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## METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN ASSESSING THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING ELECTRONIC SERVICES

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### ABSTRACT

The report discusses issues related to the capacity of the local administration for the creation and development of e-government and services. The main objective of this report is to present methodological tools for assessing capacity. On this basis and as a result of empirical studies we provide relevant data and analysis. The main results of the analysis show the feasibility of the proposed methodological approach. In conclusion recommendations and outlines trends are made.

**Key words:** Administrative capacity, local government, e-services, e-municipality, information technologies

### INTRODUCTION

In the scientific literature there are different interpretations of the term "administration". One of them gives E. Kandeveva, namely: "The administration is linked to governance. Administration exists both in state, local and public organizations, and business organizations - public and private"(5). As can be seen from this definition, the administration is divided into private (business) and public administration. Generally the distinction contained in that public administration is associated with government at the state and local level and it is oriented to the population, while business administration is one that serves enterprises and it is aimed at gaining profit. For these reasons, in the definition of administration, public and business administration must be distinguished. Such a distinction makes N. Arabadjijiski giving broad sense of the word administration, namely: "the activity of a group of people joined forces to achieve common goals. If the point is that these common goals are directed out to the public as a whole, it has a presence in the public service."(2). According to the Glossary for

Public Administration and Regional Studies administration is "administration system of public bodies implementing executive-operative form of government activities through the implementation of laws and regulations"(3). Since this concept cannot be described with just one definition the same author gives two definitions of the word in one associated with the administration "officials in government" and the second defines the term "administration" as "part of the management which deals with the implementation of the state policy by turning it into an effective business executive." On the other hand the administration can be bound to the citizens, made by I. Velitchkov and he gives its definition, namely: "administration system which provides administrative services to citizens. Governments do not create, does not define these services, they are required by law. Administration only mediates their implementation and through it n the regulations are put into practice."(4). If we consider the meaning of the word "administration" as Bulgarian dictionary defines it, it has three meanings. One is related to the authorities, namely: Administration are "executive authorities in one country", the second is related to the management states that administration are "officials in a government administrative staff"

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and the third is associated with the object management, namely "the administration is room for the management of the company, firm, etc."(1). According to the dictionary of foreign words in Bulgarian origin of the word "administration" is from the Latin word "administratio" and means service, leadership. This matter is related to the previously given definitions, namely the administration is focused on the population, namely public administration and services for business organizations, namely business administration.

In this paper we stick to the following definition of administration: "The administration is a combination of human resources and material resources destined to provide implementation and enforcement of the laws of the country under the supervision of the public authorities (state and local)" (7).

The whole system of public administration, in particular the municipal administration, is guided by certain principles that employees observe in the process of carrying out their duties. These principles are specified in the regulations and their legal enforcement leads to an open, accountable, loyal attitude of the administration

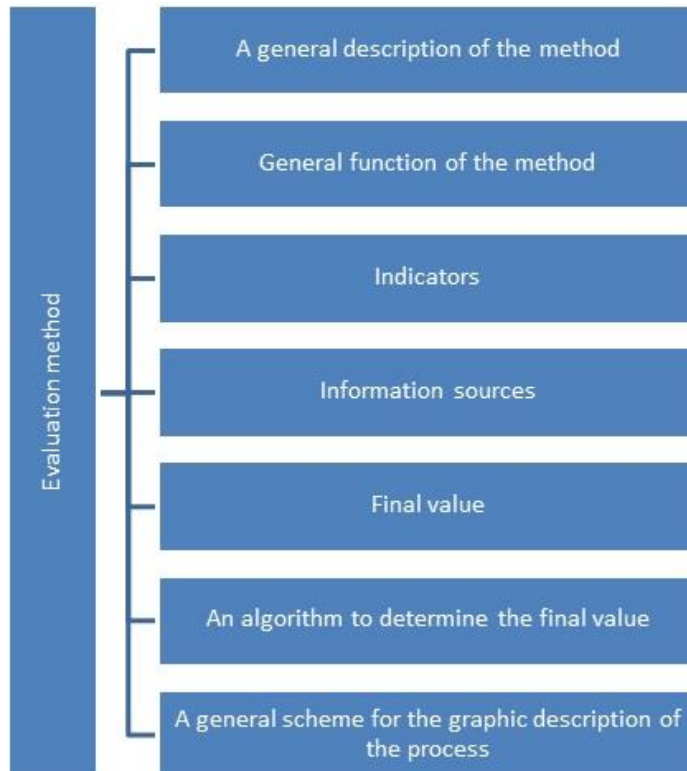
to the public as the administration operates in the public interest, and this is the main principle in the work of public administration. The ability of the administration to fulfill its fundamental obligations is associated in this study by the term "administrative capacity".

### EVALUATION OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

Below we present an example of methodological approach to measuring the local administrative capacity by designing software evaluation methods (8). For each stage of their design we propose the development of the seven components:

- A general description of the method;
- General function of the method;
- Indicators;
- Information sources;
- Final value;
- An algorithm to determine the final value;
- A general scheme for the graphic description of the process.

For every evaluation method is proposed the following scheme (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1.** Evaluation method

## DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT METHOD

For the presentation of specific methodological issues of assessment of local administrative capacity in the development and deployment of

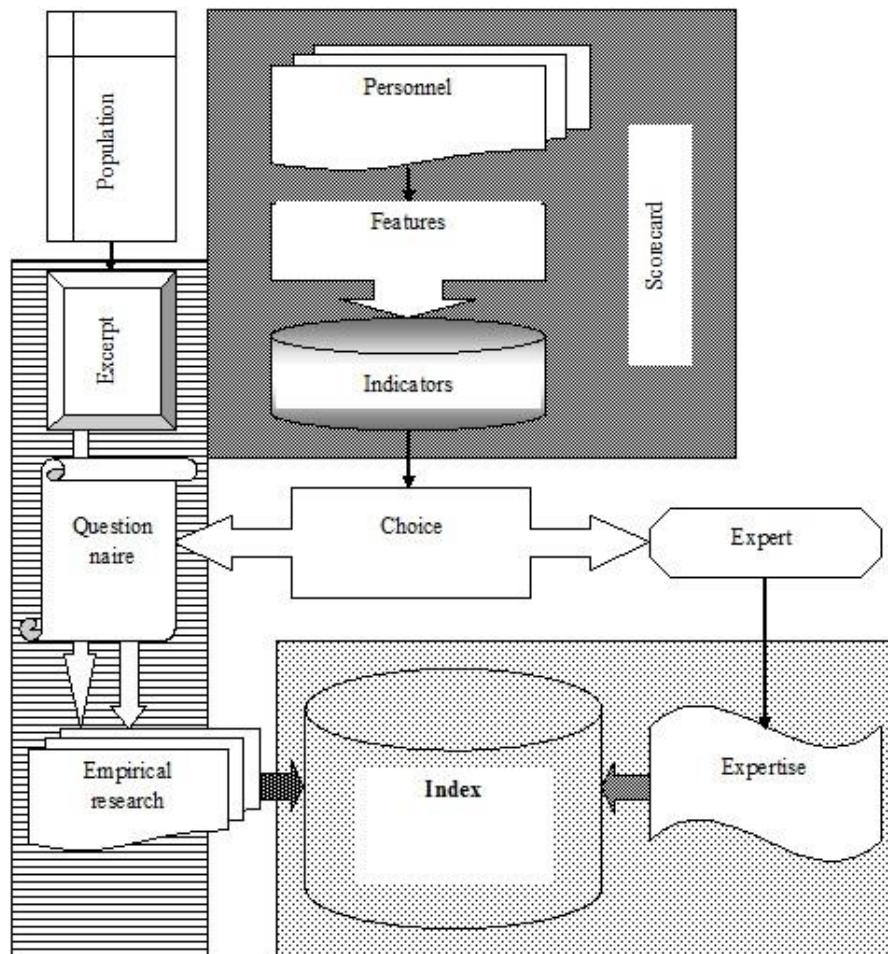
e-services we present an example description of the assessment method:

- **A general description of the method.** The method is designed to measure the level of knowledge, skills and competencies of the employees of a particular municipal administration. Most important are the dimensions of knowledge in information technology and the opportunities to develop new electronic services;
- **General function of the method.** The main feature of the method is to provide information about the level of capacity in the development of new electronic services. Thus outlines the key issues and opportunities of the administration to take measures to increase administrative capacity;
- **Indicators.** Possible indicators for the application of this method are: What indicators of employee motivation do you use? Does your organization have a system of quality management? What impact has the computer information system used in the administration of quality management? How do you assess the correlation between the level of knowledge and skills that your staff has and the requirements of the information system you are using? How do you evaluate staff turnover? Does it influence the level and changes in administrative procedures on staff motivation for professional development? To what extent are independent the results of the use of computer information systems in your organization and those who personally prepare these reports?;
- **Information sources.** The main sources of information in the application of this assessment method is a survey of the municipal administration, official statistics, etc.;
- **Final value.** The result of the application of this method is a number. Limits can be different. The scale is determined by the expert who carried out the assessment. Possible and applied in practice are Schemes 1 to 6, from 1 to 10 or from 1 to 100. These rating scales should be used and the indicators in the method;
- **An algorithm to determine the final value.** Final algorithm for determining the value shows the mathematical transformations that take place until a final value. Applied in practice are the arithmetic mean and the weighted average calculation. A major problem of the algorithm for determining the final value is the procedure to convert qualitative data into quantitative;
- **A general scheme for the graphic description of the process.** Scheme description of the process shows the sources of data and the algorithms by which the final value of the evaluation is obtained. Possible pattern diagram is shown in **figure 2**.

We believe that the proposed approach for the standardized description of valuation methods may be useful in the creation of a comprehensive valuation methodology. It can be applied to both the measurement of administrative capacity in the development of e-services, and in other forms in order to improve the performance of the local administration.

## CONCLUSIONS

The article makes an attempt to show the main methodological issues in the measurement and assessment of administrative capacity. This is done by developing software-based valuation methods. Any method can be described by a set of seven specifications. The application of these methods can be used as a basis for improving the administration and development of new administrative services. Valuation models allow development over time by adding new parameters and characteristics of the analyzed sites.



**Figure 2.** Scheme

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