ADDIE model [6], and the DRA model [7] which we are trying to modify. At the same time, our insights have shown that in great number of situations, they try to ensure a certain approach in the organization and realization of the training which, in most cases, completely or partially, is based precisely on the contemporary scientific knowledge of the andragogic cycle of adult learning integrated in the so called ADDIE model, as well as the original DRA model.

For the necessities of this paper we will study the last two models comparing their superiority.

3.1. Characteristics of the ADDIE model

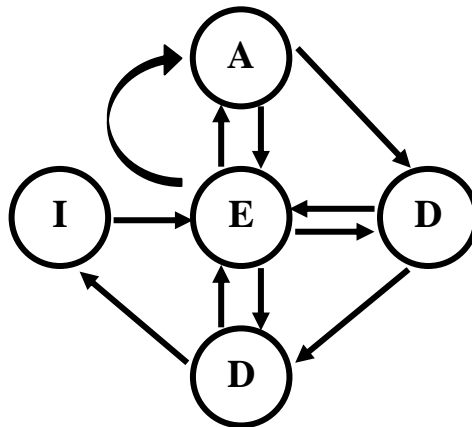


Figure 1. ADDIE² Model's Cycle of Training:

A-Analysis

The stage of analysis is when we determine what is needed to increase the achievements (i.e. the demands for achievements) and to ensure certainty that the training is designed to meet the real needs (the demands for training). Thus, this analysis will include only the analysis of the candidates' needs depending on their prior education, experience and other features and needs vital for the final modeling of the curriculum for each training group separately. This analysis should be regularly made on all three levels: organizational, group and individual.

¹ SCITOP - Synergy Creation and Transfer of Organizational Changes

² ADDIE - Analyses, Design, Dvelopment, Implementation, Evaluation

D-Design

In this stage of the cycle, the training strategy is designed. According to the basic training model, the chosen methodology approach, the range of the candidates and their location, a design for the training process should be made in order to reach the goals of the training: training workshops, seminars, debates, informative lectures etc.

D-Development of the training materials

In this stage of training activities the content which will support the specific aims is determined. Also, a detailed review of the way of conveying the information and the time needed to reach each of the specific aims is determined. The textbooks for the trainers and the participants are prepared and the focus is placed on completing the materials necessary for finalizing the training (activities lists and check lists). Also, in this stage all the technology necessities are identified. The result is a finalized, detailed, training agenda according to which the training can be carried out and all the training materials for the trainers and the trainees (Power Point Presentations, slides, transparencies, textbooks, reminders etc).

I-Implementation

Very often this stage is equalized with the term training, although the previous three are a component of the integral training model. This is in fact the immediate training process which includes the working sessions with the trainers, the individual work of the candidates, the consultations with the mentors and the final presentation and defence of the seminar papers.

E-Evaluation

Evaluation, as one of the stages of the realization of the training, takes a major part. Through it we receive a feedback about the usefulness of the training and the way the content has been presented. Because of this, from the few alternatives of this model, we have decided to use the one presented in picture 3.3 where the evaluation is not only the final stage (sum evaluation), but is carried out in each of the previous four stages as a permanent monitoring and assessment, i.e. formative evaluation.

The management of the institution-organization has a duty to be included or at least to be informed on time about the realization of each of these formative evaluations, because only then they can suggest certain corrective measures, instead of waiting for the sum evaluation which is too late for any corrective measures. From the formative evaluation we get information for the following training and the transfer of the training-where we should improve and what to change in our work in order to improve the quality of what we do in future. From the evaluation we can discover what the demands (expectations) are and the suggestions of the participants, and if we implement these in the following cycles we will considerably improve our training knowledge.

3.2. Characteristics of the DRA model³

D-Diagnosis

This concerns the initial stage carried out before the training begins, and is the basis for the overall design of the training in relation to the depth, the levels of knowledge and the skills possessed. It is carried out through realization of separate indication procedures and introductory simulating exercises.

R-Resourcing

This includes creating special training material and input of presentations for each separate conceptual, affective or behavioral aspect which is a basis for individual or group practice activities of the participants.

A-Activities

Different categories of activities which are carried out during the training. Most often simulations and work in real situations.

Comparing the two mentioned models we can notice their mutual elements which make them superior to the previous ones. For example, if we compare them to the model Extrend, we will notice that both of them superbly solve the problem of **the insufficient distinctiveness and particularity of the training material** which in most cases is incompatible to the real needs of the trainees. Also, the problem of **motivation** of the potential candidates for training, of which are not taken into consideration by Extrend until “stage five”, in the model ADDIE, and even more in the DRA approach this is completely exceeded. As a matter of fact, the work in real situations during the first meetings is usually in direction of determining the points of potential improvement and positive organizational performance from which “clusters” for organizational and individual improvement are formed.

The evaluation, as a stage and an act of conclusion of one cycle-from something which happens completely in the end, it is utterly justified and expected to be stressed as a key stage, which in the case of the model ADDIE even takes the central place while in the model DRA it is more insisted on self-evaluation /especially during the stages of experimenting and testing in the real experience/.

³ The model has been originally developed in the DETRA centre in Skopje which delivers various trainings about management to production and service companies as well as institutions and government-non government organizations and agencies in Republic of Macedonia

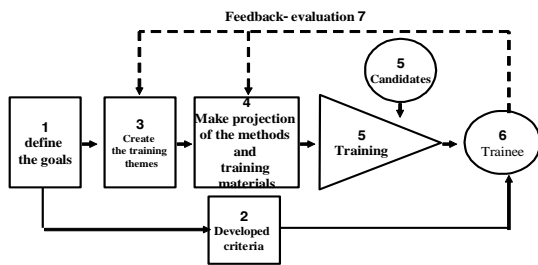


Figure 2. Extrend's method of training

4. The actual situation in the Republic of Macedonia in 2005

In 2005 an estimation was made in regards to the training needs of the state officials in the local self-government. The following conclusions and recommendations were given⁴:

- The state officials from the local self-government have a high level of awareness about the complexity of the decentralization process which imposes a need for continuous training. At the same time, all the state officials are willing and motivated to take part in training;
- Absence of general management and coordination of the training so far on all levels; also, the influence of the training so far can not be valued or estimated. There is no a unique data base about the realized training by different domestic institutions and international donors;
- The majority of training offers from various sources and the frequent matching of the topics as well as the time of realization of the topics, including non-standardized programmes, makes the programmes general and unable to cover the content in a way that will satisfy the interests of the training users;
- The uncategorized training programmes, from the aspect of which state officials and workplaces are their target group, result in heterogeneous training groups. Also, for some of the training users the level and the stress on the content presentation were satisfactory, while not for others;
- The engagement of trainers which are inexperienced in the particular area, combined with the ex-department lectures, leads to inability of the trainers to fully answer the questions of the state officials and inappropriate transfer of knowledge;
- Time unsuitable training-either too long or too short training;
- At that moment, there was a lack of adequate expertise to value the processes and the methods of the realization of the training. The received results from the realized estimation present the fact that the modern methodology for interactive training is the only effective methodology for training in generic and specialized skills, skills for establishing good interpersonal relations and team work, as an inevitable tool for creating efficient administration in the local self-government, surpassing the traditional methods;

⁴ Estimate of the necessities for training of the state officials in the units of the local self-government, Skopje, June 2005

http://tsf.undp.org.mk/comp_includes/webdata/documents/PROCENKA_MAK.pdf

- Inexistence of organizational units for human resources management in the municipalities;
- Absence of a system for ensuring training quality, including quality of trainers and training programmes and materials.

The above mentioned shows that the factual situation in view of organizing and conducting training for the public administration is different from the expectations and declarations stated in the state plans and strategies. In other words, the conducted training in many cases is inappropriate for the workplace of the employees in the public administration, and the reasons for that are because the trainings are realized spontaneously, they are not properly organized (unstructured, with no clearly defined content and knowledge which is gained and often not used for solving everyday problems); they are mostly based on the offer, rather than the demand, and the needs of the employees are not taken into consideration i.e. the area where they have an urgent necessity for training.

The above mentioned reveals the urgent necessity for a more serious, deeply founded and all-inclusive approaches to the training in general. Thus, the spontaneity in view of the kind, the type and the topic of the training will be surpassed.

5. Results from the conducted research

The research conducted in 10 municipalities in the republic of Macedonia referred to the period 2005-2007. The municipalities included in the research are different in size, with differences in the number and the structure of the public administration employed in them. Having in mind the different level of development of the municipalities and the structure of the employees where the research was carried out, the number of the surveyed is representative enough.

The activities which have been carried out lately, and are in direction of restructuring and factual change in the previous personnel sectors are rightly placed as priority. Only a simply and well placed functional unit of Human resources management (in terms of a department, sector, or an official) will be able to fully cover the training⁵ area as part of the activation and the sustaining of the personnel. As far as the establishing of the Human resources management units is concerned, we have to stress that in the last few years there has been a considerable development compared to the account of the situation in 2005.

A support to these claims are the results received from a survey covering 10% of the total number of the local self-government in the Republic of Macedonia, which are characterized by different sizes and development.

⁵ When we say training, we mean diagnosis of needs; delivery of training; connection to outer organizations, experts for training delivery; evaluation of process etc.

The results from this survey have shown that, despite the great number of realized trainings (see Annex 3), many of the employees were not included in any of the trainings. This is confirmed by the fact that out of 100 surveyed only 76% took part in training, while the rest 24% stated that they have never taken part in training.

Another statistic that has been interesting for research is which category of employees in the public administration has been located as a category which needs training in order to achieve better results at work. The research has shown that employees with more than 15 years experience and young employees with experience between 3 and 5 years take part in trainings.

The fact that a great number of the surveyed took part in more than five trainings is interesting and proves that some jobs are more predisposed to change and we have to invest more in them. This is confirmed by the answers of the surveyed of whom 100% stated that the trainings were in a same or similar area.

As far as the choice of topics is concerned, it is interesting that 71% of the surveyed have confirmed that it is made by outer consultants, 18% that they do it by themselves, which in fact is a very small number since we know that the employee and his/her direct superior know best what is necessary to study and learn in order to improve the working results.

The following results concern more the technical works connected to the realization of training, such as: application for taking part, time and place of the training, the length of the training, as well as the techniques used during the realization of the training. Thus, the results show that the institution determines which candidates will apply for the training (95%), the training is mostly conducted outside the institution (71%) combining workdays and weekends (47%), and only 26% of the surveyed stated that it had been a one-day training, while the rest of the surveyed said that it had always been a training of two or more days. 86% of the training had been organized in the form of a workshop using Power Point Presentations, hand-outs etc. In this section we will mention who conducted the training and what was the effect of the training. The data shows that most of the trainings were held by colleagues and experts from the country. Also, there are a great number of trainings which were realized by these two types of trainers combined.

The effect of the training has been estimated as great by 71%, while 5% of the surveyed do not know what the effect of the training is.

Particularly interesting for our research, as a crucial element of the realization of the training and as a separate stage of the process “training”, is the evaluation. The data shows that in 75% of the realized training evaluation was made. The most frequent evaluation is written (54%) and was conducted in the end of the training (65%).

Also, it is interesting that 53% of the surveyed stated that the training was preceded by analysis for the need of the training and the kind/topic of the training, in which, according

to the opinion of the surveyed, the managers took part-34%, the mayor-13%, outer consultant-9%.

These answers prove the fact that since 2005 the situation has changed drastically. Now, the first stage of the wider notion of training-the analysis according to the above mentioned models, obviously takes an important part, which on the other hand is a direct factor which contributes to the greater effect of training, which was stressed by the surveyed. This is also confirmed by the results from the survey which show that 8% from the surveyed think that this analysis was realized on demand made by the employees, 28% by the managers, and only 13% by the outer consultant, which is a very different image compared to 2005.

This data clearly present a situation when the choice of training was based only on the offer existing at that moment (in 2005) and making decisions for conducting a training on the initiative by the managing team, with no consultation with the employees-is in the stage of surpassing, and this kind of analysis, where the managers and the employees have the main roles, is essential.

In addition to the above said are the comments of the surveyed who state the following: "There should be more training so that the employees are more professional and competent"; "The more the training-the bigger the efficiency"; "We need more seminars and training from more areas, from areas which are out of our workplace tasks, too".

A more general conclusion which can be formed is that training is less spontaneous because the decision to conduct a training is preceded by analysis which in essence, according to the above mentioned theory, is the first and the most important activity before one makes a decision to realize a training-it is a crucial part to recognize the deficiency of knowledge and skills in the new modern organization of administration. This confirms the fact that in the last few years a substantial progress has been made towards the establishment of a systematic process for identifying the real training needs. However, more should be done in this area.

6. Conclusion

Recognizing the real needs for training and its proper defining and structuring are the key prerequisite for establishing a threshold from where we should start a continuous improvement of the effectiveness of the public administration in direction of becoming a service for the citizens through effective and efficient task performance. Nevertheless, we would like to distance ourselves from what the results are after the realization of the trainings. To support only based on the statements from the surveyed that the effect is great-in this occasion is unserious.

It would even be contradictory if we make an analysis where we would take the abilities of the personnel on one side (see list of realized training) which is usually made by the management, and on the other side the effects which are obviously not that great as in the

statements of the surveyed. Namely, we will rightfully wonder where the effects which should be felt are. The solution may be in the systematic implementation of some of the modern concepts of management (organizational studying, Performance management, Feedback 360°). The problem may also be in the wrong path to the skills, habits. The development of an individual starts from the cognitive, through the emotional to the behavioral knowledge. Nevertheless, it is known and fact is that this development means to reach for the inner motivation of the person, and this path goes, above all, through the need, the motivation which should be touched.

We are convinced that this is achieved within the group, team meetings of prelinosis and holignosis as parts and elements of the diagnosis of the DRA model, essentially functional in the mentioned SCITOP methodology for performing organizational changes.

Hence, it is obvious that there is a need to establish-choose a model for training realization and to conduct it and follow it in all its stages. As the most appropriate models, confirmed in their successful methodology are the models ADDIE and DRA, which should be respected and followed with determination.

To sum up, our conclusion is that an effective training system in the public administration can be established only through close cooperation with universities, private institutions and specific organizations as associations and local governments. It should be founded on well-thought and organized prior analysis of the training needs, and thus fully use the “synergy among the training, consultation and research” [12].

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