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THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Drahomíra Ondrová*

An international conference “*Theory and Practice of Public Administration*” was held from 11 – 12 September 2013 on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Faculty of Public Administration UPJS University in Košice. The conference was organised by the Faculty in cooperation with Košice UPJS University, and in collaboration with, and under the auspices of JUDr. **Zdenko Trebuľa**, President of the Košice Self-Governing Region. Besides the Slovak conference participants, contributors came mainly from the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Germany.

The Conference program included opening and closing plenary sessions, panel discussions; working sessions on the main conference topic took place the second conference day followed by formal and informal meetings of working groups and conference participants.

After the introductory official speeches which were presented by the guests of conference, the presentation of the Dean of the Faculty of Public Administration Prof. JUDr. **Igor Palúš** was presented. His paper concerned its attention on “*The Relationship of Democracy Regarding Professionalism in Public Administration*“, primarily focusing on those aspects which under the conditions of the Slovak Republic seem to be the most controversial ones when confronting the legal dimension and practice. Following the analyses of the local government constitutional and legal aspects of democracy and professionalism, demands regarding the proper municipality mayor’s professional education and training as the potential legal requirement for the execution of mayor’s post, and the execution of the law of mayor’s veto when enforced by municipal mayor, or his potential recalling from the post by means of the local referendum initiated by the municipal assembly were examined. At the same time there were suggested and put forth some prospective solutions of the existing problems by

* doc. PhDr. Drahomíra Ondrová, CSc. is a Head of the Department of Public Policy and Theory of Public Administration, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Popradská 66, 041 32 Košice, Slovak Republic, drahomira.ondrova@upjs.sk.

means of presenting proposals *de lege ferenda* in the area of legal amendment concerning the local self-government in the Slovak Republic.

The main mission of the conference was to present scientific and research work outcomes of modern public administration theory and practice; further on, to create a space for establishing and increasing cooperation, strengthening contacts and exchanges with domestic and foreign universities, scientific and research institutions, public-administration authorities and bodies, and finally, to exchange experience, know-how, knowledge and proficiencies with experts, professionals and practitioners who are active in public administration everyday activities.

The content of the Conference Program presentations and discussions had been focused on the significant public administration topics, which facilitate a better understanding of important issues regarding the public administrative reforms taking place in most of the European countries in connection to *“the European administrative space”* and their further development in relation to the on-going legal processes, economic capacity combined with the implementation of government policies and policymaking power. Attention had been paid to comparative studies regarding the structure and competences of administrative systems of the Slovak Republic in comparison with the other European countries, but in particular with the EU member countries. Besides that, the Conference explored how public administration can share resources with other public and private sectors to maximise efficiencies, leverage strategic advantages and exchange talent in order to create more effective outcomes for the Slovak public sector. Consideration had been also paid to individual levels of public administration; central, intermediate and local ones and their inter-relationships. A special notice was put on problems of administrative law and bureaucratic structure of public administration, government economic policy which constitutes the integral part of public administration, and the necessity of creation and establishment of ethical dimension in public administration.

Conference International Scientific Committee was made up of the prominent academic dignitaries from abroad, domestic scholars and lecturers including internal academic representatives. The chairman of the conference was the Dean of the Faculty of Public Administration UPJS University in Košice, Prof. JUDr. **Igor Palúš**, CSc.

Members of the scientific committee consisted of: Prof. Dr. **Gabi Meissner** from the University of Applied Sciences in Ludwigsburg, the Federal Republic of Germany; Prof. dr. **Dmitri Fedorovich Ayatskov**, DrSc. from P. A.

Stolypin Volga Region Academy of Public Administration, Saratov, the Russian Federation; Dr. habil. **Mária Bordás**, representative of the National University of Public Service, Faculty of Public Administration in Budapest, the Republic of Hungary; Prof.dr.hab. **Bronislav Sitek** delegated by the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Faculty of Law and Administration, Olsztyn, the Republic of Poland; doc. PhDr. **Dušan Janák**, PhD. from Silesian University in Opava, Faculty of Public Policies, Opava, the Czech Republic; RNDr. **Viliam Páleník**, PhD. h.doc. from the Institute of Economic Research SAS and the representative of the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels, the Kingdom of Belgium; prof. Ing. **Milan Buček**, DrSc. from the University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of National Economy, Bratislava, the Slovak Republic; prof. PhDr. **Marcela Gbúrová**, CSc. Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Faculty of Arts, the Slovak Republic; prof. Ing. **Viera Cibáková**, CSc., School of Economics and Management in Public Administration in Bratislava, the Slovak Republic; prof. Ing. **Viktória Bobáková**, CSc. the Vice-Dean for Science, Research and Doctoral Studies of the Faculty of Public Administration, UPJS University in Košice, the Slovak Republic.

Conference Organisational Committee consisted of prof. Ing. **Viktória Bobáková**, CSc., Ing. **Katarína Krokosová**, the Secretary of the Faculty of Public Administration, and Senior Lecturers of the Faculty of Public Administration; PhDr. **Jana Knežová**, PhD., Ing. **Helena Harausová**, PhD., JUDr. Mgr. **Michal Jesenko**, PhD., Ing. **Radovan Dráb**, PhD., JUDr. **Róbert Gyuri**, PhD., Ing. **Zuzana Hrabovská**, PhD., and Mgr. **Iveta Jeleňová**, PhD.

The second day of the conference had been devoted to presentations and discussion in sections:

The first section dealt with *“Political and Politological Contexts of Public Administration”*. It was chaired by the Chair and Discussant of the section doc. PhDr. **Drahomíra Ondrová**, CSc. in cooperation with the Vice-Dean for International Relations and Development doc. Ing. **Silvia Ručinská** PhD., and the Section Secretary PhDr. **Jana Knežová** PhD.

Topics presented by the participants reflected the widely discussed problems of the theory of public administration, models of public administration performance, public administrative competences, public administration universal theories and their principles, communal policies, characteristics of regions and their process of creation; stages, main difficulties, legislative framework, fiscal autonomy and capacity to absorb European funds in order to foster opportunities and challenges to make the situation of the regional government

in Slovakia better. In connection with the political system transformation of public administration had been dealt and discussed considering also the necessity of ethical management in public administration in order to avoid the abuse of power, thus fostering the organisation's healthy climate and ethical culture which would finally help to enhance administrative effectiveness. Analysis of foreign direct investments was discussed in comparison with the Visegrad four countries. Furthermore, presentations and discussion covered the area of new environmental, social and economic challenges of small rural municipalities. The focus was put on identification of their problems regarding preserving their essential function as viable settlements having in mind the long-term competitiveness in future. Features of the responsible communal policy were talked about, putting emphasis on the use of endogenous resources, such as: community based development, local economic development connected with the systematic approaches in the context of good governance principles. Principles of citizen's participation as the fundamental basic guidelines of democracy were reflected in relation to the institute of referendum in Slovakia and the current state of youth participation on the local level.

The second section "*Theoretical and Legal Bases of Public Administration and Practice*" was chaired by the Chair and Discussant of the section doc. JUDr. **Mária Hencovská**, CSc., and the Section Secretary JUDr. Mgr. **Michal Jesenko**, PhD.

Topics covered territorial self-government as a form of public authority, financial government as an implementation platform of a financial sovereignty. Formation and protection of living environment was discussed in relation to legislative form and application practice. At the same time the attention was put on the good governance and its principles in the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, e.g. the paper by **Jan Janeček** from the Czech Republic, which concentrated its attention on the legal aspects of property management regulation of the Czech municipalities, dealt with the mentioned topic in connection with the principles of good governance.

Legally binding legislation of the EU in public administration was considered as well. Presentations observed and revealed the existing noticeable conflict between the state omnipotence and self-government powers. The state intervention into the local affairs and the irreversible powers of central authorities are still apparent, as it was stressed during the discussion. The competences of mayors were at the centre of presenters' attention and their presentations; the competence of mayor to veto decisions of the municipal

council and limits for that legal concept under the current laws of the Slovak Republic followed by the outcomes of research work done within the VEGA project concentrated on the state of the professional preparation and training of the smaller municipalities mayors. The regulation of the local self-government legislation was analysed and ways of its modification and definition of its legal status were presented and discussed in the section. Besides that, the great variety of legal problems were put into the fore in order to find the proper solutions regarding implementation of the local self-government legal instruments which might prevent such catastrophes as floods and which would help to minimise negative impacts on citizens' lives, their health and property. The legislation of the administrative sanctioning caused by breaching of tax regulations, branches of the tax law, administrative law and administrative offences, the right to information guaranteed by the Constitution enabling citizens actively participate in an administration of public affairs, labour law and state church administration were presented and contested in discussion.

The third section "*Social-Psychological and Organisational Dimensions of Public Administration Functioning*" was chaired by the Chair and Discussant of the section doc. Mgr. **Gabriela Kravčáková**, PhD and the Section Secretary Ing. **Helena Harausová**, PhD.

Besides the general characterisation of municipalities and their classification, the presented topics were aimed at the analysis of basic characteristics and organisational structure of the local action groups and their interaction with business sector illustrated by the practical examples in a real life conditions. Processes of the implementation of community development into the public administration were analysed and discussed taking into consideration the role of territorial self-government. In connection with the on-going reform of public administration the role of community centres regarding the community development was analysed and discussed by participants. Local government communication policy was debated in connection with communication tools, the e-communication and their interconnection with social networks; efficiency and performance of the public administration employees was examined in relation to the impact of their job satisfaction; sociological aspects of the exclusion of Roma population and the role played by the territorial local governments regarding the improvement of Roma population integration into the majority society, the attention was also paid on the issues of continuing education of teachers of specialised subjects at secondary technical schools and problems of further education. Majority of presentations put into consideration conditions

of senior citizens in our society and improving their quality of life by means of mainstreaming of aging as a form of integration, seniors' quality of life in institutionalised facilities in comparison with being on their own, or living with their families; further on economic and social saturation of seniors were discussed, their participation in social life, seniors' access to education with concentration on reducing their financial illiteracy and the role of public administration to eliminate the above-mentioned problems. Socio-economic issues covered mainly the area of taxation focusing on the motives for tax compliance and non-compliance. All presentations were based on the research outcomes received from the collection of data obtained in a real-life setting.

"Economic Aspects of Territorial Self-government" were presented and discussed in the fourth section which was chaired by the Section Chair doc. Ing. **Anna Čepelová**, PhD., and Section Secretary Ing. **Radovan Dráb**, PhD.

Topics covered the area of economics and management provided on the level of self-governments presented the recent trends in the sphere of management, marketing, bookkeeping and the rest of financial aspects which are connected with the self-government administration. Some papers put their attention at foreign direct investments as well as on their effects in connection with the regional development in Slovakia, on the economic analysis of regional development and financial possibilities which might make their advancement faster, ways of use the EU funds to reduce regional disparities, effects of public administration decentralisation and fiscal decentralisation, content of operational programs, implementation of knowledge management principles, measurement and evaluation of the satisfaction of public administration users, examination of innovative processes and dissemination of knowledge, character of basic electronic services to citizens and analysis of information systems interrelated with the improvement of local authorities activities, comprehensive survey and study of the Slovak official municipalities websites. Besides that, impacts of public administration on the economy of municipalities were dealt with and discussed in the section as the new system of public administration transfers provide more competences for self-government activities, but on the other hand, they transmit the increase in expenditure and everyday tasks.

Summing up, we can say that by means of organising international conferences and its research activities the Faculty tries to improve and spread the knowledge and awareness of public administration, to develop its scientific, academic and practical foundations and to make the relationship of the Faculty closer to local bodies of government and territorial self-government.