



# Public Administration in the Perspective of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology. A Discussion

Zoltán AMBRUS

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
ambruszoltan@sapientia.siculorum.ro

**Abstract.** Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology as a psychosocial discipline provides the axiological and practical foundations for accomplishing successful transition, for dealing with the undesired effects of the crisis and globalization processes, for the vitalization and efficient functioning of democracy. In this respect, terms such as: social equality, community feeling as pro-sociality, unconditional respect for human dignity, co-operation 'on the useful side of life,' and horizontal interpersonal communication represent psychosocial concepts and anchors in the democratic transformation of social reality. In order to apply the fundamental principles of public administration, i.e. democratic values and efficient administrative activities, public administrative organs need an integrative psychosocial perspective. The projects promoted by public administrative organs should focus more on co-operation and less on competition, they should encourage self-esteem, and should assert the potentialities of community members. In partnership with civil organizations, public administrative organs can create within a community some efficient social equality 'laboratories' marked by co-operation as the dominant interactional behaviour. Public administrative authorities' encouragement of citizens and civil organizations to participate and co-operate for solving community problems represent a 'motion of confidence,' especially when community is faced with difficulties and hardships.

**Keywords:** Adlerian psychology, democratic principles, community, social equality

## The psychosocial approach to the administrative phenomenon in the context of globalization and transition

Globalization processes represent a mandatory reality of the contemporary world, being characterized by life acceleration through the hypertrophy of material consumption and money rush, as well as by the degradation of community values

and social co-operation. Such attributes lead to increasing social tensions and to an atmosphere of discouragement, with all repercussions for the individual's social behaviour and also for the quality of cohabitation. Ultrafast changes, competition and fierce fight for power, together with generalized corruption, immorality, increased selfishness and aggression have undermined both the psychosocial foundation of community and the individual's mental health, causing him/her to react more and more by destructive and self-destructive behaviours. Social life is marked by the abuse of democratic freedom, which means that each individual pursues his own rights and at the same time disregards the rights of the others. This unilateral and discretionary interpretation and use of democratic rights only in the self-interest emphasizes social and economic inequities and leads to the so-called polarized society (Dreikurs 2000, 205).

After the values specific to the totalitarian regime have collapsed, the transition period still lacks a climate which could encourage the formation and crystallization of a system of authentic democratic values. Such values should be able to shape the major social actions in a society into developing democratic communities and a civil society in which citizens adopt a proactive and pro-social behaviour. Very weak or inexistent social cohesion, especially in the urban areas, dramatic decrease of the political leaders' importance, lack of trust in the political class, inequities and discrimination, and increasing difficulties in providing the means of subsistence constitute themselves as main sources of malfunctions in individual and community life. In such an unfavourable climate, power is constantly shifting away from citizens and communities are being concentrated in institutions which drift apart from citizens' interests and rights, and they operate by ignoring communities and civil society.

Thus, the essential issues to be addressed today concern the way in which globalization works, how the transition to market economy and to the democratic pluralistic political system is performed, how undesirable effects are to be prevented and counteracted, and also how the positive and stimulating influences of these processes could be employed to raise the life standards and improve cohabitation. In this respect, based on decentralization and real local autonomy, local public administration authorities have the task to manage these processes in the public interest, 'humanizing' globalization and dropping the reactive counterproductive attitude according to which they claim that globalization processes are the cause of unsuccessful transition and prolonged recession.

In order to tackle the issues mentioned above, local authorities should initiate the planning and application of viable realistic solutions and to involve in this social co-operation all interested factors, ranging from economic agents from the private sector to civil organizations and communities of citizens. Public administration's responsibility, initiative, and need for intervention are increased in the context of the crisis. Taking into consideration that action is required first

and foremost at the levels of inter-human relations and psychosocial realities, an important issue to be addressed is represented by the means of accomplishing this initiative and intervention, this bold and proactive approach. Public administration authorities must take into consideration that market economy is not a purpose in itself. Instead, it should serve the needs of the community and citizens since economic values cannot replace democratic values.

In my opinion, globalization processes and the promotion of advanced technologies constitute themselves as opportunities to increase citizens' welfare and the quality of community and citizen life only when growth is sustained by environment and respects the human dignity of all community members. Public administration authorities should join their efforts with all economic and social life factors and counteract the effects of crisis manifest in three main directions, namely: deepening poverty, environmental destruction, and social decomposition – all consequences of society malfunctions (Korten 1995).

Ultrafast world changes and globalization processes, together with efficient functioning of information society and promotion of communication technologies, require the clarification, re-evaluation, and introduction of concepts and values such as: community, integration, co-operation, cohabitation, representative democracy, identity, reciprocity, subsidiary, autonomy, solidarity, interpersonal equality, horizontal communication, citizenship, pro-sociality, and self-determination.

A main objective of public administration activities is shaping the European identity by channelling all efforts into creating an integrated Europe of all citizens as a community of regional, cultural, and local communities.

Regardless of the undesired effects of globalization, crisis and slow transition, public administration organs should create contexts which encourage social solidarity, an ethics of partnership, and respect for differences, and also contexts which satisfy the actual needs of communities based on the plurality of values. An efficient and humane society needs co-operating communities, social groups, and citizens who express social interest and pro-sociality, act as autonomous agents with initiative, and take responsibility for their actions. Consequently, a chief organizational and formative objective of public administration authorities lies in generating democratic practice and cohabitation, as well as in encouraging and promoting authentic values in all spheres of life. At the same time, such an objective involves creating contexts which support the development of co-operating capacities and ensure the feelings of equality and satisfaction of all actors involved in this effort.

Furthermore, another matter which should not be omitted is represented by what Naisbitt (1994) considers a paradoxical aspect of globalization, namely that small constitutive elements, such as communities, organizations, groups, and people, gain an increased importance and become stronger owing to information technologies and to the multiply interconnected world.

In this integrative context, public administration organs, communities, and organizations will interact productively, existing and working together to achieve desirable purposes. Decentralization, local autonomy, and subsidiarity will become authentic realities characterized by self-administration, initiative, self-management, sharing of responsibilities, applying democratic procedures in taking decisions and applying them.

A positive aspect of making administrative activities more efficient is represented by the fact that citizens and civil organizations possess nowadays the knowledge and information necessary to participate in co-operative actions, to lead a democratic and productive life, to get involved responsibly in making decisions about the community in which they live and act.

In an optimistic approach, globalization processes can lead to the formation of more efficient functional units, to an interactive system based on pro-sociality and each individual's personal responsibility (Ambrus 2004, 13).

Public administration authorities are meant to promote democratic social values and pro-sociality, focusing their entire activity on the problems and needs of their communities and citizens, in the context of a democratic plurality of values. In close co-operation with civil society, public administration organs can and must counterbalance the undesired effects of globalization by employing social psychology knowledge in devising public interest programmes and forming alliances with a pro-social purpose. Thus, public administration organs contribute to the formation of a new humanism, based on functional interpersonal equality as a premise of a truly democratic society (Delors 2000, 37).

## **Psychosocial aspects of achieving the fundamental principles of public administration**

Alfred Adler's individual psychology as a psychosocial discipline and integrative anthropological approach to human nature constitutes itself as an authentic 'psychology for democracy,' providing a value and an action-like framework for the successful achievement of the fundamental principles of public administration (Stein 1999).

Adler (1992) focuses on the social environment in which the human being develops and acts as an indivisible entity of similar value to his fellows. The term individual in 'individual psychology' designates the integrative, indivisible (*indivduum*) nature of human personality.

In Adler's psychosocial conception, man is not a victim of uncontrollable internal or external forces but rather a conscious actor responsible for shaping his own destiny, capable of self-determination and self-education, and able to co-operate with other people. Thus, the Adlerian psychology provides the axiological and

praxeological foundations for accomplishing a successful transition, for dealing with the undesired effects of the crisis and globalization processes, and for the vitalization and efficient functioning of democracy. In this respect, terms such as social equality, social interest as pro-sociality, unconditional respect for human dignity, co-operation on 'the useful side of life,' and horizontal interpersonal communication represent psychosocial concepts and anchors in the democratic transformation of social reality, in modernizing society and satisfying the needs and interests of the community (Ambrus 2011, 10).

Social cohabitation and the accomplishment of efficient social co-operation require initiative and personal courage, a constructive lifestyle and community feeling in action and provide an effective psychosocial ground for overcoming the feelings of discouragement and inferiority generated by contemporary world realities. In the Adlerian approach, the epoch of anxiety, fear, and discouragement must be replaced by an encouraging and democratic social practice leading to communities in which each and every individual and group enjoys respect and confidence and at the same time shows respect for the others' rights and dignities.

A key issue of the administrative reform consists in increasing the democracy of public administration, by extending citizens and civil society's direct participation in taking administrative decisions, in accomplishing the objectives of public administration, and in the control of administrative processes.

An indirect form of public administration's democratic procedures is represented by the promotion of public interest which expresses the interests of the majority of society, without disregarding the interests of minorities. Since it reflects continually changing social processes and needs, public interest implies a perpetual re-evaluation to which public administration authorities and the civil sphere can make a valuable contribution by emphasizing the actual needs and interests of population.

As far as the principle of public administration's social efficiency is concerned, in our opinion, administrative activities are efficient only if community members, civil society, and political organizations are satisfied with them. This is why administrative communication and public relations must aim directly at substantiating this satisfaction.

The above mentioned public administration principles define the quality of public administration activities. On the one hand, a less democratic public administration cannot be efficient since its citizens cannot participate in solving common issues and in controlling administrative processes. On the other hand, an inefficient public administration which does not manage resources accordingly cannot be democratic as long as it ignores the fundamental needs and expectations of the given community.

Public administration's democracy and social efficiency must be approached as psychosocial realities with a focus on values and actions, and such an approach

implies an integrative and deeply humanistic perspective. In this respect, the Adlerian psychology provides a theoretical and praxeological framework extremely useful to all participants in accomplishing truly democratic and efficient public administration.

In the Adlerian approach, democracy implies social co-operation based on mutual respect, dignity for all citizens, acknowledging the equal worth of all humans, and being social interest in action (Beames 1992).

According to Dreikurs (2000, 197), democracy supports the realization of man's fundamental rights, based on acknowledging the human equality of all citizens. In this respect, democracy represents functional interpersonal equality.

Equal rights are generally accepted, whereas acknowledging the equal worth of all people is considered an aim impossible to achieve. At the same time, everyone has the right to define democracy in their own way, so people deem it right to regard themselves as democratic and progressive beings. Consequently, many of them perceive democracy as mostly a political phenomenon, when in reality democracy does not end at the borders of politics, it only starts there (Stein 1999).

As far as the democratic process is concerned, neither political equality nor economic equality is possible without achieving social equality. Political, economic, and social harmony can be accomplished only when all society members will be acknowledged and treated as having a similar human value (Dreikurs 2000, 200).

The main difficulty lies in the fact that people do not know and are not ready to live together as humans of a similar value, having the mutual duty to respect everyone's dignity. This is why an essential formative and public relations purpose of public administration authorities should be focused on developing the citizens' ethical and democratic behaviour by employing new encouraging methodology and interactive techniques at the levels of communities, organizations, institutions, and families. This purpose can be achieved by performing projects in common with civil society and all factors interested in the democratization of the entire public life. At the same time, there is a strong need for leaders who are able to help communities to become democratic by providing them with opportunities to apply democratic procedures at a smaller scale in daily life, and thus training citizens in the more significant challenges of taking social responsibilities.

This co-operative approach is absolutely necessary in the contemporary world since different spheres of socio-economic life are marked by an abuse of democratic freedom, according to which everyone pursues only their own rights and ignores or even despises the others' rights. Such unilateral and reductionist interpretation and use of democratic rights and freedom without responsibility emphasize social and economic inequalities, leading to the so-called polarized society and to social conflicts which impact on the quality of cohabitation (Dreikurs 2000, 205).

By establishing a constructive psychosocial atmosphere characterized also by trust and co-operation at community level, public administration authorities are no longer perceived by citizens as coercive institutions which do not represent their interests and are even their enemies. Consequently, an important public relations objective is represented by changing the image and reputation of public administration authorities and institutions by means of horizontal and respectful communication, as well as by widely participative actions.

Public relations campaigns led by public administration authorities should aim at changing and restructuring the attitudes of community members in a proactive and pro-social direction, namely by replacing the citizens' ignorant obedience, discouragement, and 'slave mentality' (Dreikurs 2000) with responsible involvement in leading their own lives (Ambrus 2010, 62).

In case that legal provisions and democratic cohabitation norms are violated or contraventions are committed, the decided sanctions should serve mainly community interests, focusing on adopting a desirable social behaviour. In this respect, the sentence to community service should be widely employed, providing a coercive context and having a more efficient preventive character (Vedinaş 2012, 301–302).

Local public administration authorities should take into consideration the human factor, the human resources potential, and the real needs of community when taking economic initiative and solving economic problems within their territory.

According to the social dominance model, social and power inequalities coexist with different forms of oppression in human society in the context of democracy. In such an approach, prejudices, discrimination, and oppression are not seen as pathological or quasi-pathological states of community, but rather they are regarded as 'normal' states, linked to the essence of politics and materialized in an inter-human communication process on the undesirable side of life (Sidanius and Pratto 1999, 61). This phenomenon is explained by the existence of negative reference groups which have an extremely low social status and which are strongly discriminated. It should be mentioned that social policy programmes applied forcefully do not achieve their purposes because they generate strong opposition when reaching the limits of status between dominant groups and negative reference groups.

In an optimistic perspective, Dreikurs (2000, 205) notices that there are no obstacles, malfunctions, and deprivations in the achievement of democracy that cannot be dealt with or remedied without more democracy. In other words, social practice based on equal interpersonal relations and mutual respect can be successfully promoted by courageous and co-operative actions.

In order to reach this objective, we have to take into account that democratic social practice requires negotiating abilities necessary to attain common grounds of action. Democratic leadership involves diplomacy and reconciliation of



opposing interests and viewpoints, and at the same time it stimulates the formation of concepts, attitudes, and desirable values within the framework of constructive group activities and responsible participation of all community members in taking, elaborating, and accomplishing decisions.

The fundamental premise of individual psychology is represented by all human beings' quest to belong and be appreciated by a human community. Thus, the democratic process is meant to provide welfare both for individuals and for groups, constituting itself as the means through which people who enjoy equal respect and dignity can solve life issues in co-operation with their fellows (Ferguson 2004, 8).

In conclusion, in order to implement public administration principles successfully, public administration authorities and institutions must encourage citizens in their activities, reassure them that they belong to the community in which they live, and support their cohabitation with their fellows as people of a similar value.

## **Social co-operation based on community feeling as social interest in action – the psychosocial foundation of public administration's democracy**

Serving public interest and community welfare, public administration is meant to co-operate with civil society relying on social interest as an evaluative attitude towards life as a whole, encouraging citizens' 'feeling for and with community' (Ferguson 1999, 5).

According to Dreikurs (1989, 9), community feeling/social feeling has no fixed or rigid object, but rather it expresses one's attitude towards social life, one's need to co-operate with his/her fellows, and an adaptive coping with life situations. Community feeling develops according to the individual's need to belong to a social community and is expressed by his/her capacity to co-operate with other community members. Non-development or lack in community feeling steers the discouraged individual towards the useless side of life, and thus makes him/her adopt counterproductive and antisocial behaviours aimed even against the community.

Adler (1996, 64) notices that the social value of human personality and character can be evaluated solely from the viewpoint of the individual's relations with the community, acknowledging his/her level of community feeling development as a sense of solidarity.

In public administration practice, the concept of community as well as that of community feeling can be employed abusively or manipulatively. In other



words, demagogical political rhetoric constantly resorts to the social feeling of solidarity between citizens when aiming at undesirable purposes targeted even against the interests and needs of the community. Employing the social feelings of community members in public administration activities involves psychosocial processes which favour the action-like character of this human potential, such as: co-operation, mutual trust, respect for human dignity, respectful communication, interpersonal equality, sharing of responsibilities, peaceful solving of conflicts, taking decisions in common, etc. (Adler 1958).

As a consequence, an essential objective of local public administration organs is represented by creating favourable pro-social contexts which will encourage the formation of desirable attitudes and behaviours meant to ensure the welfare of both individuals and the community.

Thus, public administration authorities should focus mainly on the formation of authentic communities that can promote the development of community and solidarity feelings. Such communities would also promote interpersonal relationships of social equality and would respect the differences between individuals, as well as the personal dignity of each and every member of the community who co-operates for everyone's welfare (Ambrus 2010, 62).

Lacks in community feelings can make people tend towards the 'useless' side of life, adopting disadapting and deviating behaviours. Mosak (1977, 117) states that social interest cannot be manifest both on the useful and the useless side of life since this complex social attitude represents a psychosocial foundation of positioning the individual, making him/her act on the useful, constructive side of life.

Adler (1996, 64) regards community feeling as a crucial motivating factor of human's social behaviour, stressing out that community shapes the entire psychology of the individual: 'no man can fully develop himself without sufficiently cultivating and emphasizing his social community feeling'. An appropriate level of community feeling development ensures that the individual acts courageously as a responsible agent, thus reaching self-development and contributing to the achievement of community purposes. The most consistent courage towards life issues stems from community feeling. Such courage does not require big physical efforts or daring actions but rather the courage and moral strength to cope with continual life challenges (Ferguson 1999, 9).

Dreikurs (1989, 5) claims that the individual's co-operating ability represents the measure of development specific to his social interest and community feeling. Co-operating capacity is tested in difficult and critical situations, when a courageous person interacts and contributes to the problem solving without expecting any reward.

Community feeling makes possible the constructive compensation of negative inferiority feelings, as well as finding personal significance and importance by productive and socially useful means. This extremely valuable psychosocial

equipment of the individual provides him with the foundation for life success, constituting itself as a crucial source of self-esteem and a life filled with satisfactions and achievements.

Social interest developed ever since early childhood represents a psychosocial ‘immunization’ against the hardships and negative aspects of life which needs to be incorporated in the individual’s lifestyle, whereas the co-operating capacity should be incorporated in his/her social behaviour in order to ensure the courage and mental health, which are absolutely necessary in coping with life challenges (Lombardi 1975, 11).

According to the Adlerian psychology, the main matters in life, namely work or professional career, interpersonal relationships or friendship, couple relations and family life, are social issues which request a significant level of social co-operation and human solidarity to be completed successfully. Adler (1958, 8) draws attention to the fact that all human beings aim at reaching personal significance and importance, but many times they forget that this significance lies in fact in their own contribution to the others’ lives. Groups can stimulate and encourage the development of community feeling, but they cannot force this development.

Individual psychology as social science approaches human matters in their social context, promoting an integrative sociological perspective. From this viewpoint, all life matters must be analysed in their social situation, considering the iron logic of communal life (Ansbacher and Ansbacher 1993, 127).

Community feeling represents the individual’s social attitude of coping with major life tasks, namely: socially useful work, relationships and social integration, couple relations, and family life. According to Adler (1958, 10), the individual’s manner of coping with these unavoidable human matters expresses the community feeling’s degree of development. These major life tasks do not have an incidental character, but rather they represent essential duties, eternal life challenges which seriously test each individual. As a consequence, neglecting, ignoring, or unaccomplishing any of the life tasks denotes undevelopment or lack of community feeling, a discouraging state which amplifies the individual’s inferiority feelings.

Being an existential task of the individual, work/occupation does not assume a very high level of community feeling development as compared to the other major life tasks. By way of contrast, interpersonal relations and integration in community require well-developed community and human solidarity feelings, co-operating capacities, and compassion. Some people attempt to compensate their lack of courage to establish authentic interpersonal relationships with excessive social relations, for example, by intense activities in the political sphere or in other areas of social life, aiming only at increasing personal prestige. Therefore, forced sociability signifies one’s concealment of his/her lack in significant interpersonal relationships (Ambrus 2011, 110).

A satisfactory coping with these major life tasks fortifies the individual's feelings of self-value, self-esteem, and self-competence, leading to self-efficacy. In their efforts to increase the quality of community life, public administration authorities must not overlook these psychosocial aspects which are crucial to individual and community welfare. At the same time, they should provide contexts which encourage the formation and development of psychosocial competences absolutely necessary in social adapting and integration processes.

In conclusion, public administration's democracy, openness to citizens' and community issues, co-operation with civil society can and must contribute to the formation of constructive, proactive, and pro-social civic behaviour. Thus, the citizen becomes a free and responsible agent able to decide for himself and for the others' welfare, whereas public administration activities become socially efficient.

## **The principle of functional social equality in public administration's democratic practice**

The principle of interpersonal equality constitutes itself as a *sine qua non* premise of public administration's democracy and social efficiency. The sense of social equality represents a functional psychosocial component of pro-sociality as community feeling, of democratic social practice. In this respect, democracy can be defined as functional interpersonal equality, meaning that each individual is entitled to take his/her own decisions on his/her actions; in other words, s/he has the right to self-determination.

In the Adlerian conception, social equality is applicable only in a social context, being a psychosocial aspect of democratic cohabitation. The fact that people have a similar value does not mean that they are all the same standardized beings, but rather that they are unique human beings with unmistakable and infinite inner worth, who have the universal right to be treated with dignity and respect. Adler (1958) emphasizes that no one can be absolved from the universal duty of treating fellows with respect, an essential prerequisite of gaining the others' co-operation.

People will co-operate and cohabit democratically only if they acknowledge that they are not utterly different from the others in spite of the inter-individual differences and varied abilities. They have a similar value on the social level and are equal human beings who share the same need to belong to a community (Dreikurs 1989, 5).

In a world of discouragement and fear, developing human condition and establishing democratic social practice require social communication and interpersonal relationships which follow the psychosocial principle of human equality, based on mutual respect and one's right to self-determination. Public

administration's democracy and social efficiency are accomplished when each and every group and individual feels respected by the others and enjoys their trust. Thus, the citizen becomes a free agent responsible for his own behaviour and for the social field in which he acts. Dreikurs (2000, 14) remarks that in daily life practice people's similar social value is rarely acknowledged owing to the individual's fear to lose his/her superiority over the others, in the false belief that human equality will actually place him/her in an inferiority position.

Applying the interpersonal equality principle into practice is faced with two major interdependent obstacles, namely the social inferiority feelings and the competitive climate. Therefore, aiming to compensate the social inferiority feelings, individuals often choose competition, achievement, and maintenance of personal prestige, defending their superiority over the others (Ambrus 2005, 100). Consequently, the projects promoted by public administration organs should focus more on co-operation and less on competition, encouraging self-esteem and asserting the hidden potentialities of community members.

Enduring social inferiority, marginalization, and discrimination, as well as maintaining negative reference groups and lack in democratic practice of social equality undermine community life, preventing citizens from participating in social life and contributing to community welfare.

Systematic experience of negative social feelings, together with the context of the crisis of values, generate and maintain extremely noxious prejudices with destructive consequences upon social cohabitation. According to the Adlerian psychology, one's issues are not isolated, detached from life realities, but rather they are anchored in the wider societal matters, being in close connection with the psychological processes in which the person is involved.

Applying the human equality principle to social life raises a series of practical questions and issues. This is the reason why certain scientists even deny the possibility of putting interpersonal equality to practice, considering it outside the limits of human possibilities and even against human nature, and thus proving that people are not equal in essence. Such an approach suggests that psychosocial and ethical motivation for interpersonal equality has decreased drastically, posing a real threat to losing the equalities that humanity has achieved by hard struggles over the centuries.

Dreikurs (2000, 193) claims that it is not human equality, but rather social inequalities that are arbitrary, discretionary, and therefore against human nature, although so far there have never existed societies based on social equality which would encourage unconditional respect for human dignity. Certain forms of social dominance and superiority, such as the superiority and dominance of money, of masculine individuals or of the white-skinned people, represent the manifestation of a vertical psychosocial dynamics, motivated by the fear of imperfection, of personal insignificance, or by the fear of reaching an inferior position.

Consistent promotion of pro-sociality as a supreme value of the planetary system of social values as well as achieving functional human equality contribute to the implementation of more democratic forms of social life by public administration. Interpersonal equality coincides in fact with the deepest individual interests and needs, and at the same time ensures both the cultivation of co-operative relationships and the accomplishment of productive democratic cohabitation.

Public administration organs must influence the redirecting of community values from competition to co-operation, from discouragement to courageous social actions, and from vertical social relations to a horizontal psychosocial dynamics. In daily social practice and in their position towards public administration organs, citizens must experience pro-social behaviours, relating to the others as people of a similar human value.

In partnership with civil organizations, public administration organs can create within the community true social equality 'laboratories' marked by co-operation as the dominant interactional behaviour. In such social learning laboratories which would have objectives such as environment protection, community development, charity actions, spending free time, cultivating cultural traditions, etc., participants would learn to act together, to experience interpersonal equality, and to co-operate in order to reach common goals.

Consistent promotion of social equality in daily community life as well as in public relations with public administration authorities and institutions constitutes itself as an important psychosocial factor in the prevention and counteracting of hate, envy, chauvinistic nationalism, aggression, dissocial and antisocial behaviours. As a consequence, discouraged people are provided with real opportunities to choose a new behavioural orientation based on their adhesion to community values (Ambrus 2005, 106).

In my opinion, a decisive aspect of establishing democratic communities in which citizens co-operate relying on social equality is represented by the promotion of an integrative identity of community members. By means of their actions and projects, public administration authorities and institutions can and must contribute to the formation of a regional identity of the citizens. Such an identity has an integrative character, defining all community members at the same time in the spirit of interpersonal equality.

In the perspective of the Adlerian psychology, selectively highlighting the ethnic criterion in defining personal identity excludes, estranges, and discriminates those who have a different ethnic or religious origin, a fact with serious repercussions for cohabitation and co-operation within the given community. Therefore, encouraging the development of local or regional identities through active democratic means contributes to the increase of cohesion and social solidarity at community level, and thus optimizing the entire public administration activity. In a plastic comparison, Dreikurs (2000) appreciates that social equality as a

fundamental law of social life which governs all social interactions owing to its general and unavoidable effects resembles the universal law of gravitation which determines the relationships between physical corps.

## **Ways to improve communication and co-operation between public administration organs and civil organizations based on the Adlerian principles**

An essential condition in ensuring public administration's democracy, in orienting administrative activities exclusively towards the society's interest is represented by the participation of citizens and civil society in solving the major issues of communal life, in other words, the existence of a direct relationship and co-operation between community members and public administration authorities and institutions (Brezoianu and Oprican 2008, 17–18).

As the most important factor of public life, civil organizations' involvement in taking administrative actions is an essential requirement of democracy, and in this respect public administration authorities have the duty to put this need of civil society into practice. Civil organizations can be more engaged in the decision-making process by 'socializing' the administrative decisions, in other words, by opening this process and less by co-opting civil society representatives into decisional organs, since such an option is not in accordance with the nature and obligations of civil organizations (Kákai 2004, 159). In this respect, the majority of civil organizations consider that it is important to participate in the preparation of decisions and to influence local decisions both by their professional activity and by the activity performed within the local community (Bogdanor 2001).

As a consequence, civil organizations must be essential actors in the decisional administrative process also because implementing the decisions made in their absence or even against them is not possible without their contribution, no matter if they participate in the preparation and establishment of this process or not. Therefore, civil organizations must be involved as equal partners all along the decisional process.

The decisions made by public administration authorities cannot reach their aim and thus become socially efficient unless they are built on the responsibility, social co-operation, and partnership of all factors which promote the values of pluralist democracy in community life.

In order to overcome the difficulties and obstacles which occur in the attempt to establish productive social co-operation between public administration authorities and civil organizations, both parties should agree upon the content of this co-operation according to their specific needs. Thus, public administration

authorities expect civil organizations to participate in carrying out the decisions made, whereas civil organizations wish to be actively involved in the entire decisional process, starting with the preparation stage and continuing into the decision formation and application stages.

Civil organizations will become actual partners of public administration authorities only when fear, discouragement, negative attitudes, and counterproductive competition will disappear. The political factor has the tendency to subordinate civil society and keep it in a dependent position, and this is why – in order to establish authentic partnerships with civil organizations – political authorities have to abandon the relations of power and domination, as well as those of superiority–inferiority. Civil organizations cannot achieve their purposes as long as they are permanently subjugated by the power organs, what causes the civil organizations' tendency to shift away from politics (Kolumbán 2008, 120).

I think that a significant improvement in the relationships between public administration authorities and civil society will be made when public administration organs will drop the attitudes of rejection, superiority, or discrimination, and provide all civil organizations with equal opportunities in continual growth (Horváth 2002, 157).

Thus, public administration authorities should abandon their superiority position and overcome the fear of losing this superiority or the prestige of being superior. This vertical communication should be replaced by bold horizontal communication based on mutual respect and social equality. At the same time, authorities should encourage co-operation and voluntary involvement within the community as well as in the relations between communities.

In my opinion, public administration authorities still do not perceive or treat civil organizations as partners of a similar value. They do not encourage sufficiently their participation and co-operation in joint efforts in the decisional process, in an atmosphere of encouragement and mutual respect. This fact is also owing to the authorities' lack of preparation and psychosocial competence to treat the others as entities with a similar value, to co-operate with the others as equal people, given that the democratic evolution of a society is based on the feelings of human equality and self-determination, which are absolutely necessary in all spheres and at all levels of social practice.

According to Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1996, 5), one has the tendency to discourage people s/he interacts with. Moreover, when one discourages the others, s/he becomes even more discouraged, and thus contributes to the undesirable phenomenon of mutual discouragement and cultivates interpersonal relationships with disadaptive and counterproductive effects.

This is why encouragement is crucial to any democratic interaction, involving respect for the other's dignity and stimulating the development of one's internal resources on the useful side of life in the social co-operation process.



Encouragement activates the community feeling and stimulates the participation of the encouraged person in his own development and in the achievement of shared purposes (Ansbacher and Ansbacher 1993). The encouragement process implies a positive feedback from the encouraged person, accepting his involvement in co-operative solving of life issues. However, encouragement should not be mistaken with praise, constraint, or the pressure of the others. It rather aims at accomplishing self-management, intrinsic motivation, developing trust in one's own forces and abilities, what is so necessary in coping with complex situations with a high degree of difficulty.

As a stimulating approach, encouragement implies a series of specific attitudes, such as: stimulating attempts, accepting mistakes, creating opportunities for achieving success, setting realistic standards, acknowledging efforts in improving situations, showing confidence in the effort to become competent, stimulating self-evaluation, appreciating contribution and co-operation, and focusing of strengths and qualities (McKay 1992, 11–12).

Encouragement is absolutely necessary for reaching co-operation, in other words, the voluntary effort to participate in achieving common purposes. In this respect, co-operation between public administration authorities and institutions and civil organizations must express social interest in action, i.e. common activities with beneficial effects in improving cohabitation in community.

According to the principles of Adlerian psychology, actual improvement of relationships with civil society assumes approaching the situation in its complexity, searching for solutions which would aim at the given situation in an integrative manner. In this holistic perspective, what is suitable and desirable in a given situation can be inadequate or unsatisfactory in another because it represents a different whole. In this conception, the purpose of public administration organs is to understand, evaluate, and satisfy the needs presented by a concrete life situation at present and in the future, respecting the others and valuing human dignity (Ferguson 1991, 69).

Co-operating in a democratic atmosphere, in other words, acting interdependently with the purpose of achieving common aims, leads to new psychosocial attitudes and competences. As a consequence, civil organizations are no longer considered uncomfortable or even hostile, but rather equal partners in a joint effort to raise community life standards.

In an optimistic view, we can develop our community feelings; we can learn co-operation, group problem solving, respect for the others' subjectivity and dignity. Moreover, we can learn to acknowledge and satisfy the needs occurring in a given situation and thus contribute to the successful implementation of public administration principles in social practice. Sincere wish to help or a congruous expression of the intention to provide assistance are crucial to supporting civil society's democratic participation and to promoting an ethics of partnership.

## References

- Adler, Alfred. 1958. *What Life Should Mean to You*. New York: Putnam Capricorn Books (Originally published in 1931).
- Adler, Alfred. 1992. *Lebenskenntnis*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag (The Science of Living, 1929).
- Adler, Alfred. 1996. *Cunoașterea omului*. București: Editura IRI (Menschenkenntnis, 1927).
- Ambrus, Zoltán. 2004. *Cultura moral-civică în școli în contextul globalizării și tranziției*. Cluj: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană.
2005. *Psihopedagogia încurajării. Perspective valorice și acționale*. Cluj: Casa Cărții de Știință
2010. Anfänge der Individualpsychologie Alfred Adlers in Rumänien. *Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie* 35: 59–72. Verlag Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
2011. *Életstílus és kommunikáció. Alfred Adler individuálpaszichológiája a XXI. század perspektívájában*. Marosvásárhely: Mentor Kiadó.
- Ansbacher, Heinz–Ansbacher, Rowena. 1993. *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler. A Systematic Presentation in Selections from his Writings*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row Publishers.
- Beames, Thomas. 1992. *A Student's Glossary of Adlerian Terminology*. Chicago, IL: Photon Communications.
- Bogdanor, Vernon. 2001. *Politikatudományi enciklopédia*. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.
- Brezoianu, Dumitru–Oprican, Mariana. 2008. *Administrația publică în România*. București: Editura C. H. Beck.
- Delors, Jacques. 2000. *Comoara lăuntrică. Raportul către UNESCO al Comisiei Internaționale pentru Educație în secolul XXI*. Iași: Editura Polirom.
- Dinkmeyer, Don–Losoncy, Lewis. 1996. *The Skills of Encouragement. Bringing out the Best in Yourself and Others*. Delray Beach, FL: St. Lucie Press.
- Dreikurs, Rudolf. 1989. *Fundamentals of Adlerian Psychology*. Chicago, IL: Adler School of Professional Psychology (originally published in 1953).
2000. *Social Equality: The Challenge of Today*. Chicago, IL: Adler School of Professional Psychology (originally published in 1971).
- Ferguson, Eva. 1991. The Danger of Being Right. In: E. D. Ferguson (ed.), *Equality and Social Interest*. 64–70. Chicago, IL: Adler School of Professional Psychology.
1999. *Adlerian Theory. An Introduction*. Chicago, IL: Adler School of Professional Psychology.

2004. The 2003 H. L. and R. R. Ansbacher Memorial Address: Democratic Relationships: Key to Adlerian Concepts. *Journal of Individual Psychology* 60: 3–24.
- Horváth, Tamás. 2002. *Helyi közszolgáltatások szervezése*. Budapest – Pécs: Dialog Campus.
- Kákai, László. 2004. *Önkormányozunk értetek, de nélkületek! Pártok és civil szervezetek a helyi társadalmakban*, Budapest: Századvég Kiadó.
- Kolumbán, Gábor. 2008. Túl kicsi az erdélyi magyar társadalom ahhoz, hogy civil társadalma legyen. In: K. Daczó (ed.), *Civilek Székelyföldön. Interjúk székelyföldi civil vezetőikkel*. 119–126. Csíkszereda: MIÉRT kiadványa.
- Korten, David. 1995. *When Corporations Rule the World*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Lombardi, Donald. 1975. *Search for Significance*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hal.
- McKay, Gary. 1992. *The Basics of Encouragement*. Coral Springs, FL: CMTI Press (originally published in 1976).
- Mosak, Harold. 1977. *On Purpose: Collected Papers*. Chicago, IL: Alfred Adler Institute.
- Naisbitt, John. 1994. *Global Paradox*. New York: William Morrow & Co.
- Sidanius, Jim–Pratto, Felicia. 1999. *Social Dominance. An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Stein, Henry. 1999. *A Psychology for Democracy: Presentation at the IAIP Congress*. Oak Brook, Illinois: Alfred Adler Institutes of San Francisco and Northwestern Washington.
- Vedinaș, Virginia. 2012. *Drept administrativ*. București: Editura Universul Juridic.