

THE ROLE OF THE DECISION IN THE PROPER FUNCTIONING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Essential component in directing the activities of any organization, the decision is at the center of the concerns of many specialists, in an attempt to give it a comprehensive explanation. In such a way, the space of this article is dedicated to exposure to the various approaches that the administrative decision knows on the stage of the literature for explaining its significance and for emphasizing the role that it plays in the conducting the public administration activities. Beyond the variety of the approach perspectives analyzed, we have identified nuances that together allow the clarifying of the significance of the administrative decision, for which can be accepted the explanation of motor element, targeting instrument, of projection of what it needs to be done in the administrative activity. The research carried out shows that without consistent and effective decisions, the public administration is unable to satisfy the public needs as completely as possible. Only by adopting and implementing the most appropriate decision one will contribute to ensuring the effectiveness of the public administration activities with direct impact on the satisfaction of the public interest.

Key words: *administrative decision; directing instrument; projection of what it needs to be done; course of action; decision-making process; public administration.*

JEL Classification: *D73, D81.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since anyone makes decisions that direct his/her personal activities, we can not dispute the importance of the decision in the activity conducted by the public administration authorities and institutions. In other words, as any human activity is preceded by a decision on what it should be done and how, so the activity of public administration has the administrative decision as the motor element.

In this register, in the pages of the present paper we aim to highlight the role of the decision for an efficient conduct of the activity in the public organizations. The objective followed by the development of this article is to analyze the different approaches that the administrative decision knows in the space of the literature in the field to explain its content and to emphasize its importance in the suitable functioning of the administrative system.

To achieve the assumed objective we resort to the analyze of the various opinions, views and judgments formulated in the literature, their investigation allowing the explanation of the significance of the decision for the good conducting of the activities made at the level of public organizations.

II. BASIC CONCEPTS REGARDING THE DECISION IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In highlighting the role of the administrative decision for the optimal management process we start from the explanations that doctrine in administrative science provides to the concept of decision.

For the beginning, we consider relevant the opinion expressed by A.L. Hampton and A.F. Shull Jr. who tell us that the decision designs the chosen course of action and its consequences; a decision, by definition, means a targeting of the action for the future (Hampton and Shull Jr., 1973, p. 20).

Then, Ch.E. Lindblom believes that, although there may be endless discussions on the subject of the decision, one may detach a punctual idea: the process by which individuals and groups determine a correct course of action from a variety of alternatives is one of the central functions of an administrator fact that requires a special attention (Lindblom, 1988, p. 221).

With focus on field of the administration, we learn from K.J. de Graaf, J.H. Jans, A.T. Marseille and J. de Ridder that the administrative decisions made by the government bodies are a fact of life: the public sector members face them all the time; administrative decisions are legal acts; they can be regarded as legal packaging of everyday experiences (De Graaf, Jans et al., 2007, p. 3).

Another explanation for the administrative decision is given by V. Tabără who talks about two ways that describe it. Thus, according to the author quoted, in *broad* legal sense, the administrative decision describes any volitional act producing legal effects which takes both the form of a legal act and the form of a material-legal fact, and in *narrow* legal sense the administrative decision represents the legal act, indifferent of the branch of law belonging or the uni or bilateral character of the will it contains, provided that the act is emitted from the administration (Tabără, 2013, p. 177).

According to the opinion that comes to us from A. Parlăghi, the content of an administrative decision is the achievement of a certain public goal such as the provision of a product of general interest, the provision of a public utility service or the execution of some works of strategic importance (Parlăghi, 2013, p. 16).

About the administrative decision we receive information from the E. Bălan from the perspective of which this is the central element of the activity carried out by the structures of the public administration for the achievement of the leadership and organization tasks (Bălan, 2008, p. 150).

In order to be able to serve the general interest of society, I.M. Nedelcu considers that the administrative decision must meet the following requirements (Nedelcu, 2009, p. 334):

- substantiating the decision on a solid scientific basis;
- the decision must have a realistic character, it providing the best solution to the problem, starting from the accurate assessment of the factual situation;
- to be made in time.

Only in this way can be achieved the mission of the public administration, the social-political character of the administrative decision, as a factor for the realization of the state policy. (Brezoianu and Oprican, 2008, p. 101)

In a synthesizers manner, H.A. Simon, quoted by J. Simonsen, understands the decision as the administration heart (Simonsen, 1994, p. 1).

In another approach, M. Baltador argues that, by its content, nature and role, the decision states as vital nerve of public administration management (Baltador, 2005, p. 222). According to the same author, the decision represents a cell in the managerial process of the public administration, its focal point, its climax moment (Ibidem, p. 223).

Amid these conceptual explanations, we retain for the administrative decision the explanation of projection of what it needs to be done in the management and functioning of the public administration structures.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION

The clarification of the content of the administrative decision can also be achieved through the features that describe it. The characteristics of the administrative decision distinguish it from other categories of decisions specific to management science, being the consequence of the specific nature of the activity from the public administration (Miulescu, 2010, p. 184). A systematization of the characteristics of the administrative decision can be found in the following figure (see Fig. 1):

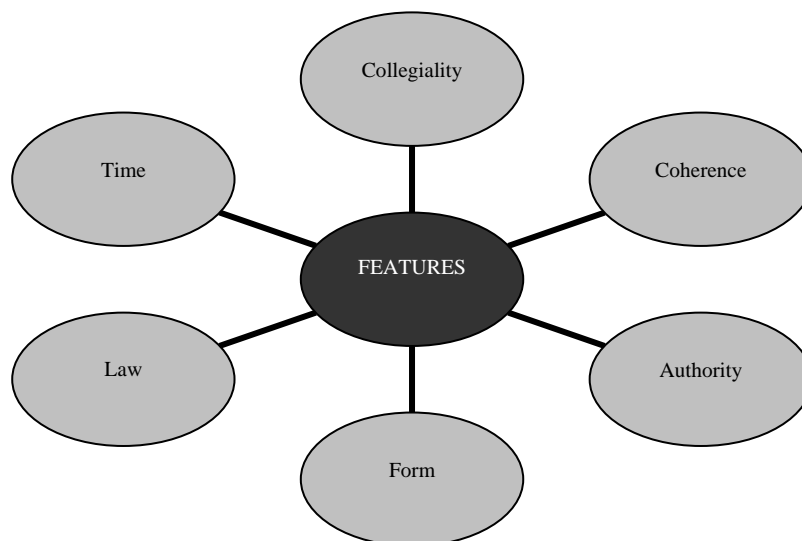


Figure 1 - The features of the administrative decision

Source: author's elaboration according to C. Manda, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-236, N. Miulescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-185

The collegiality, regarded as an expression of the absence of property over the decision, ensures the anonymity of the administrative action, the administration acting independently of the decision-makers (Parlagi, 2013, p. 19). Any administrative decision, whether individual or normative, is the result of collective work of several people, of a team, because, whatever the content, the adoption of a decision involves the co-operation of the internal structures of the public authority, both to avoid contradictions, but also to ensure respect for the public interest (Manda, 2004, p. 230).

The coherence concerns the need for the administrative decision to be based on previous decisions, other current decisions, and even to support possible future decisions. In other terms, the administrative decision is a bridge between the past, the present and the future, which makes public administration to become a primary guarantee of the continuity of a policy (Ibidem, p. 231).

The authority consists of the competence, the power to make decisions, which then serve as a model for making the other decisions, too. The relation of authority is based on the formal prerogatives that allow the hierarchical superior, in the event of conflict, to impose the proper conduct on his subordinates (Ibidem).

The formalism ensures that the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens are respected by the administration (Miulescu, 2010, pp. 184-185), and it is also a guarantee for the proper functioning of the administration process by establishing precise rules for elaborating, adopting and implementing applicable to any administrative decision. This feature may also have negative connotations, as many formalities can complicate the administrative mechanism and even keep citizens away.

The law requires that the administrative decision be issued in compliance with the letter and the spirit of the law. The most important category of administrative decisions are the administrative acts that constitute the main legal form of the activity of the public administration authorities. It is the law that establishes the powers of the public administration and specifies the conditions that the administrative act must fulfill to be valid and produce legal effects (Manda, 2004, p. 233).

The time expresses the dynamics of the administrative decision, representing the interval between receiving a task and executing it by the administration. The moment of the decision making permit the issuer to consider the actuality and the opportunity of his/her decision, as the failure to solve the administrative tasks within the legal timeframe can attract the civil servants' responsibility for failing to fulfill their obligations according to the law (Miulescu, 2010, p. 185).

Having the support of these explanations, we believe that the administrative decision is easier to understand by knowing the features that describe it and define its content.

IV. DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

Trying to perceive the meaning of the administrative decision, at this time we will consider various approaches formulated by specialists that offer us further clarifications.

Analyzing the problem of the responsibilities division regarding the decision making between the executive staff and the management staff of an organization, for which he uses the expression "vertical specialization", H.A. Simon explains why executive employees lack a certain autonomy in making decisions and are subject to the authority and the influence of the management staff. The quoted author believes there may be at least three arguments for vertical specialization in the organization (Simon, 1944, pp. 17-18), as follows (see Fig. 2):

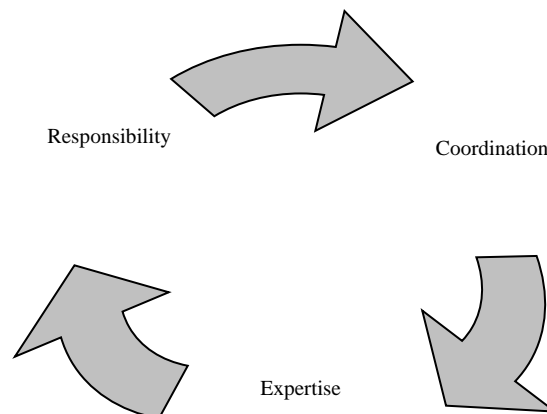


Figure 2 - Arguments for "vertical specialization" in the organization apud H.A. Simon

Source: author's elaboration according to H.A. Simon, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18

In an organization, the vertical specialization is absolutely essential for achieving the *coordination* among the executive employees. The group behavior involves not only the adoption of the correct decisions, but also the adoption of the same decisions by all the members of the group.

Then, the vertical specialization allows a greater *expertise* in making decisions. The activities of an organization should be divided so that the processes which require a certain skill to be carried out by the persons who possess that skill. Similarly, the decision making requires special skills, so the responsibility for the decisions making need to be allocated to the persons who possess such skills.

Third, the vertical specialization allows to the staff to take *responsibility* for its decisions. The purpose of the vertical specialization is the ensuring the control of the management staff on the administrative staff, leaving to the latter an appropriate autonomy to deal with technical issues on which a governing body is not competent to decide. From here, we can speak of responsibility both from the management staff and from the execution staff for their decisions.

In light of the explanations above, we believe that each of these three arguments and all together – coordination, expertise, responsibility – support the effective conduct of the decision-making process in the public organizations.

To substantiate the explanations regarding the decision in public administration, we consider as being also eloquent the clarification of the same author, cited this time by J. Simonsen, who talks about five criteria by which organizational influence (Simonsen, 1994, p. 6) manifests on the decisional process (see Table 1):

Table 1. Influence criterions on the decisions in organizations apud H.A. Simon

Crt. no.	Criterion	Description
1.	Authority	The power to make decisions which guide the actions of another; it is a relation between two individuals: one "superior" and the other "subordinate";
2.	Communication	The communication can be formal expressed by media, memoranda, letters, records, reports, manuals, or informal which regards the social relations of the organization members;
3.	Training	Prepares the organization members to reach satisfactory decisions himself, without the need for constant exercise of authority;
4.	The criterion of efficiency	The criterion requires that, from two alternatives having the same cost, to be chosen the one which leads to the greater achievement of the organization objectives and that, from two alternatives leading to the same degree of achievement, it must be chosen the one which entails the lesser cost;
5.	Organizational identity and loyalty	The individual substitutes organizational objectives for his own aims in determination of his decisions; the person identifies himself/herself with the group, and in making a decision he/she evaluates several alternatives of choice in terms of their consequences for the group.

Source: author's elaboration according J. Simonsen, *op. cit.*, p. 6

In this approach one can notice at least five criteria that can have an impact on decision making in organizations and, consequently, may affect the functionality of the overall organizational structure.

Examining of effects of the decisions contents on the decisional processes in public organizations, B. Bozeman and S.K. Pandey talk about the multidisciplinary of researches regarding decision making. The evoked authors believe that the public management field does not hold an exclusive license for conducting researches on decision-making. Researchers in the fields of business, economics and even psychology conducted own researches on decision-making. Such a broad range of researches on making decisions makes that decisional process to be analyzed in depth, which allows a good knowledge of the subject. In essence, according to these two authors, in organizations, the decisions are the markers for action and the precursors for success or failure; the failure signals, in its turn, the need for new decisions. (Bozeman and Pandey, 2003, p. 2)

According to the D.E. Griffiths, cited by A.L. Hampton and A.F. Shull, the decision-making is the central

function of government. A solid argument for this explanation is that the decision making is not central in the sense that it has more importance than the other functions, but is central because the other functions of government can be better interpreted from the perspective of the decision-making process. (Hampton and Shull Jr., 1973, p. 19)

The importance of the decisional process is also outlined by the H.A. Al-Tarawneh which says in the opening of its paper that many theorists and practitioners consider the decision making as being the most critical function, core of the management (Al-Tarawneh, 2012, p. 2).

The essential role of the decisional process is also emphasized by the K. Raczkowski from which we learn that the decisions making is a constant and integral process of choosing a such solution that is seen as effective (Raczkowski, 2016, p. 27).

Worth noted in explaining the significance of the public decision we consider to be also the P.F. Drucker's assertion, evoked by A.L. Hampton and A.F. Shull, which states that the decision making is a major key to effective administration. (Hampton and Shull Jr., 1973, p. 19) According to the author evoked, for an effective decision-making process at least five elements should be considered, as follows (see Fig. 3):

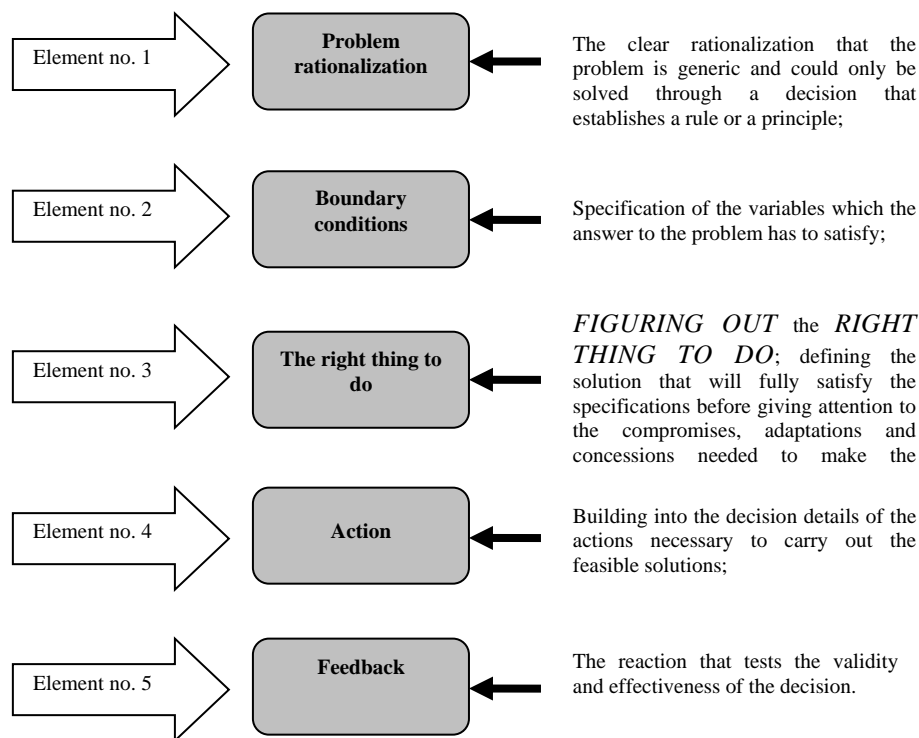


Figure 3 - The elements of an effective decision-making process apud P.F. Drucker

Source: author's elaboration according to A.L. Hampton, A.F. Shull Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 20, apud P.F. Drucker, *The effective executive*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1967, p. 122

The consideration of these five key elements could determine better decisions making with major implications for problems solving, for achieving the objectives of a public organization. The adoption and the implementation of the most appropriate decisions will help ensure the efficiency of the public administration activities affecting the meeting of the public needs.

V. CONCLUSION

Amid those contained in the previous lines, we can conclude that, although there are not few experts, academics and practitioners alike, who are concerned with explaining the decision, in general, or the administrative decision, in particular, we identified nuances which together allowed the clarifying its significance.

Although the administrative decision does not lend itself to a strict explanation and interpretation, one can admit that it is, without exaggeration, the backbone of the activity of public administration institutions. Beyond the approached theoretical perspective, we do not think anything wrong if we say that without effective decisions we can not speak of an efficient administration. The administrative mechanism can function only if the made and

implemented decisions ensure the satisfaction of the public interests as completely as possible.

In total, the wide range of approaches exposed in the previous pages allows us to state that the administrative decision plays an important role of instrument for directing of what it needs to be done in managing the affairs of public administration.

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