Excellence in public administration: job satisfaction as a factor of good administration

Aleksander Aristovnik, Polonca Kovač, Anamarija Leben and Nina Tomaževič*

Faculty of Public Administration, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Email: aleksander.aristovnik@fu.uni-lj.si
Email: polona.kovac@fu.uni-lj.si
Email: anamarija.leben@fu.uni-lj.si
Email: nina.tomazevic@fu.uni-lj.si
*Corresponding author

Abstract: Good administration emphasises the service-mindedness of public administration and the restriction of authority. It has long been primarily understood as a legal doctrine. However, the notion of good administration has to be expanded with the concept of business excellence to incorporate specific managerial elements because satisfied civil servants better satisfy the public interest and the rights of parties. Hence, an analysis of good administration in relation to job satisfaction was conducted, with a special focus on Slovenian practices in various types of administrative agencies. First, the results show that job satisfaction is a factor of good administration and, second, that its understanding and enforcement vary according to the type of agency involved (service or authoritative). Third, there is an insufficient awareness of job satisfaction impact both on the satisfaction of parties in administrative procedures and on good administration holistically.

Keywords: good administration; job satisfaction; public administration; excellence; civil servants; Slovenia.


Biographical notes: Aleksander Aristovnik is currently working at the Faculty of Public Administration from the University of Ljubljana as an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Public Sector Management. In addition, he is an Associate Professor in the Department of International Economics at the Faculty of Economics. He has actively participated in around 60 international conferences and recently participated as the head or a member of a few research projects financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS). He has also published and reviewed many professional and scientific articles in domestic and international (ISI-cited) journals. He recently became a member of various international associations and organisations (e.g., EEA, NISPAcee, INFER, etc.).

Polonca Kovač has been a Researcher and Lecturer at the Faculty of Public Administration from the University of Ljubljana, since 2001 and an Associate Professor since 2013. She specialises in the fields of administrative law and...
public sector reforms and is the co-author of numerous scientific articles and conference papers and several monographs. The Slovene Research Agency appointed her to an eight-member research program group at the Faculty of Public Administration for the period 2015–2018. She is active in many national and supranational committees and networks [EGPA (as a PSG co-Director), NISPAcee, etc.], and she is a reviewer for several national R&D and higher education agencies and journals, and an OECD, SIGMA, and ReSPA expert.

Anamarija Leben is an experienced Lecturer for Informatics in Public Administration at the Faculty of Public Administration from the University of Ljubljana. In her research work, she is primarily engaged in e-government and business process management. She has actively participated in different international and national research project and published numerous professional and scientific articles and parts of monographs.

Nina Tomaževič is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Administration from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. She teaches Basics of Organisation, Theory of Organisation, Management in the Public Sector, Human Resources Management and Social Responsibility. Her research interests encompass management, human resources management, social responsibility and business excellence. She is an author of numerous scientific and professional articles, monographs and parts of monographs and has actively participated in international and domestic conferences. She is a member of different project teams and professional and scientific associations.

This paper is a revised and expanded version of a paper entitled ‘Good administration – balancing lawfulness, job satisfaction, service-mindedness and efficiency (in Slovenia)’ presented at EGPA Annual Conference, Toulouse, 26–28 August 2015.

1 Introduction

The concept of good administration is seen as a combination of ensuring the democratic authority toward users of public services and, simultaneously, effective governance (Aristovnik et al., 2015). It eventually results in a legally predictable and responsible exercise of authority and delivery of public services. It is connected with the concept of good governance, which is a broader concept that includes the value and implementation aspects of governing public relations, i.e., the tasks of the political administrative system or the efficiency and effectiveness of public agencies and policies in the broadest sense (Bevir, 2011; Bissessar, 2013; Stumpf in Kovač and Gajduschek, 2015).

Good administration may be connected with the concept of business excellence as the key five elements of good administration (lawfulness, equity, proportionality, protection of public interest; impartiality and equality/non-discrimination; decisions within reasonable time; right to be hard, to information, to use own language, remedy, rights of defence; legal protection and compensation for violation) can be understood as a set of approaches focused on the users of public services which are executed by public employees following specific managerial principles. Excellence in public service delivery has been one of the crucial themes of international public sector reforms. A large number of tools and concepts have been built up to help governments with service improvement (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2008; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). Some of these are
legislative (Bovaird and Halachmi, 2001), e.g., the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) in the USA, the Best Value in the UK, or the Bassanini reforms in Italy. However, others are essentially voluntary; e.g., use of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model (Para-González et al., 2016) and other quality/excellence management systems [e.g., Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Balanced Scorecard]. Many business excellence models are in use in private and public organisations, with each bringing benefits but also various weaknesses when applied in practice (Dahlgaard et al., 2013; Tomaževič et al., 2016). Although existing excellence models come from different perspectives, they all highlight the fact that excellence of public administration must necessarily be seen as a multi-dimensional concept (Aristovnik and Obadić, 2015; Emery et al., 2008; Henry et al., 2009).

When discussing good administration as a set of approaches (like the left part of excellence models, e.g., EFQM) that emphasise the service-mindedness of public administration and the restriction of authority, we can look for a connection with the results (like the right part of excellence models), measured as the satisfaction of different stakeholders (e.g., employees, users) and efficiency as a business result. In practice, the field of good administration has not been examined in detail yet, especially regarding its connection with job satisfaction and, consequently, the efficiency of administrative agencies (Bevir, 2011; Kovač and Gajduschek, 2015; Pollitt et al., 2008/2009). Therefore, the main goal of the paper is to present an analysis of the integration of job satisfaction with the elements of good administration.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section 1 is the introduction. Section 2 presents a short literature review on good administration, job satisfaction and user satisfaction. Section 3 outlines the methodology of the research on the connection between job satisfaction and good administration. The research results are presented and discussed in Section 4. At the end, the highlighted aspects of the research topic are discussed, focusing on confirming the hypothesis, presenting the differences between the findings and expectations, and developing proposals for improvement in the sense of achieving good administration with due account of the impact of satisfaction among civil servants. This is followed by the conclusion with a list of limitations and avenues for further research.

2 Literature review

Job satisfaction is one of the most widely studied constructs in industrial psychology (McShane and Von Glinow, 2007), both in private and public sector (Cantarelli et al., 2015). It has most often been defined as a pleasant or positive emotional state resulting from the perception of work, conception and assessment of the work environment, work experience and the perception of all elements of the work and workplace (Mihalič, 2008). According to Weiss (2002), job satisfaction is an individual’s attitude toward their job resulting from the net sum of the positive and negative emotions they experience at work. Job satisfaction is a pleasant feeling a person has when their expectations from work have been fulfilled.

Sakanovič and Mayer (2006) consider job satisfaction to be an extremely important factor of efficiency and effectiveness. They claim that employees work more and better when they are satisfied. Like several other authors (e.g., Tomaževič et al., 2014), they
study the factors that influence job (dis)satisfaction and investigate the correlation between satisfaction and an organisation’s effectiveness (Wilson and Narayan, 2016). Other studies show that satisfied employees are more loyal (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2003; Meyer and Allen, 1991), less absent from work, and change job less often (Howard et al., 2004). Moreover, satisfied individuals perform their tasks more efficiently and more effectively, thus contributing to an efficient and effective achievement of the organisation’s goals (Gorenak and Pagon, 2006) and entrepreneurial orientation in public sector (Karyotakis and Moustakis, 2016). Authors also list the negative consequences of dissatisfaction, both at the level of the individual, the organisation, and the society. These include passive loyalty, indifference, negligence (being late, a large number of errors), absenteeism, burnout, fluctuation, etc. which in an individual causes problems with their mental and physical health (Garland, 2002) or low morale (Lambert, 2001). All of the above mentioned result in additional costs and lost time for the organisation and, consequently, negatively affect its competitiveness and development opportunities (Camp and Lambert, 2006; Lambert et al., 2005; Meyer et al., 2004).

Another key result of an organisation’s excellence is user (customer) satisfaction, particularly in service oriented activities (Benmansour, 2016; Ho and Cho, 2016). User satisfaction represents an affective state that is the emotional response to an experience or a sequence of experiences with a provider. It is produced by the user’s assessment of the degree to which a provider’s performance is perceived to have met or exceeded some comparison standard (Cadotte et al., 1987; Spreng et al., 1996). The idea that job satisfaction positively affects service quality and user satisfaction is based on some conceptual models, among others: the service-profit chain and service climate. Based on meta-analysis, Eren et al. (2013) as well as Mendoza and Maldonado (2014) highlight a statistically significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and the dependent variable user satisfaction, also mentioning the significant variability in the strength of this relationship over service context.

A relatively new field of studying both job satisfaction and user satisfaction is called ‘behavioural public administration’. Its main focus is on the psychological and behavioural foundations of public administration, in order to systematically analyse evaluative judgments, decision-making and the (intended) behaviour of public managers, public professionals and citizens (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017; Jilke, 2016; Tummers et al., 2013; Tummers and Rocco, 2015).

Not much research has been carried out in practice as far as good administration is concerned, particularly as regards the influence of job satisfaction on the efficiency of administrative agencies. However, considering the new contents and definitions of administrative relations and public governance, such as globalisation, deregulation, privatised delivery of public services outside direct public administration (Rose-Ackerman and Lindseth, 2011), and excellence in public administration (Tomaževič et al., 2017), the new methods of public governance and public management indeed call for theoretical debates and practical implementation.

The main goal of the paper is to present an analysis of the connection between job satisfaction and the elements of good administration with the purpose of designing a collection of directions for the future modernisation of the Slovenian public administration, especially by taking the interests of different stakeholders into account, primarily civil servants and users of public services. With the aim of a better introduction to the concepts of good governance and good administration as well as their connection, the project Good Administration and Efficiency in Selected Fields of Public
Administration in Slovenia was carried out in 2014 and 2015 (Aristovnik et al., 2015). In the first phase of that project, the elements of good administration were defined on the basis of the studied literature and in relation with the principles of good governance. In the second phase, the elements of good administration (as part of good governance) were connected with the concept of job satisfaction. A key hypothesis of the research was that job satisfaction is a factor of good administration. We assumed that satisfied civil servants work more and better, which means that public administration performs more efficiently, also by ensuring service-mindedness and the rights of defence to the parties in administrative relations. This assumption was made on the basis of studying the elements of good administration (Bevir, 2011; Kovač and Gajduschek, 2015), the definitions of job satisfaction, facets and factors of job satisfaction, along with the consequences of care for civil servants and their satisfaction at work (for more, see Tomaževič et al., 2014).

In addition to the above presentation of the basic concepts of good administration, job satisfaction and user satisfaction, the article provides a detailed description of the methodology of research. The related section defines the hypothesis and describes the empirical research. The results are presented in Section 4.

3 Methodology of research

3.1 Theoretical research

In order to test the hypothesis, starting with the connection between good governance and good administration, a comparative and theoretical research was carried out to examine the directions of development of the good administration doctrine. The key findings, characteristic of our time and the Central European area, and the analysis of selected literature served as a basis to setup a model of understanding good administration. This was followed by the definition of the main elements of good administration and presentation of the interdependence between the broader concept of good governance and good administration. Next was the formulation of research questions relating to the basic hypothesis in order to test the theoretical findings among the heads of various Slovenian administrative agencies. Since the primary finding revealed that an interdisciplinary approach was inevitable, questions and hypotheses including legal, economic, organisational, politological and sociological elements were presented (Kovač et al., 2016). The main objectives of research were thus to establish:

1. The most influential elements of good administration in theory and Slovenian praxis.
2. The connection between job satisfaction and the efficient and effective delivery of administrative tasks, with an emphasis on the relation toward the users of public services.

The theoretical analysis and empirical approaches all aimed at answering several research questions, from the perception of good administration and its implementation in (Slovenian) practice to the actual connection between job satisfaction and efficient administrative agencies. In the phase of studying the connection between good administration and job satisfaction, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H. Job satisfaction is a factor of good administration.
The theoretical part of research relied on several combined research methods, mainly historical, dogmatic, comparative and normative analysis with deduction and induction, integrated in the value judgement by means of the axiological-deontological method. The latter also served as basis for the empirical approach. The theoretical part produced a model that was verified in practice by way of surveys and structured interviews with the heads of two types of administrative agencies (either service-minded or authoritarian) daily engaged in administrative proceedings with the parties. Finally, the topics for debate were formulated, together with proposals for improvement and actual implementation of the concept of good administration in administrative practice. All of the above may come useful to the responding administrative agencies or even more generally.

The elements of good administration, defined on the basis of theoretical part of the research (see Aristovnik et al., 2015) are listed in the first column of Table 1. In order to study the connection between good administration and job satisfaction, the empirical part of the project based on the survey on job satisfaction and trust in one of the largest Slovenian administrations (Umek et al., 2009). Twenty-four facets of job satisfaction were analysed:

a  relationships (A1) and leadership (A2)

b  salary and security (the present study identified none of the nine facets of this category)

c  tasks (C1) and working conditions (C2).

Table 1  Correlation between good administration and job satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good administration</th>
<th>Job satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Lawfulness, equity, proportionality, protection of public interest</td>
<td>A1 &amp; A2 &amp; C1 / Relationships, leadership, tasks (e.g., 11 volume of regulations, work guidelines, 19 possibility of performing work autonomously, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Impartiality and equality/non-discrimination</td>
<td>A1 &amp; A2 &amp; C2/ Relationships, leadership, working conditions (e.g., 19 possibility of performing work autonomously, 22 supervision over work, eight volume of tasks, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Decisions within reasonable time</td>
<td>C1 / Tasks (e.g., eight volume of tasks, 11 volume of regulations, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Right to be heard, to information, to use own language, remedy, reasons for decisions = rights of defence</td>
<td>A1 &amp; A2 &amp; C1 / Relationships, leadership, tasks (e.g., two possibility of participating in decision-making, eight volume of tasks, 13 work with people, 22 supervision)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Legal protection and compensation for violation</td>
<td>A2 &amp; C1 / Leadership, tasks (e.g., two possibility of participating in decision-making, eight volume of tasks, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:  Own (2016)

The cross-sectional method showing the correlation between the concepts of good administration and job satisfaction served to design the model presented in Table 1, which was subsequently verified by way of surveys and structured interviews.

By merging the concepts of good administration and job satisfaction, the above model envisages a direct influence of the individual facets of job satisfaction of civil servants on
the elements of good administration and on the ways in which such reflects in the attitude toward the parties, i.e., users of public services. It was established that greater job satisfaction leads to a higher presence of individual elements of good administration and hence to greater satisfaction of the parties who are among the major stakeholders in the work of public administration. The relevant questionnaire contained 16 questions in two main parts, all concerning elements of good administration and job satisfaction (from Table 1).

3.2 Empirical research

The empirical part of the research aimed to verify the model’s assumptions and formulate proposals to improve selected areas of work of public administration. This was accomplished with the analysis of empirical data obtained from job satisfaction surveys addressing the factors defined as key incentives or barriers to the development of public administration. The results were compared with the outcomes of structured interviews.

The online survey questionnaire was sent to the heads of all regional administrative agencies: both service-oriented administrative units (AU, 58 in total) conducting mainly administrative procedures at the request of the parties, as well as financial administration offices (FA, all 15) and police administrations (or directorates, PA, all eight) mainly conducting procedures in public interest and ex officio, regardless of or even contrary to the will of the parties. Regional agencies were chosen to avoid the centrally managed bodies where merely the attitude of a certain head as a person can alter the functioning of the agency at the state level. Moreover, a larger sample of respondents, with the target rate of response of at least 50%, enables a more legitimate perception of the actual state of affairs. We expected to find out that job satisfaction is a more significant factor of good administration in authoritative procedures where the acute collision of interests between regulations and parties’ interests hinders proactive behaviour.

The web application was launched and the relevant replies obtained in February and March 2015. The response rate exceeded any expectations and the results, despite being limited to a certain type of agencies, may well be considered as representative. The response rate among the mainly service-oriented units was 69% (40 out of 58) and among authoritative financial and police administrations 83% (19 out of 23, namely 15/15 financial and 4/8 police administrations). Following a basic statistical analysis, the results obtained were presented to selected respondents who in the survey had expressed the wish for discussion (almost a quarter). To ensure the better representativeness of results, the respondents came from various offices throughout Slovenia, differing in terms of workload and staff number as well as orientation (service-oriented or authoritative). The interviews were conducted in March and April 2015 with a duration of approx. two hours per head and participating civil servants (hereinafter, I1 stands for interview at the financial office in region A, I2 for a large administrative unit in region A, and I3 for a medium-sized administrative unit in region B). In both the survey and the interviews we paid special attention to the consistency of replies in order to compare them with the expected replies on the significance of good administration and job satisfaction. To this end, further control questions were asked concerning the actual implementation of individual elements of good administration to identify the possible gap between what is stated and what is actually implemented.
4 Results of the research on connection between job satisfaction and good governance

4.1 Understanding the impact of job satisfaction on good administration

The impact of job satisfaction on the satisfaction of the parties, i.e., users of public services was assessed on a four-point scale (in order to obtain the insight into respondents’ values). The average for AU was 1.43 and for PA and FA 1.58, which means that service-oriented agencies (AU) more often consider job satisfaction to have a significant impact on the satisfaction of the parties than authoritative agencies (PA and FA). At the same time, it should be noted that the results mainly range between ‘very’ in ‘fairly’, meaning that the connection between job satisfaction and the satisfaction of the parties is strong (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Connection of job satisfaction and satisfaction of the parties – to what extend does the job satisfaction in your organisation influence the satisfaction of the parties?

![Figure 1](Image)

Source: Own (2016)

Satisfaction of the parties is thus significantly related to the elements of good administration which can be efficiently and effectively ensured only by satisfied civil servants. The most important facets of job satisfaction relate to relationships, leadership (e.g., degree of civil servant autonomy at work, which was much lower among authoritative agencies than among service-oriented agencies), tasks and working conditions. For example, the element ‘sufficient information for work’ presented an obvious difference between service-oriented and authoritative agencies: the volume of information in service-oriented agencies was evaluated with almost one average point higher. According to one of their heads, one should be aware that it is necessary to ‘search – in public administration and all service-oriented activities – for the intersection between three concepts: leadership and management by objectives, employees’ (i.e., civil servants’) satisfaction, and satisfaction of the parties’ (I3).

Figure 2 shows how one or the other group of respondents evaluated the impact of civil servants’ (dis)satisfaction on the elements of good administration.
On a five-point scale (we wanted to allow an interim value and therefore 1 means ‘most affected’ and 5 is ‘least affected’), job satisfaction among civil servants in AU mostly reflects in the times for decision and (as deriving also from interview I2) the right to be heard, while in FA and PA it mostly affects the equal treatment of the parties. In both groups of agencies, no impact is admissible on lawfulness, as confirmed by interviews I1, I2 and I3. Hence, if good administration is regarded as an upgrading of the ‘mere lawfulness’, the results obtained – showing significant deviations and partial treatment raise concern yet at the same time open the possibility for system improvement.

### 4.2 Implementation of the connection between job satisfaction and good administration

According to the survey, the facets of job satisfaction significantly influencing the implementation of good administration include in particular: adequate information of civil servants, adequate working conditions, and support to civil servants in the distribution of tasks. The heads were first asked whether their civil servants were sufficiently informed of how the elements of good administration reflected in the work of the agency as a whole. The possible answers were: very, fairly, little, and not really. Here, too, a considerable gap was observed between representatives of AU (45% responded ‘very’ and 50% responded ‘fairly’) and FA and PA (only 4.2% responded ‘very’, 58% responded ‘fairly’). The answer ‘little’ was chosen by nearly 30% of respondents from predominantly repressive agencies and by only 5% from AU. There is, hence, a significant difference between the two types of the agencies as regards the
perceptions their heads have of the information of civil servants about the importance of good administration for the agency’s performance (Figure 3).

**Figure 3** Amount of information from heads to civil servants regarding the impact of good administration on performance of the agency

![Bar chart](image)

Source: Own (2016)

Differences occur also as regards the heads’ knowledge and understanding of good administration as well as the relation toward and information of civil servants about the issues concerned. This means that differences between the two types of agencies may be expected also in the civil servants’ attitude toward the concept of good administration and, consequently, toward the agencies’ performance.

Quite differing were also the opinions of the heads concerning the relevance of adequate working conditions for the civil servants to be able to achieve the elements of good administration (Figure 4).

Despite some discrepancies between the two types of agencies, most heads considered working conditions very important to ensure lawfulness, equity, proportionality and protection of public interest, and less relevant to ensure effective legal protection and compensation in the event of mistakes made by public administration or reasonable time limits for decisions. Interim values were chosen for impartiality and equality/non-discrimination, the right to be heard, participation, etc.

The next aspect referred to the respondents’ (as employers’) evaluation of adequate information of and support to civil servants in the distribution of tasks related to good administration (Figure 5). No major discrepancies were observed between the two types of agencies although some differences exist in the evaluation of individual elements. Support to civil servants was evaluated highest as regards lawfulness, equity, proportionality and protection of public interest, followed by impartiality and equality. The remaining three elements were assessed similarly – the least important was support in relation to effective legal protection and compensation by public administration.
Figure 4  Relevance of the working conditions for the elements of good administration

Source: Own (2016)

Figure 5  Information and support to civil servants in distributing tasks to achieve good administration

Source: Own (2016)
The above results confirm what has been established so far, namely that there are significant differences between the two types of agencies as regards their service-mindedness. There is also an evident connection between or influence of management and autonomy on job satisfaction of civil servants and consequently on the achievement of good administration. When management is more open and autonomy is higher, the agencies more successfully achieve the elements of good administration, which represent an upgrading of the (merely) formally provided relationship of public administration toward the users of public services.

5 Discussions

The research aimed at a theoretical and empirical examination of good administration and job satisfaction, and the way the two connect. The theoretical part first examined the term good administration, including in the sense of its placement within the concept of good governance. Then a model of public administration was designed, with its pertinent elements. The area of job satisfaction was discussed separately, especially the facets of satisfaction which were later on connected with the elements of good administration. The aim of the empirical part was to verify the existence of a connection between job satisfaction and user satisfaction (satisfaction of the parties) and/or whether job satisfaction affects implementation of the elements of good administration. For this purpose, several approaches were used, ranging from an analysis of the available literature and reports down to online surveying of the heads of administrative agencies and conducting of structured interviews with selected heads – the objective of the latter was to explain in greater detail the data acquired during the surveying process. Special emphasis was placed on investigating a potential difference between the understanding and implementation of the connection between satisfaction and good administration in the case of agencies which are more service-oriented (administrative units) and those that are more authoritative (police and financial administrations).

The results of the empirical research showed that the connection between job satisfaction and user satisfaction was strong. User satisfaction thus significantly correlates with ensuring the elements of good administration which can be successfully and effectively implemented only by satisfied employees (Figure 6). This confirmed the hypothesis that job satisfaction is a factor of good administration.

Other important information is the fact that significant differences exist among the types of agencies in terms of the elements of good administration which are negatively affected by the potential dissatisfaction of employees. The predominantly service-oriented agencies (AU) that provide services to citizens and the business sector are more familiar with the good administration concept than the more authoritative agencies (PA, FA), while at the same time the understanding and implementation of individual elements of good administration differ between these two types of agencies. This was confirmed by the results of the surveys as well as the subsequently conducted structured interviews where the aspect of awareness of the importance of appropriate leadership and care for employee and customer satisfaction was again proven. The research thus joined the group of research pieces, which have already confirmed that customer/user satisfaction is one of the key factors of business performance, particularly in service-oriented activities (Cadotte et al., 1987; Spreng et al., 1996), and that it can be achieved through satisfied employees (Eren et al., 2013; Mendoza and Maldonado, 2014).
We detected (only) an abstract or partial understanding of the importance of job satisfaction for the implementation of good administration. This is also reflected in the significantly lower realisation of good administration and a higher level of impact of civil servants’ (dis)satisfaction in more authoritative parts of the administration. Considering the preliminary analysis and interviews, this can be attributed to the fact that dissatisfied civil servants, in particular due to greater conflict of interest and non-assumption of liability, only pursue the statutory minimum rather than a holistic approach.

Job satisfaction is crucial to ensure long-term effectiveness and efficiency also in public administration. Nowadays, similar organisations, although operating in similar conditions, nevertheless achieve different degrees of effectiveness and efficiency. The main reason for such is that their managers understand and carry out their role in human resources management differently and also differently show their commitment to work and their associates (Lambert et al., 2005; Tirelli and Goh, 2015; Sabourin and Ayande, 2016). Therefore, there are also key differences in the attitude toward the users of public services (Mendoza and Maldonado, 2014; Spreng et al., 1996). The managers, i.e., heads of administrative agencies, who are aware of the importance of developing job satisfaction regularly monitor the situation and look for opportunities for continuous improvement, introduce such and test them. Many heads of public administration bodies are already well aware of the impact that job satisfaction has on the outside (Sakanović and Mayer, 2006). Considering this and other studies made so far, there are only few cases where this issue is addressed in a systematic and comprehensive manner. This research shows that the satisfaction of civil servants mostly affects the duration of decision-making, i.e., procedures. Since in a competitive world this element is crucial, in particular for parties in administrative procedures that come from the business sector, the correlation between raising awareness, support and job satisfaction indeed deserves the most attention.

Based on the findings, we suggest a system-wide usage of the model shown in Figure 6. This means that in the future more attention will need to be paid to job satisfaction in order for the civil servants to be more responsive to the users of public services.
services and, consequently, more effectively protect public interest, with due account of the parties’ rights.

All the examined elements are affected by changes in the economic situation of the country as well as by the limited financial resources particularly in public administration. Thus, it seems even more important to apply non-financial measures to increase the satisfaction of civil servants and, consequently, the satisfaction of users of public services. Such measures are incentives, such as consolidation of mutual relations, developing teamwork, praise, opportunities to participate in decision-making, psycho-hygiene, support to trade unions, de-bureaucratisation and the like. Financial constraints should not serve as an excuse for inaction. It would also be wise to introduce in the entire public administration (in Slovenia) the good practices seen in the case of administrative units, where the coordinating Ministry of Public Administration combines common standards and methods of work concerning TQM in general (Kovač, 2015) while allowing individual upgrades and even their introduction as a universal standard.

6 Conclusions

The good administration concept emphasises the service-mindedness of public administration towards parties (i.e., public service users – customers) as well as the restriction of authority. As customer satisfaction is one of the key factors of business excellence mainly in service-oriented activities, good administration can be understood as an important mediator between employee satisfaction and public administration agencies’ efficiency and effectiveness. The empirical analysis showed that the effect of employee satisfaction on the achievement of good administration is theoretically well known but still underestimated in practice and/or implemented only partially and randomly. Moreover, the understanding and implementation of the good administration concept in the Slovenian arena differ considerably in terms of the type and orientation of the agencies involved, i.e., these are mostly service-oriented in administrative units and more authoritative in financial and police administrations. The results of the research can serve as important guidance for further modernisation of the Slovenian public administration, especially considering the interests of different stakeholders and, above all, employees and users. The crucial role is played by leaders at all levels, mostly in the sense of encouraging the development of an appropriate good administration culture by those who implement it (employees) for those who use it (parties, i.e., users). This can only be achieved by a comprehensive and systemic top-down approach and not by hoping for the accidental ‘enlightenment’ of employees or a few leaders who have already been transposing the good administration concept into everyday practice.

The main limitations of the research include the number of examined units and the insufficient diversity of the types of public administration agencies that took part in the research. Based on the above, new investigative opportunities were identified during the research such as surveying other types of stakeholders about their satisfaction, i.e., customers and employees, as well as discussing a wide array of types of organisations in public administration, e.g., ministries, bodies of ministries, social work centres, etc. In the case of successful implementation in public administration, similar research could also be conducted in municipalities.
Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P5-0093). The research was also supported by a grant from the Faculty of Public Administration (University of Ljubljana) as part of internal research and development projects.

References


Interviews with the Director of the Regional Office of the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia (interview I1; 25 March 2015) and with the Heads of a large (interview I2, 25 March 2015) and a medium-sized administrative unit (interview I3; 2 April 2015).


Notes
1 Category A comprises the following seven elements (out of 24): one possibility of realising one’s abilities, two possibility of participating in decision-making on organisation (i.e., agency), three feeling of belonging to the staff, six style of leading the organisational unit, 19 possibility of performing work autonomously, 22 supervision over work, 24 relationships among the staff.

2 Category C comprises the following eight elements (out of 24): fur working hours, five working conditions (equipment, premises), seven variety of tasks, eight volume of tasks, 11 volume of regulations, work guidelines, 13 work with people, 17 job location, 18 administrative tasks.

3 Administrative units (all 58) carry out approx. 850,000 first-instance administrative proceedings per year (approx. 50,000 in the unit covered by the interview I2 and approx. 9,000 in the unit covered by the interview I3). Most proceedings are initiated at the request of the parties and involve personal documents and registers, visas for foreign nationals, permits for public gatherings, for weapons and for the activities of various associations, construction and operating permits, decisions relating to agriculture, war veterans and disabled, etc. The Financial Administration of Slovenia is in charge of taxes and customs duties – one of its largest offices (covered by the interview I1) issues per year approx. 105,000 decisions at first instance, just as many resolutions and around 30,000 executions.

4 Interview I1 was carried out in one of the largest financial offices with over 200 civil servants in five divisions and branches, covering the territory of five administrative units, including the unit surveyed in interview I2. Interview I2 covered one of the largest administrative units with almost 150,000 residents in seven municipalities (a predominantly urban area) and approx. 80 civil servants working on the seat of the unit and in 9 local offices. Interview I3 covered an administrative unit with approx. 20,000 residents in four municipalities (almost entirely rural area) with just under 30 civil servants.

5 According to the interviews (I2): ‘It is of key importance for the integrity of the civil servants that in the event of dissatisfaction, the parties have the possibility to talk to the head and hear a voice from above’, with due consideration of the adequate communication in the process.