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A learning public organization as the condition for innovations adaptation

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Abstract

The current conditions of the public organizations functioning determine the creation of innovation process whose successful implementation is related to continuous organization learning, fostered by shaping the culture of learning. The significance of the problem undertaken in the study allows to state that undertaking activities focused on innovations by the organizations of the public sector is an expression of their development and the consequence of searching for methods of increasing efficiency of actions. The study is of theoretical nature, it is the result of analysis of the subject literature with regard to the issue undertaken.

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1. Introduction

The contemporary discourse concerning effective public sector functioning clearly stresses the need for innovation process creation in public organizations. The experienced researchers in this field notice the multiplicity of understanding innovation, especially articulating the issues that the contemporary innovation is no longer of incidental nature, but constitutes deliberate operation, which should be predictable in every aspect. Therefore, both in Poland and around the world, the need for effective innovation process management is being noticed (Pomykalski, 2010), which implies interpretation of this category in the context of the result (the product) and the process. The tendency to create and implement innovations in the public sector organizations is a result of evolution of their

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functioning, which is reflected in the departure from the traditional bureaucratic organization, based on the paradigm of Weber's administration towards the New Public Management oriented at effectiveness and performance as well as professional approach to the citizen-client and the contemporary concept of co-management emphasizing the ancillary nature of administration towards the citizens and partnership in relations with the clients. In the paradigm of co-management, public organizations learning gains special importance. Performance of public duties at this point is understood as a process of social learning, in which actors of varied social statuses and formal character take part (Van de Walle & Hammerschmid, 2011). The attributes of innovative organizations are characterized by creativity, involvement, responsibility, flexibility and learning (Vigoda-Gadot, Shoam, Schwabsky, & Ruvio, 2008; Fard, Rostamy, & Taghiloo, 2009).

In this article, the author attempts to justify the claim that the current conditions of the public organizations functioning determine the creation of behaviors focused on shaping the culture of organization learning, such as creativity, involvement, responsibility, openness to changes and continuous learning, which is the condition of effective undertaking innovative operations as well as an effective innovation implementation.

The purpose of the study is an attempt to show the role of organizational learning in shaping the culture of learning, which constitutes the condition of effective undertaking innovative operations as well as an effective innovations implementation in the public organization. The study is of theoretical nature, it is the result of analysis of the subject literature with regard to the issue undertaken.

2. Dichotomous innovation understanding

The defining the notion of innovations has not yet received a clear interpretation in the literature on the subject, which is justified, since the multiplicity of interpretations is determined by a number of conditions determining the specific nature and area of implementation. The issues of defining and classifying innovations in the Polish literature on the subject, supported by an analysis of the world's literature, in relation to the public sector, is multifaceted (Osborne, 1998; Halvorsen, 2005; *Oslo Manual*, 2005; Wiatrak, 2011). One of the distinguished classifications determines treating innovations in the category of a product and process. In this respect, in the first perspective innovations are changes, which lead in consequence to new products. On the other hand, the process-related context allows treating innovations as any processes of creative thinking aiming at application and use of improved solutions in technique, technology, organization and social life (Pomykalski, 2001), as a result of which it is the transformation of the idea into a new or improved launched product, or an improved operating process used in the industry or trade, or a new approach to public services performance (Pomykalski, 2002).

In the same perspective an interesting proposal is a study of the American researchers who also stress the double character of innovation, treated both as the result of a number of actions, namely the result of a certain process, and a process that is defined as “generation, acceptance and implementation of a new idea or approach in a given issue, among social entities for which the change questions current solutions and constitutes a social value as well as generates social benefits” (Bland, Bruk, Kim, & Lee, 2010). The adopted context of innovations perception is justified by the statement that in the public sector the main innovative activities motive should be the development of public goods and creating public value. In this respect, criticism is given to general innovations understanding as “novelties in a given organization”, as in the case of the public sector copying innovations from one organization to the second, without considering its specific nature is a replication rather than innovation (Light, 1998 acc. to Bland, Bruk, Kim, & Lee, 2010). Their opinion is justified by the specific nature of the public sector, in which, as opposed to the business sector, the criterion of profitability is not enough, and what is desirable is consideration of complexity of public problems and justification of social benefits.

On the basis of experiences described by the American authors and researchers of the innovations management process in business as well as in the public sector (Cooper & Edgett, 2007; Tidd, 2006; Twiss, 1993; Urban, Hauser, 1993 acc. to Pomykalski, 2010; Bland, Bruk, Kim, & Lee, 2010) with regard to the specific nature of the public sector the author proposes differentiation of five, consecutive phases of the innovation understanding process is suggested Fig. 1.

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