

NEW EVALUATION MODEL: PAEM (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EVALUATION MODEL)

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Abstract

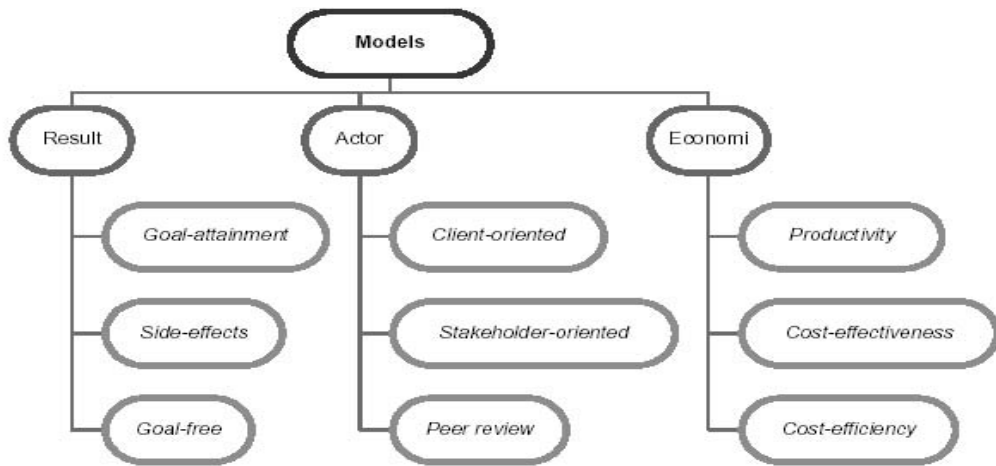
In order to be effective, evaluation should be based on solid monitoring systems. If the monitoring system is missing, what should be done? In this respect, the new model, called PAEM (Public Administration Evaluation Model), is a possibility. It generates structured programs and projects out of mere unstructured activities of public institutions. It helps building an indicator system that has a double functionality: it secures the future existence of a monitoring system and provides a functional evaluation toolkit.



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The need for a new model, adjusted to the Romanian realities

In 1997, Vedung described evaluation models as being organized into three main classes as shown in the figure below.



Source: Vedung (1997), "Public Policy and Program Evaluation", Transaction Publisher.

Figure 1. Evaluation Models according to Vedung (1997)

After studying the applicability of different existing evaluation models in the Romanian public institutional framework, we encountered several difficulties that made the applied models difficult to apply, if not unpractical. The main cause is that most existent evaluation models are based on a monitoring system and on administrative capacity to monitor. In the case of Romania, the monitoring system does not exist. Another cause is that the existing evaluation models assume an evaluation culture and capacity, which is more than a reporting culture. As we have presented in another study (Gârboan, 2007), Romanian public administration has just passed the pre-culture stage of the evaluation culture, and it entered into a developing stage.

Table 1. Evaluation culture. Frequency distribution

		Evaluation Culture			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2 pre-culture (11p-20p)	35	36.1	41.2	41.2
	3 weak culture (21p-30p)	46	47.4	54.1	95.3
	4 developed culture (31p-40p)	3	3.1	3.5	98.8
	5 extremely developed culture (41p-48p)	1	1.0	1.2	100.0
	Total	85	87.6	100.0	
Missing	System	12	12.4		
Total		97	100.0		

Source: Gârboan, 2007, p. 51

Therefore, as shown in the table above, a big proportion (41.2%) of the Romanian investigated public institutions have a pre-culture of evaluation. This means, that they still have to make progresses on data management systems, on using previous experiences in improving general activities, and even on organising their activities based on programs.

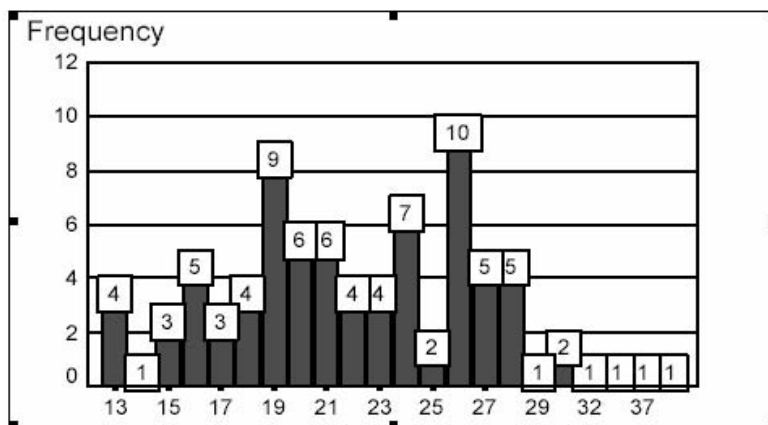


Figure 2. Evaluation culture. Source: Gârboan, 2007, p. 52

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the investigated public institutions on the scale used to measure the evaluation culture.

Also, when measuring the evaluation capacity, we obtained a quite weak evaluation capacity. 45.1% of the respondent institutions have a very low evaluation capacity; while 52.4% have a low capacity.

Table 2. Evaluation capacity. Frequency distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2 very low capacity (16p-30p)	37	38.1	45.1	45.1
	3 low capacity (31p-45p)	43	44.3	52.4	97.6
	4 high capacity (46p-55p)	2	2.1	2.4	100.0
	Total	82	84.5	100.0	
Missing	System	15	15.5		
Total		97	100.0		

Source: Gârboan, 2007, p. 53

By analyzing the graphics of the absolute values, which are not grouped together (Figure 3), we can clearly see that the mode value is 26, which is similar to the mode value discovered at the culture of evaluation.

The evaluation capacity (absolute values)

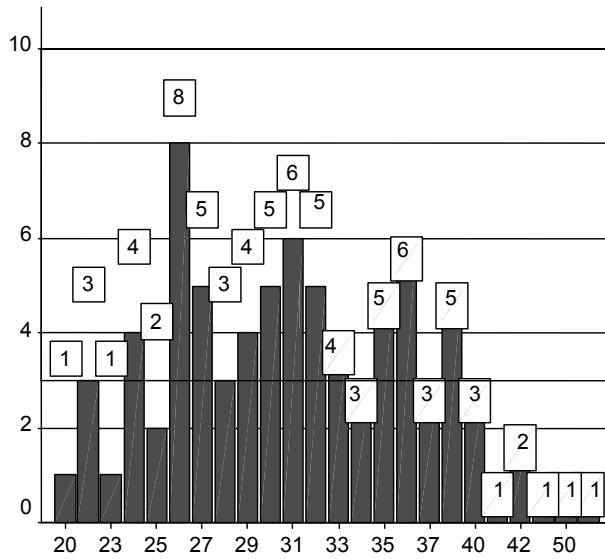


Figure 3. The evaluation capacity; Source: Gârboan, 2007, p. 54

Concerning the expertise in evaluation, the number of civil servants that received training in this domain, or have practical experience in program evaluation is very low (see Figure 4 and Figure 5).

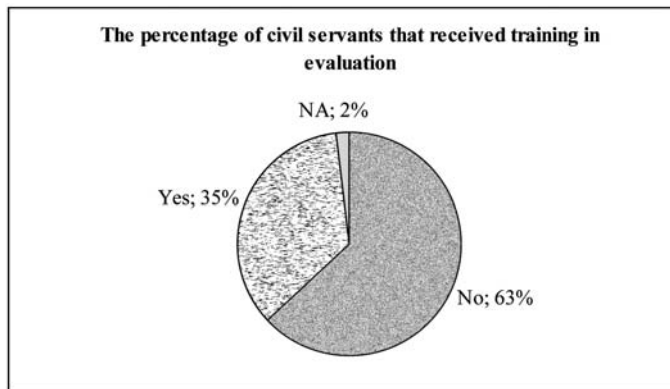


Figure 4. The percentage of civil servants that received training in evaluation. Source: Gârboan, 2007, p. 54

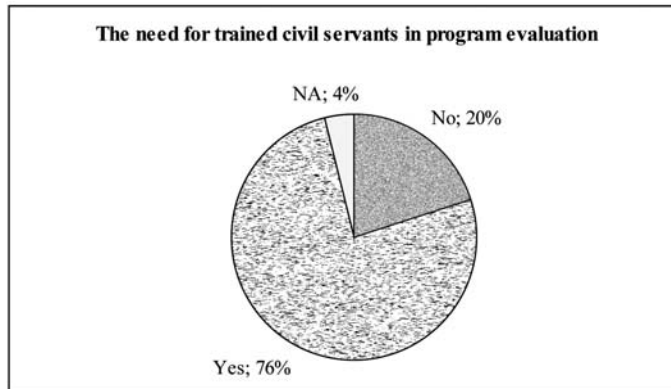


Figure 5. The need for educated personnel in the evaluation field
Source: Gârboan, 2007, p. 54

63% of the analyzed public institutions do not have in their structures specialized civil servants in evaluation (Figure 4) and 76% of them acknowledge the need for more civil servants trained in program evaluation (Figure 5). Even if 13% of the analyzed institutions have specialists in evaluation, they are aware that the need for specialized personnel in evaluation is even bigger. These figures show the tendency of public institutions to development a capacity for evaluation and the unquestionable existence of the evaluation culture in Romanian public institutions.

The evaluation capacity is also given by the estimation capacity of the necessary resources, which, as the study indicates, is very low, only one third of the respondents being able to estimate the costs of an evaluation.

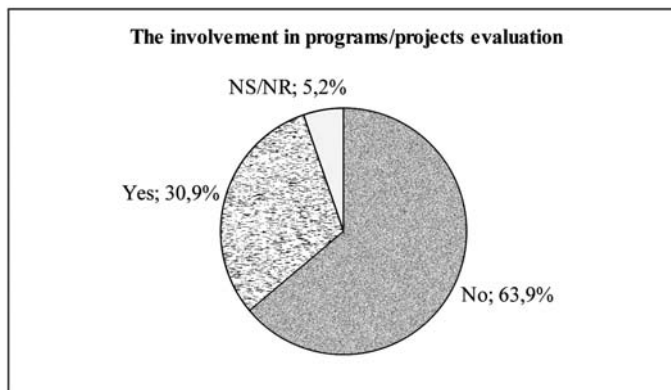


Figure 6. The involvement of public institutions in programs/projects evaluation
Source: Gârboan, 2007, p. 56

The research also showed (figure 6) that the involvement of institutions in projects and programs evaluations is extremely law (only 30.9%), even though most of the respondents have participated in such evaluations and have been evaluated in projects that required European funds.

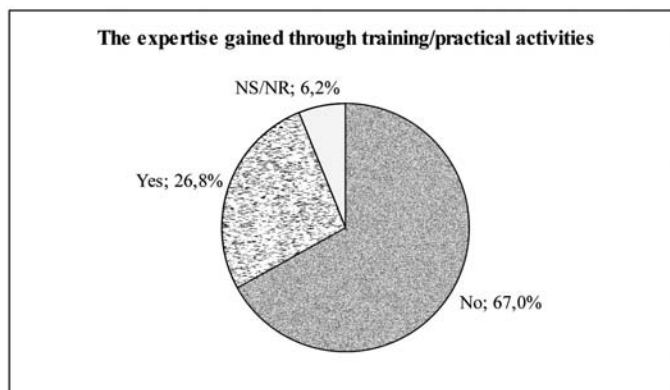


Figure 7. The expertise gained through training/practical activities
Source: Gârboan, 2007, p. 56

When analyzing the expertise gained through training and/or practical activities, the situation is even more dramatic (Figure 7). The research identified the need for training in evaluation and research methods fields, and the need for research projects that would include an evaluation component with implications for the public institutions.

Generally, the results models, the process models, the system models, the economic models, the actor models and the programme theory models require, for correct application, a solid monitoring and evaluation culture and capacity. Romania is at its very beginning in this area.

Romanian public institutions are connected with program monitoring and evaluation mainly in the context of the programs and projects financed from pre-accession funds (PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD), which have well-established monitoring and evaluation systems. This led to an initial development of the monitoring and evaluation culture in Romania. This is an important step, even if evaluation is still more a reporting procedure rather than an actual evaluation procedure.

At the half of the year 2005, the Management Authority (which coordinates the evaluation and monitoring system of PHARE and the Operational Programs funded from EU structural instruments) of the Ministry of Public Finance began developing a National Evaluation Strategy based on the technical assistance received through the contract financed by PHARE 2003. The National Evaluation Strategy, launched in November 2006, is an important instrument that could gather the development tendency in the field of evaluation in Romania. The interest for evaluation is growing but the specific request for evaluation is just at the beginning. When excluding the programs financed by European or external funds, there are no examples of evaluation programs or programs that include an evaluation part. The request for evaluation depends on the existence of a legislative framework, which provides a controlled evaluation and general acknowledged need and utility of the implementation politics, strategic management and defined budgetary course. Nowadays, the problem is the lack of laws, which blocks the development of an evaluation system. It seems to be a malfunctioning mixture between supervision and evaluation functions.

After studying the applicability of several evaluation methods in the context of Romanian public institutions, we developed a new model that can be used to evaluate programs especially when evaluators cannot take advantage of a well established monitoring and evaluation system. This is a model developed not only for Romanian institutional context, but it can be applied also in other developing countries.

The new model, called **PAEM (Public Administration Evaluation Model)**, is composed of 10 different stages, of which the first one is related with program design or standardization, and the others are related to evaluation.

1. Program standardization

Romanian public administration has not passed to a program and project budgetary system, despite several attempts in this direction (Law of public finance no. 1989/1998). This is the reason why numerous activities of public institutions were not considered programs or projects, although they had many functional particularities that made them feasible for monitoring and evaluation. These activities are not standardized programs and projects. They do not have clearly specified objectives, activities, time framework and other program elements. In order to be able to evaluate them, standardization of the activities of an institution is required. By this process, most of the public institutions activities could be turned into programs and projects. The gain would be an easier and more effective monitoring and evaluation. In order to standardise, we could use a Program or Project Form.

The Program/Project Form. The standardization of activities is necessary whenever we need to turn them into programs and projects in order to monitor and/or evaluate them. This could be achieved by simply filling in a Program Form. This is an instrument that must contain several elements, such as the context of the program, the organizational structure, the documents of the program, the actors involved, the specific activities, the time framework, the resources involved, the expected results as well as other significant elements particular for each case.

The context of the program involves a short history of the activity that is being standardized (details on its origin and its initiator), the summary of the specific activities of the program and of the delivery methods for different services, information on similar activities and services, as well as details concerning the uniqueness of the program. Another element of the Program Form is **the organizational structure**, which refers mainly to the institutional levels of functioning and control, and to the allocation of responsibilities.

The documents of the program refer to the scope and the objectives of the program, the methodology of the program (meaning the strategies used in order to reach the goals), short-term, medium-term and long-term expected results, and the system of performance indicators. The documents of the program should also include the description of the specific activities by providing information about the name, location, time framework of each individual activity, the person responsible for each activity and the incentives and penalties related to their accurate or wrong implementation respectively. Also, the documents of the program should include the evaluation and the monitoring methodology, as well as other significant elements according to the

particular situation. Any Program Form should include a chapter for observations and additional notes. The Program Form should be filled out after conducting repeated interviews with the involved parties. The program initiators could give information about the context of the program. The organizational details can be provided by those implementing the program. They could also give details on the documents of the programs. After collecting all these pieces of information, we already have an overall image of the program and we can prepare the next step: the establishment of the monitoring and the evaluation system of the program.

2. Setting the evaluation goals

During this stage, the goals of the evaluation should be accurately presented. Even if not many evaluation questions can be answered because of the lack of a monitoring system, several elements can be measured: the effects of the program as perceived by a group of actors involved in the program, the degree of their satisfaction etc. The presentation of the evaluation perspective is crucial. This could be the perspective of the target group, of all the actors involved, the perspective of the financing entity or that of the implementation unit. The evaluation type and the evaluation methods should also be specified here in order to set the area of the investigation.

3. Conclusions of previous evaluations

If any evaluation has been done previously, their findings should be presented. It could be useful to present especially strong and weak aspects that have been noticed in the past, as well as any other findings that could set the basis for present or future benchmark. In the category of previous evaluations may fall accreditation processes as well as any other evaluation or self-assessment.

4. The construction of an indicator system used for monitoring and evaluation

The indicator system can be built in the process of expressing concepts in operational terms. This is a procedure specific to social sciences research methodology. The first step would be to turn the concepts into variables. These variables represent the indicators of the future monitoring and evaluation system. Next, several computations could be accomplished in order to obtain indices which can offer a synthetic image of different tendencies. During this stage, the type of indicators should also be established: performance indicators, impact indicators, efficiency indicators, etc. The indicator system that has been obtained can be used in a first instance both as a monitoring indicator system and as an evaluation indicator system. Then, progressively, the evaluation indicator system will develop specific traits.

5. The selection and use of research methods in program evaluation

From the methodological toolkit of social sciences research, program evaluation uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to admit that program evaluation actually uses the multi-method approach. Based

on the type of the program and of the evaluation objectives, diverse combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods should be used.

6. Data analysis and interpretation

Data interpretation is done, according to the type of collected data, with the help of statistical (quantitative) analysis methods or with the help of qualitative analysis methods.

7. Filling in the indicator system

During this stage, the system of indicators will be filled in with measurement data obtained in the data analysis and interpretation stage.

8. The development of a plan to reduce the unwanted effects

This stage is specific to the internal institutional management. The evaluation process can bring a significant in-put by rendering explanations connected to functional and not functional aspects that have a positive or a negative impact. Even if the development of a plan to reduce the unwanted effects is not generally perceived as being part of an evaluator's work, some useful suggestions can be made at this stage.

9. Writing the evaluation report

The evaluation report represents the synthesis of the evaluation studies. It is a document based on the evaluation process that can have different destinations. The evaluation report can be addressed to the management of the institution or to the financing entities that are supposed to have the responsibility for decision-making. The evaluation could suggest through the evaluation report some actions or decisions that need to be taken. In the same time, an evaluation could be addressed to the media or to the general public. According to the target group of the evaluation, the language used and the details presented should be carefully considered.

10. Planning the integration of the evaluation results in the design of future activities and programs

Every evaluation should end by integrating some of its findings in future actions. The planning of integration of the evaluation results in the design of future activities and programs represents just the plan for fighting the unwanted effects, an additional but very useful document of the evaluation. This is useful mainly for increasing the performance of future actions.

Trends

As most sources indicate, the tendency in the field is to use more than one evaluation model at a time (Hansen, 2005:448). But they must be carefully chosen and adjusted to country and institutional realities. In the public field, evaluation

studies and reports are required to answer more and more questions regarding the process and the results of the projects; of increasing interest are also the economic effects and the social impact effects. Especially in the case of the projects financed from the public funds the tendency is to use complex evaluation models that focus on more than one perspective.

In order to be effective, evaluation should be based on solid monitoring systems. If the monitoring system is missing, evaluation models should be consequently adjusted. In this respect, the new model, called **PAEM (Public Administration Evaluation Model)**, is a possibility. It generates structured programs and projects out of mere unstructured activities of public institutions; it helps building an indicator system that has a double function: secures the future existence of a monitoring system and provides a functional evaluation toolkit.

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