

Chapter 16

Portal for Employees in the Public Sector: A Tool for Knowledge Management in Human Resources

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ABSTRACT

The need to reduce public spending has led Portugal to make administrative reforms. To that end, it called on the so-called e-government, using ICT as a mechanism to increase the quality and transparency of public services while lowering costs and operationalizing new public policies. Although administrative decentralisation is enshrined in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, only recently has it been prioritised as one of the great objectives of the administrative reforms of the state. To this end, the transfer of the necessary financial and human resources are foreseen. This will imply the implementation of human resources management strategies and mechanisms that avoid surplus or shortage of human resources, both in Central and Local Administration. Therefore, in this chapter, the creation of the “Portal for Employees in the Public Sector” is proposed as a shared management tool.

INTRODUCTION

The economic crisis which Portugal has experienced in recent years has resulted in high budgetary restriction which has inevitably had an impact on Public Administration.

In this context of cost reduction, Portugal has undertaken a thorough administrative reform of its public services, with the aim of simplifying, streamlining and making administrative processes and procedures more transparent; To enable savings in resources, quality gains, effectiveness and efficiency, and ultimately to facilitate the mobility of public employees to perform other duties, essentially in order to curb public spending.

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Thus, the Portuguese Public Administration (national, municipal and regional) has a very rigorous management of existing human resources and an adoption of good practices and global or sectorial mechanisms, supported by information technology, either through digital platforms and through more open and strategic communication, so that despite the reduction in employees, it is still possible to provide a public service of proximity to citizens, with quality, efficiency and efficiency.

Although the promotion of administrative decentralization is already foreseen for in art. 6 (1) and in art. 267 (2) of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, the reality is that very little was done to develop this. Only recently has the Government made it one of the primary objective in State Reform.

Hence, a process of the transfer of competences from the central administration to municipalities and to inter-municipal entities, in areas such as education, local health services, development contracts, social inclusion and culture, has begun. Included in this transfer is the necessary and sufficient human, financial and patrimonial resources to exercise of the powers transferred by local authorities and inter-municipal organs.

The policy of administrative decentralisation entails a transfer/redistribution of employees from central and regional administrations to local administration, and perhaps to a redistribution within the central administration itself, which may involve some risks, such as poor distribution of human resources. That is, there could be an unequal distribution in two tiers of government: 1) local municipalities could end up with a surplus of employees, while others with a deficit; 2) some services of the central administration could have an excess of employee, while others scarcity.

These constraints pose a number of challenges to Portuguese Public Administration, who, in this process of administrative decentralisation, must find mechanisms of reaction and flexibility, especially in the area of human resources management, to allow for a balanced distribution of employees in a transparent and egalitarian manner, which will not forfeit the well-being of employees and their career development.

This article proposes the creation of the “Portal of the Employee in the Public Sector”: an integrated management tool for all human resources of the Portuguese Public Administration, which will assist in three areas of Public Administration work: the creation of job opportunities; the promotion of career development and the well-being of employees and the development of strategies to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of human resources in Public Administration.

Administrative Reform in Portugal

There has been a generalised international consensus around the idea that governance procedures and institutional dynamics are essential in explaining differences regarding country development. (Acemoglu et al. 2012)

By administrative reform we mean the deliberate use of authority and influence in applying new measures to an administrative system in order to change its goals, organisational structures and procedures with the aim of increasing quality, efficiency and effectiveness in the development of the services provided.

According to Madureira et al. (2006), administrative reform should be seen as an integrated, complex and diversified project with a need for the careful and conciliatory management of the behaviour and expectation of different parties so that all may be served without restrictions.

In Portugal, the constitution of the Welfare State began after 25 April, 1974 with the implementation of new social policies, which meant the expansion of the role of the State in social areas such as education, health, social welfare and social housing, in addition to the subsequent increment in public expenditure and the number of state employees.

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