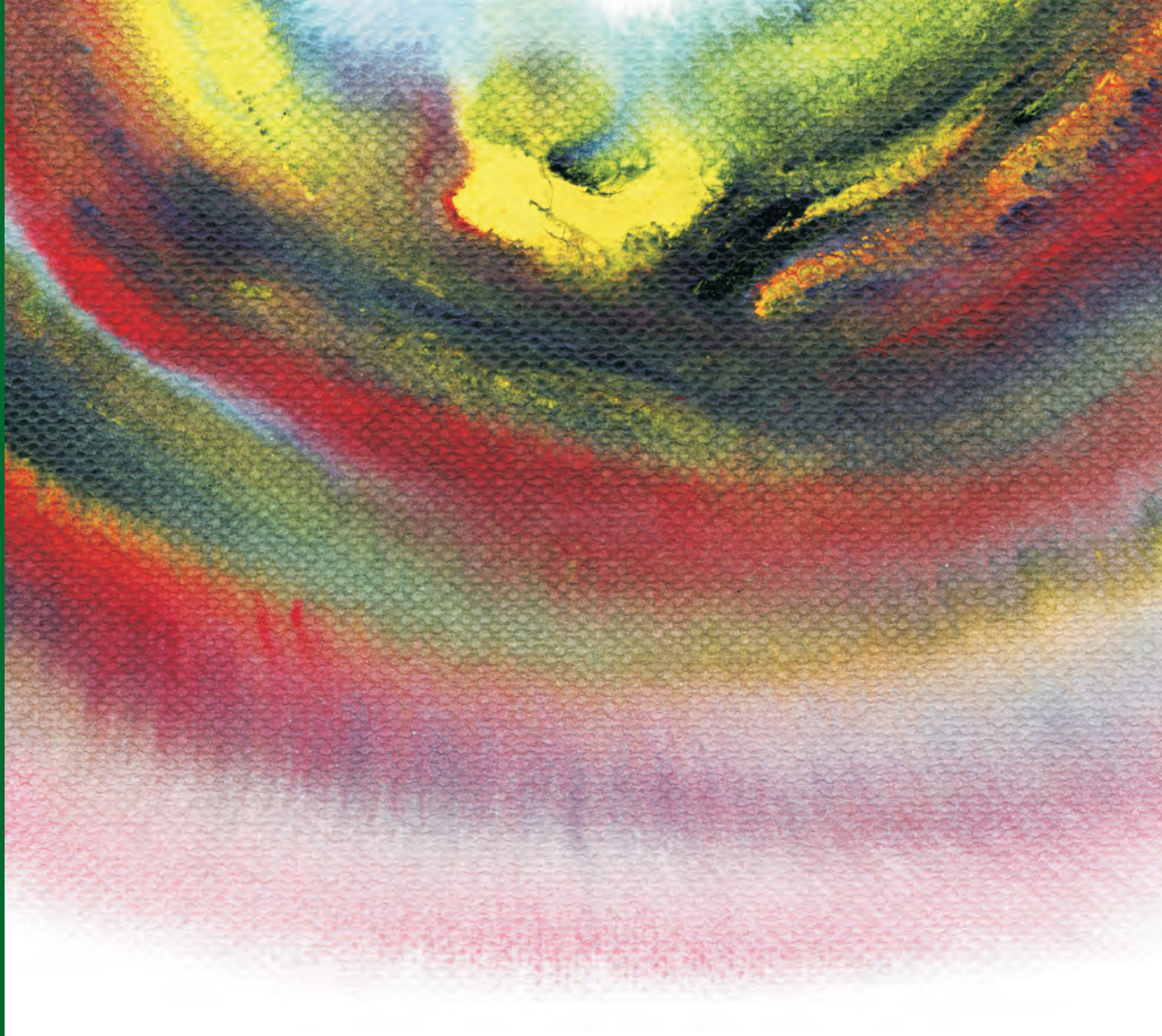

Organizational Learning

A Framework for Public Administration

Editors: Karol Olejniczak, Stanisław Mazur

HUMAN CAPITAL
NATIONAL COHESION STRATEGY

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On the behalf of Research Team
Karol Olejniczak and Stanisław Mazur

[1] The Department of Navigation and the Department of Control of the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Maritime Economy; the Department of Supra-regional Programs and the Human Resources Management Office of the Ministry of Regional Development (currently all four departments are contained within of the Ministry of the Infrastructure and Development); the Law Department and Department of Environmental Information of the Ministry of the Environment; the Department of Public Administration and the Department of Information Society of the Ministry of Administration and Digitization.

Introduction

Karol Olejniczak

The complexity of modern socio-economic issues turns our public policies into a continuous trial and error process. Every time public managers and stakeholders address a new policy issue they have to use research results, experience and insight to find out what works for whom and in what context. That requires from public organizations intense organizational learning. This challenge is especially demanding for administrations of countries that are undergoing modernization of their socio-economic systems. Poland is an example of such country.

In order to face the challenge of effective organizational learning, we need to address three pressing questions:

1. How does learning work in our public organizations?
2. What promising practices can we implement to advance learning in public organizations?
3. What changes in public management are required to combine learning with the growing demands of performance and accountability?

This book is an attempt to address those questions in a systematic and empirical manner. The answers presented in this volume are the result of a four-year empirical research project conducted in Polish ministries and study visits in public institutions of twelve countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Why learning matters

Modern institutions of public administration face a number of challenges in the process of developing and implementing public policies. First, since the majority of modern socio-economic problems are complex and dynamic in nature, addressing them in an effective way requires a flexible, multi-sector approach and therefore the mobilization of different, broad coalitions of socio-economic actors. Public organizations have to orchestrate this process, and face number of challenges while running programs that are highly complex (Rogers, 2008).

Second, the development of science and modern technologies creates unprecedented capacity for data collection, analysis and empirical research. The opportunity for evidence-based public management (that is, using information for decision-making) is clearly visible (Shillabeer et al., 2011). However these developments have

also created information overload (Spira, 2011). Thus, public organizations face the challenge of developing smart strategies to turn the data into meaningful knowledge, useful in a public policy process (Hatry, Davies, 2011; Partnership for Public Service, 2011).

Third, a scarcity of public financial resources urges governments to focus public interventions on solutions that are effective. This leads to the challenge of identifying and understanding the mechanisms behind successful interventions (Davies et al., 2009). Public organizations have to look into the "black box" of intervention design (Astbury, Leeuw, 2010) and learn the existing social or even behavioral mechanism of change that underpins the effectiveness of regulations and public programs (Pawson, 2013; Sunstein, 2011).

Fourth, studies show that "mechanisms of change" are highly contextual (Pawson, Tilley, 1997). They work for certain recipients, at certain times and under certain conditions. This in turn means a need for permanent adaptation of developed solutions through constant learning and responding.

All these challenges lead to situation where every intervention can be treated as an experiment, while policy-making becomes a "trial-and-error problem-solving process" (Bardach, 2006, p. 350). In such conditions, the only effective strategy for every public organization is continuous learning.

The issue of organizational learning seems even more pressing for the public administration in countries that are undergoing transformation since, in addition to the four issues described above, these administrations face a fifth challenge. They are moving from a traditional, bureaucratic model of public administration to a new paradigm of public management. This new approach is strengthened by the fact that external aid programs (e.g. European Union funds) are driven by the logic of public management. This requires both strategic planning and effective, development-oriented use of resources. At this point organizational learning becomes an important asset to tap into, while trying to make the best use of EU funds and live up to the new standards of public policy.

What is organizational learning

The issue of using knowledge in organizations and building a competitive advantage based on experience has been addressed by three different strands of literature: Organizational Learning, Learning Organization and Knowledge Management (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999; Maier, 2007, p. 19-93). A brief summary is presented in Table 1.

The first strand, "Organizational Learning", focuses on studying learning processes of and within organizations. Since its roots are in behavioral analysis, these studies approach the learning phenomenon as a social process of interaction, information flows and system of feedback that gradually changes the mental models (assumptions) shared by members of organizations (e.g., see Argyris & Schon, 1995; and Cyert & March, 1963).

The second strand, "the Learning Organization", concentrates on explaining how to create and improve an organization, so it can reach its ideal – the capacity

to learn effectively, adapt, compete and prosper. These studies are normative in nature – clearly assuming that there is a blueprint for a "learning organization" with a set of characteristics that can be developed regardless of the sector or profile of an organization's business (e.g., Pedler, et al. 1997; Senge, 1990).

The third strand is "Knowledge Management". Its roots are in economics and management, therefore studies from this strand focus on "knowledge" as an asset, a unique resource of competitive advantage (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Wiig, 1993). They conceptualize the nature of knowledge, and its different types and explain how knowledge is gathered, stored, shared and used in improving performance.

Although literature on organizational learning and knowledge management has been steadily growing (Dierkes et al., 2001; Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011; Ma & Yu, 2010), it still has certain shortcomings, especially visible to public sector practitioners.

The majority of work has been devoted to private sector organizations. These studies offer limited insight into organizational learning processes of public administration, since management in public agencies is different from management in private firms due the distinctive nature of government (Hill & Lynn, 2008; Rainey & Chun, 2005).

As Easterby-Smith and Lyles point out (2011, p. 16), literature still lacks empirical research on actual learning processes. Examples of good empirical work, focused on learning in public agencies, are limited (Lipshitz et al. 2007; Mahler & Casamayou, 2009; Moynihan & Landuyt, 2009). Literature is dominated by theoretical studies, missing the practical considerations that public managers have to face every day in their work on public policies.

On the one hand, frameworks offered by academic literature often are complex and difficult to be operationalized and measured. On the other hand, models offered by consultants lack grounding in empirical evidence. This makes it challenging for public managers to use them for organizational assessment and evidence-based management.

Finally, all three strands tend to ignore the political aspects of power and control that take place in organizations around knowledge resources and especially in decision-making within bureaucratic organizations (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011; Grieves, 2008, p. 469; and Prusak, 2001).

Initially, authors from different literature strands tended to underline the uniqueness of their approaches. However in recent years, Organizational Learning and Knowledge Management have begun to merge (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011). For practitioners – managers in public and private organizations – this divide has been always quite artificial. Comparative research shows that public managers borrow ideas and techniques from different strands without even using or even being aware of the different terminology applied in each strand (see: chapter 3 of this book). Therefore, in this book we take a pragmatic stand and derive information from all three strands of research.

Building on the body of literature on organizational learning and knowledge management, we propose the following sets of definitions. They will guide us throughout the rest of this book.

We define ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING as *"adaptation that is based on the social process of reflection that produces new insights, knowledge and association between past actions, the effectiveness of those actions and future actions"* (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 811; Lipshitz et al., 2007, p. 16).

Four aspects required special explanation (Argyris & Schön, 1995; Fiol & Lyles, 1985; March, 1991; Lipshitz et al., 2007):

- An adaptation can be reactive – responding to changes in the environment or proactive – taking initiative based on the analysis of observed trends.
- An adaptation can cover both incremental improvement (single-loop learning) as well as substantial changes in assumptions underlying policy intervention, current organizational strategies and exploration of new approaches (double-loop learning, sometimes called "unlearning").
- An adaptation is based on evidence, mainly feedback about an organization's performance (activities and their effects) and ability to reflect on that information.
- Reflection is a social process that involves teams who consciously and critically review the relevance of assumptions, objectives and routines shared by members of the organization (so-called mental models).

We argue that in the process of learning three TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE can be produced and used (Alavi & Leidner 2001; Ein-Dor, 2010; Ferry, Olejniczak, 2008; Polanyi, 1966):

- contextual knowledge – knowledge about the context in which an organization operates, its stakeholders, trends in the given policy field;
- strategic knowledge – knowledge about the key objectives of the organization, its mission and available resources;
- operational knowledge – know-how on procedures and effective processes.

These types of knowledge can be generalized and are easy to codify (explicit knowledge) or lie in the heads of personnel, rooted in experience, context-specific (tacit knowledge).

Last but not least, we assume that organizational learning, as defined above, is positively linked with performance. In other words, ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IMPROVES THE PERFORMANCE of an organization, both in its strategic and operational activities. This relation has been confirmed in the literature mentioned earlier (Cavaleri & Seivert, 2005; Fugate et al., 2009; McNabb, 2007; Monavvarian & Kasaei, 2007; Pee et al., 2010; Perez-Lopez et al., 2004; Wiig, 2002).

Table 1. Overview of main literature strands

Literature strand	Theoretical roots	Focus	Key motives in "classics" definitions	Classic works	Top 5 quoted research articles, times cited in ISI
Organizational Learning	Psychology System thinking Management	Focuses on studying learning processes of and within organizations. Aims at description and understanding of factors that influence learning. Studies are more theoretical and descriptive in nature.	Multilevel nature of learning (people, teams, organizations); Feedback and feedback-loops; Relation with environment; Value of experimentation and experience; Change in cognition and behavior.	(Argyris, Schon, 1978), (Cyert, March, 1963)	(March, 1991), 2985 (Powell et al., 1996), 1823 (Levitt, March, 1988), 1786 (Huber, 1991), 1714 (Brown, Duguid, 1991), 1554
Learning Organization	System thinking Management	Focuses on an ideal type of organization that has the capacity to learn effectively, adapt, compete and prosper. Aims at understanding how to create and improve learning capacities. Studies are more practical and normative in nature.	Positive role of learning; Ability to permanently change and adapt; Organization as a living organism; Collective processes of learning.	(Senge et al., 1994), (Pedler et al., 1997)	(Slater, Narver, 1995), 860 (Garvin, 1993), 569 (Kim, 1993), 303 (Simonin, 1997), 263 (Ferlie, Shortell, 2001), 238
Knowledge Management	Economics Information technologies Management	Sees knowledge as a unique resource of competitive advantage. Studies aim either at conceptualizing the nature of knowledge (more theoretical orientation) or at explaining how knowledge is gathered, stored, shared and used in improving performance (practical orientation).	Knowledge as a resource; Types of knowledge (tacit vs. explicit); Stages of knowledge management: acquisition, distribution, application, storing.;Strategies and tools of effective KM; Positive effects of knowledge management – innovation, competitive advantage.	(Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1995), (Wiig, 1993)	(Alavi, Leidner, 2001), 1246 (Spender, 1996), 878 (Dyer, Nobeoka, 2000), 735 (Studer et al., 1998), 734 (Hansen et al., 1999), 733

Source: (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011, p. 3) (Maier, 2007, pp. 19-93) (Örtenblad, 2001); own review of definitions used in 75 key publications on KM, OL, LO; analysis of ISI database records (accessed January 2012)

The structure and value of this book

In our book we start by looking into public organizations to understand the mechanism of organizational learning. We focus on the level of departments because they are the basic organizational and functional structures of the ministries. In other words, these are the places where practical solutions of public intervention (regulations, programs, etc.) are designed and executed. In Polish ministries, departments have around 20 to 50 staff. They can be further divided into units - small teams of 5 to 10 people. They have clear and distinctive functions related to policy tasks (for example within the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development these are: Department of Roads and Motorways, Department of Competitiveness and Innovation, Department for Spatial Development Policy) or service delivery within the Ministry (e.g. Department of Human Resources, IT Department, Legal Department).

In the first chapter of the book we address the question of how learning works in the departments of ministries. In subsequent sections we present the stages of our empirical discovery – from forming an initial theoretical model, through quantitative verification, deepening with qualitative exploration, confronting Polish findings with observations from other countries, to a final framework. In the conclusions of Chapter 1 we provide readers with a framework of organizational learning. This covers both the processes that constitute the learning cycle and determinants that influence the effectiveness and quality of that process. Both researchers and practitioners will appreciate that our framework provides a clear synthesis in the form of a visual model combined with a robust means of measuring elements of the learning phenomenon in public organizations (with the use of tested survey questions). The presented framework can be used as a diagnostic tool for the monitoring and assessment of learning processes in public organizations. It also provides a map to visualize results and conducts data driven discussion on an organization's condition.

In Chapter 2 we compare the public administrations of twelve countries: Australia, Canada, Spain, Switzerland, France, Great Britain, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United States. Based on interviews and a review of documents we identify over 80, very practical techniques that could advance learning in public organizations. In the conclusions of the chapter we point out certain phenomenon that are similar across different cultures and traditions. We also propose a typology that connects identified practices with key elements of the organizational learning framework, identified in Chapter 1. We hope that this chapter will be a valuable source of inspirations for public civil servants across different countries.

In the final chapter of the book we look more broadly, beyond single departments, at the context in which public organizations operate. We ponder what changes in public management are required to promote learning. We focus on discussing ways to overcome tension between organizational learning and narrowly defined performance and accountability. The conclusions are directed to a wider audience of both practitioners and researchers in the public sector. We hope that our arguments will contribute to shifting current public sector philosophy towards "accountability for learning".

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1 Discovering the learning mechanism

Karol Olejniczak, Jakub Rok, Łukasz Widła, Anna Domaradzka

In this chapter we address the following question: **How does learning work in public organizations?** In the course of the chapter we present the steps of our empirical research that allowed us to gradually build and validate an organizational learning framework. The final, validated version of the framework is offered in the Conclusions of this chapter. It should help our reader understand, what elements form an organizational learning cycle, what factors influence its performance and quality, and finally, how we can measure and monitor this phenomenon in our public organizations.

To answer the opening question we use a mixed-methods approach, both at the level of research design and data analysis. As a research strategy we used a modification of explanatory mixed-method design (a follow-up explanation model) (Creswell & Clark, 2010, p. 72). Figure 1 illustrates our research process.

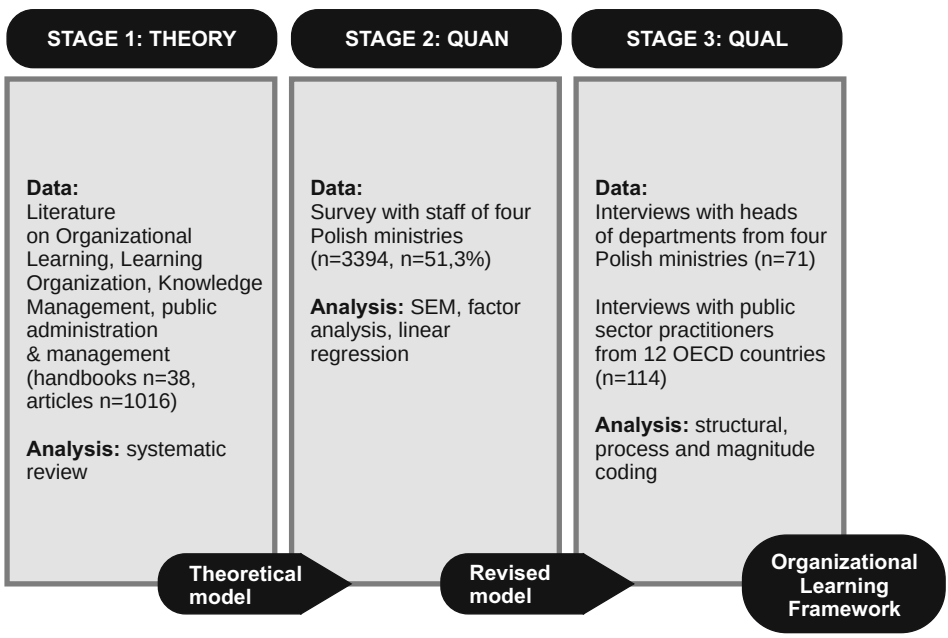

Figure 1. Stages of the research process

Source: own study.

The structure of the chapter closely follows the sequence of our three analytical stages, allowing us to show how adding new layers of data and different analytical methods expanded our understanding and allowed us to develop a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of organizational learning.

In the next section we briefly present the theoretical framework of organizational learning grounded in a literature review. Section two discusses the testing of the theoretical framework using quantitative analysis of data from the survey with ministry employees. In section three we expand our framework by adding qualitative data drawn from two sources. We explore the perspective of the heads of studied departments through in-depth interviews, and then we compare Polish specificity with international practice, using qualitative data from study visits conducted in 12 OECD countries. Finally, in conclusion, we discuss the key findings and present a framework for organizational learning in public administration.

But first, we need to understand why Poland constitutes a good subject for public administration studies. This country can be seen as a European laboratory of public intervention and modernization of public administration. During the last 25 years Poland has undergone substantial systemic transformation from a socialist state-owned and centrally planned system, to a dynamic market economy. Although system transformation has been almost completed (Morawski, 2010), Polish public administration is still undergoing modernization. The strongest modernization impulse comes with European Union membership (Czaputowicz, 2008), mostly from implementation of EU-funded programs in the field of Regional Policy (Kozak, 2006). During the last 10 years the Polish administration has been implementing the European Union Cohesion Policy – a set of socio-economic development programs worth over 100 billion euro. In order to run EU-financed programs, the number of departments in Polish ministries has had to adapt to a new set of skills and new philosophy of public management. At the same time, units not involved in EU programs work in line with the traditional bureaucratic paradigm. This duality makes Polish Ministries an interesting case of administration under transformation. In our analysis we looked for signs of this transformation in the field of organizational learning.

1.1 Stage 1: Developing the theoretical framework

The aim of the first stage of our research was to develop a theoretical framework of organizational learning in public administration. For this purpose we conducted an extensive literature review.

Analytical procedure and methods

Organizational learning constitutes a broad range of phenomena analyzed by different strands of literature (see: Introduction). We performed an extensive literature search to pinpoint its driving characteristics for use in our framework. The starting point for building a framework of organizational learning was a review of handbooks and references in encyclopedias of management, public administration,

governance, organization studies, knowledge management, organizational learning, etc. (n = 38). This allowed us to get an overview of the field, identify classic literature and avoid "citation amnesia" – a common shortcoming of bibliometrics periodical searches. What emerged from the overview were three main strands of literature: Organizational Learning, Learning Organization, and Knowledge Management. We further explored these three strands by applying a systematic review of the collection of research articles in the Web of Science and SCOPUS databases. We focused our search on empirical articles related to the public sector, published between 1990-2010. The result was a sample of 1016 documents. Based on a review of abstracts we selected articles with clear empirical cases of both private and public administration organizations (n = 252). To this sample we added 10 top-cited articles from each of the three branches of literature (according to Web of Science). This ensured that we would not omit important sources in our analysis that were mostly theoretical in nature. This analysis was supplemented by a review of 25 definitions from "classic" publications in each field. For the content analysis we used MAXQDA software (www.maxqda.com) and an initial coding strategy (Saldana, 2012, p. 100).

Findings

Based on the literature overview, for the purposes of our framework, we define organizational knowledge as a result of the social process of verifying assumptions, strategies and "theories in use" through interaction with an environment. This is followed by reflection and adaptation. Here we follow the view of the majority of authors from the organizational learning field (Argyris & Schon, 1995, p. 3-30; Crossan et al., 1999; Levitt & March, 1988, p. 320; Lipshitz et al., 2007).

Further, we divide institutional learning in our framework into four basic elements: knowledge, feedback, reflection and adaptation (or process of change). Apart from learning processes, the framework includes a number of organizational learning factors. These are the independent variables that can potentially have a significant impact on the organizational learning process. A graphical version of the framework is presented in Figure 2.

The starting point for an organizational learning framework is a taxonomy of knowledge adapted from knowledge management (KM) literature. We define knowledge as "information in action". Instead of distinguishing types according to the form of knowledge (tacit vs. explicit) we make the distinction based on the content of knowledge. The three types are (Alavi & Leidner, 2001, p. 113):

- Strategic knowledge – "knowing why we do things", knowledge about the objectives of the department, its mission and effects expected from the department;
- Operational knowledge – "knowing how", operational knowledge about tools, procedures that allows us to act smoothly, on time and in accordance with regulations;
- Contextual knowledge – "knowing what/about", knowledge about the environment in which the department operates, understanding the trends, relations and causal connections policy in the department's field of expertise.

The second element in our framework is feedback. This is a central mechanism in both organizational learning (OL) and learning organization (LO) literature, as well as in the latest approaches to knowledge management (KM). It allows an organization to determine whether a particular activity or process worked or whether should it be redefined (Sessa, London, 2006, p. 163). Based on the literature from psychology and system thinking we define feedback as any impulse that informs us about an organization's performance (Anderson & Johnson, 1997; Levy et al., 2006; Meadows, 2008). Literature on psychology points to the fact that useful feedback should meet four key criteria (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). First, it is vital to acquire feedback from diversified, external sources. Second, feedback should be collected on a regular basis. Third, feedback formulated in a constructive and structured way is more useful. Finally, positive feedback is considered more helpful than negative communication.

What follows feedback is a social process of reflection (Antal et al., 2001a, p. 5; Ortenblad, 2001, p. 130). This takes form of discussions, deliberation, and analysis. Some authors refer to it as "inquiry" (Argyris & Schon, 1995), in which templates, solutions and mental models used in particular organizations are tested and questioned (Fulmer & Keys, 2004).

Reflection can lead to eventual change in knowledge structure and volume. In other words – it can change the mental models shared by members of the organization. This creates feedback-loops – a situation in which certain outputs of the system (in this case departments activities) influence their environment and then, inputs from the environment are fed back into the system-organization (Bardach, 2006, p. 339). Literature identifies three types of loops (also called types of adaptation or orders of learning) (Antal et al., 2001b, p. 923; Argyris & Schon, 1995, pp. 27-30; Fiol & Lyles, 1985):

- single loop learning – a simple adjustment of actions, procedures and routines that changes operational knowledge;
- double loop learning – requiring in-depth inquiry that leads to substantial change in the underlying assumptions, premises, values and key theories that were used for a particular policy or action;
- deutero-learning – learning to learn, leading to adjustment in the sources and structures used for information collection and analysis.

In our framework we distinguish a fourth type of loop underlying the mission of an organization. This is strategic loop learning (Bennet & Bennet, 2004, p. 442) that leads to the adjustment of the main goals and the redefinition of departmental tasks.

The organizational learning factors were elaborated in a different way to the learning processes. We took a more open approach and put forward only broad groups of potential factors, instead of a list of detailed hypotheses. The clusters included personnel, leaders, resources, organizational environment, and interactions and relations. The reason for taking this approach was twofold. First, the literature we reviewed described the context of different countries, and mostly – private organizations. We assumed that the character of causal relations might be significantly different in the case of the Polish public administration. Second, we wanted to

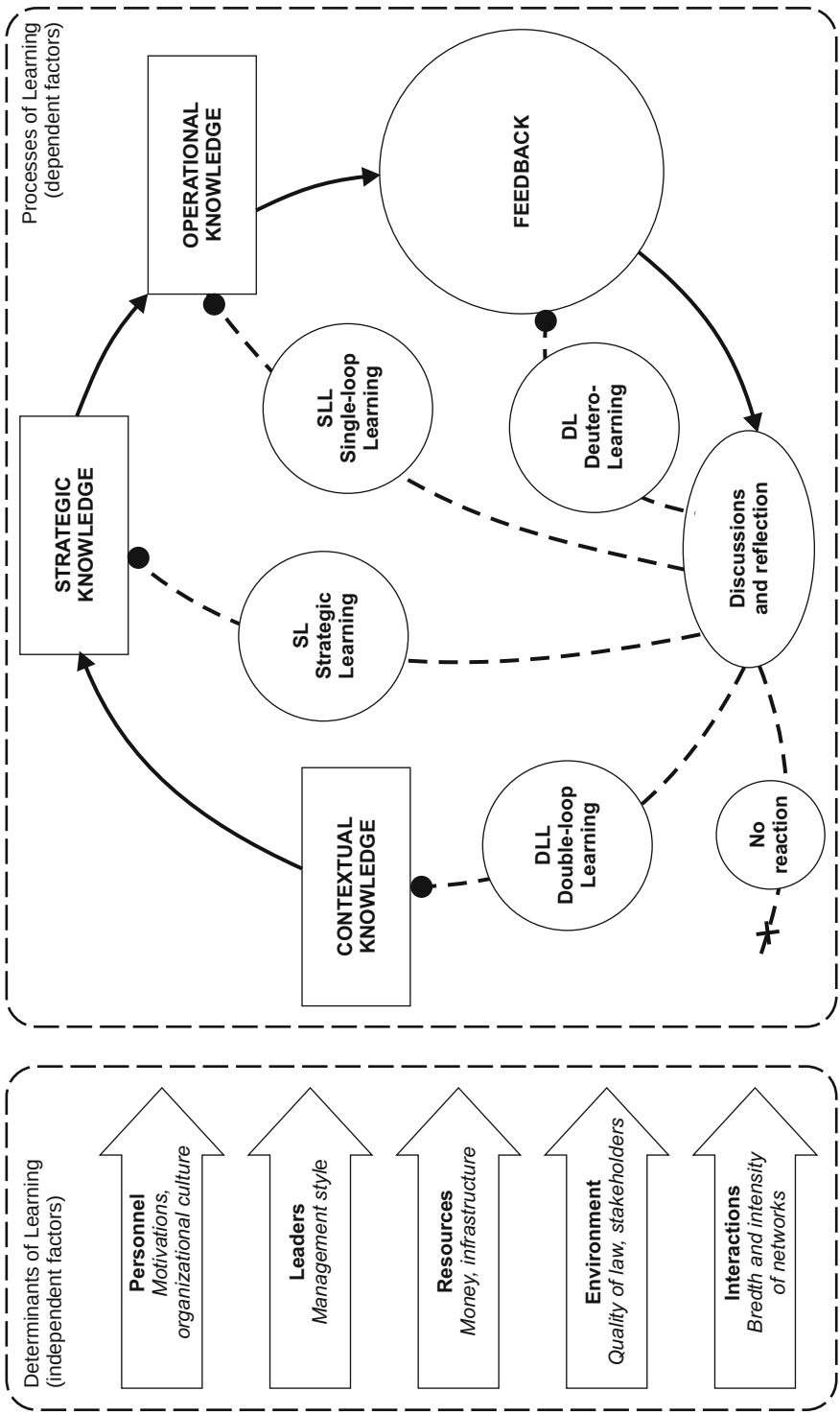

Figure 2. Framework of organizational learning – version 1

Source: own study.

keep a maximum level of openness, in order to take account of factors that are not sufficiently explored in the international literature.

Each element of the framework was transformed into a set of survey questions, inspired by earlier survey tools presented in the literature (Marsick & Watkins, 1999; Perez-Lopez et al., 2004; Preskill & Torres, 1999). However, we adapted some of the questions to the specific structure and characteristics of Polish ministries.

The framework presented above attempts to combine a cyclical approach (loops of learning) and a linear approach (relations between the organizational learning factors and processes of learning). Thus, it takes into account the cyclical nature of organizational functioning, while simultaneously providing a starting point for practical strategies of organizational change by identifying cause-effect relations.

1.2 Stage 2: Testing the framework in practice – a survey with ministry employees

The aim of this stage of our research was to empirically test the theoretical framework using quantitative data analysis. In other words, we wanted to verify, whether the theory rooted in the literature would prove its validity in practice.

Analytical procedure and methods

The source of data was a Computer-assisted Web Interview (CAWI), conducted in the period from March 7th to April 4th, 2011 among all employees (with the exception of heads of departments) of four Polish ministries involved in the project: the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry for Regional Development.[2] The sample examined consisted of all 3394 ministry employees and the rate of return of the questionnaire was 51.3% (1741 respondents).

The quantitative tool – the CAWI questionnaire – was structured so that individual questions were clustered into groups that constitute the broader dimensions, that is, our analytical categories (see: Annex 1[3]). Some of these were based on questions taken from earlier studies on knowledge management in organizations and thus, as such, they were verified within other research projects. Other questions were created in consultation with practitioners and theoreticians of the Polish governmental administration system. At the development stage of the questionnaire, we made sure that most (about 90%) of the questions would have a coherent, five-point Likert scale.

Overall coherence of the questionnaire was verified in several ways. First of all, we checked their face validity through discussion with project stakeholders. Then we conducted pilot research that allowed us to collect feedback from the interviewees.

[2] Ministries were selected as representations of different organizational and functional solutions present in the Polish administrative system.

[3] Annex 1 presents the questions from the CAWI questionnaire that were used to measure particular analytical categories. Items are clustered into the categories according to the final version of the organizational learning framework.

Pilot data was analyzed to make sure that the questionnaire was coherent, using Cronbach's alpha test. The test results were very high – on average, the components reached a scale of 0.96.

In our research, we took advantage of both types of factor analysis: first, we attempted to recreate the assumed constructs (confirmation analysis), then, if the first approach failed, to approach the matter from an exploratory point of view and attempt to identify new factors. When we had constructed new factors, we reverted back to confirmation analyses to see how these 'new' factors impacted one another.

In terms of the learning processes, the framework assumed the structure discussed in the previous section (see: Figure 2). It anticipated three types of knowledge (operational, strategic, contextual), a feedback stage, reflection and five types of reactions (no reaction, double-loop learning, strategic learning, single-loop learning and deutero-learning). These feedback-loop components were to exert impact on the state of types of knowledge, and their indirect impact upon one another. Determinants of organizational learning were also derived from a literature review, and consisted of a broad set of phenomena related to intra- and inter-organizational characteristics.

SEM – Structural Equation Modeling

Prior to commencement of modeling, the survey data was preprocessed. Namely, the 'blank' answers and missing data were replaced with the average for a given ministry.

The next step was to construct the model coefficients themselves. According to the information obtained at the pilot stage, not all factors that had their equivalents in the first framework were reflected in the data. Initially we attempted to recover these elements by building the original framework. However, it turned out that most elements had not been built in the expected manner[4]. Their factor loadings were incoherent (some were very high, others – very low) or negative. Therefore, we focused on factor analyses that would allow us to obtain the empirical constructs reflected by the data.

For this purpose, we used factor analysis of the principal components with orthogonal Equamax rotation. This preliminary analysis was aimed at checking whether the data would group into other elements than those pre-determined within the constructed theoretical framework. In this manner, we obtained ten factors – components of the organizational learning process, which only partially matched the elements from the theoretical framework (for instance, the knowledge-building factors); others were entirely new constructs. The analysis consisted of two stages: the first stage was the factor analysis that pertained to all components of the organizational learning process, and this resulted in the determination of the ten factors. The second stage consisted of the identification of explanatory factors. In the case of the latter, the

[4] And, to be exact, that is why we conducted pilot stage – we expected that our variables would settle into consistent factors, and they finally did, although in the end we received different factors than we expected.

procedure was very similar to the identification of the process components; however, this time, the analysis was performed for each focus area individually: separately for groups of variables pertaining to different categories such as personnel, resources etc. As a result, a total of 26 explanatory factors regarding the learning process was obtained.

On the basis of these factors, new structural models were built. We used confirmatory factor analysis to redefine the factors present in the data at the SEM level. At this stage of analysis, we were not interested in correlations between individual components of the organizational learning process, therefore we applied orthogonal rotation, at the modeling level[5], to de-correlate the individual factors. This in turn allowed for the construction of partial models, containing, for instance, only the knowledge- or adaptation-building factors.

In this way, we obtained a link between individual components of the learning process and the determinants of this process. Thus, our analysis uncovered another level of 26 factors which had indirect influence on the learning process and which we describe as 'determinants of the learning process'. Our overall approach is presented on Figure below.

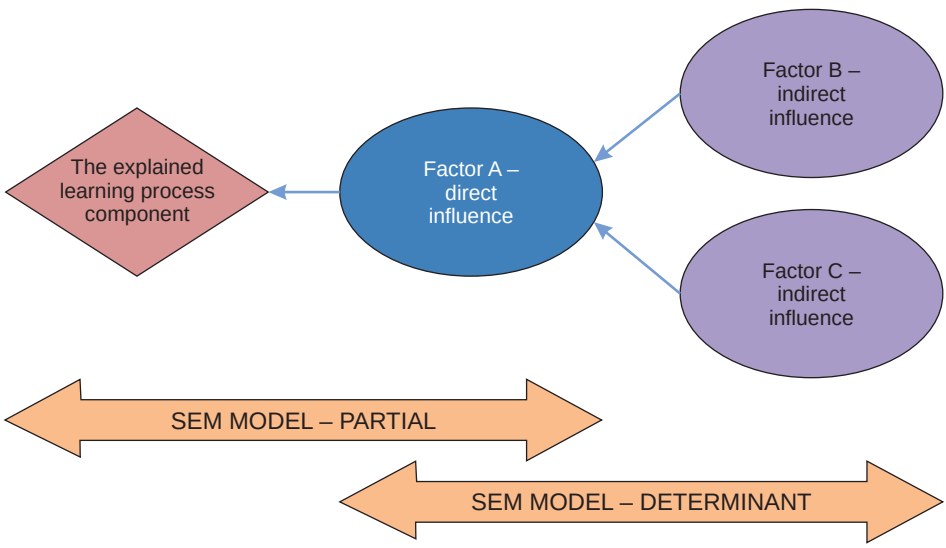

Figure 3. SEM modeling stages

Source: own study.

Of these 26 factors (determinants) only a few appeared to be important for further analysis. To determine which factors had significant explanatory power, we correlated factors from the determinant side with elements of the learning process to see which

[5] Orthogonal rotations make it possible to obtain uncorrelated factors. The advantage of this approach is the possibility to treat factors as unrelated.

of the determinants actually interacted with the core of our framework. Out of the 26 factors, only 7 were correlated relatively strongly ($R^2 > 30\%$), and these factors passed for further statistical analysis.

To summarize, the quantitative analysis was conducted in several stages:

- Analysis of missing data
- Factor analysis (exploratory) for learning processes
- Factor analyses (exploratory) for determinants of the learning process
- Creation of factors in the database on the basis of SEM analysis
- Analysis of average values of factors for individual departments in the context of results obtained for individual ministries.

The structural models created described well the common reality in the examined fragment of the Polish public administration system. However, our objective was not only to diagnose the processes responsible for learning, but also – and most importantly – to verify the existence of individual processes in the specific ministries and departments.

Using the CAWI method enabled us to maximize the number of respondents, who participated in the survey. The sample obtained was large enough to allow for complex quantitative analysis leading to the building of an organizational learning framework. The next section summarizes our findings at this stage.

Findings

As Figure 4 shows, our two-level factor analysis resulted in defining 10 dimensions of learning. We examined the questions hidden behind each dimension and came up with the four main issues constituting the learning process: reflection mechanisms, knowledge base, adaptation processes and existing impulses.

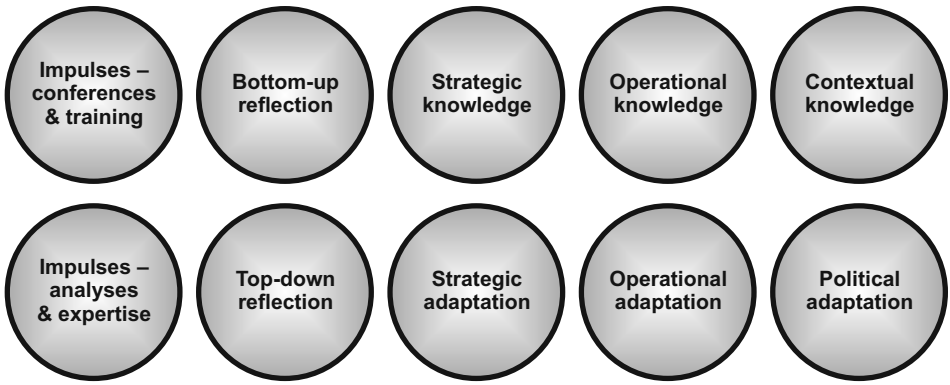

Figure 4. Framework of organizational learning – version 2

Source: own study.

Compared to our initial, theoretical framework, the factors obtained referred mainly to the state of reality[6], only some of them had a processual character. Also, the framework based on quantitative data failed to confirm the existence of feedback mechanisms, as described in the literature. In-depth analysis proved that the theoretical factors associated with feedback could not be recreated based on the gathered data. However, another, more general source of knowledge emerged – impulses. They included two types of impulses: "analyses and expert opinions" and "conferences and training".

Constructing a new framework was aimed not only at unveiling the processes of learning in Polish ministries, but also at exploring the potential determinants of these processes so that they constituted a coherent part of the framework. The analytical procedure described above resulted in defining 7 organizational learning factors, i.e.: mutual support, group cohesion, psychological safety, democratic leadership style both at the level of heads of departments and heads of units, availability of analyses and information, and quality of expertise.

To sum up, the quantitative analysis described above resulted in major changes in our theoretical framework. All four learning loops and feedback disappeared, and the complex cycle of learning was replaced with a static picture comprising 10 dimensions of organizational learning, grouped into 4 main categories, i.e. impulses, reflection, knowledge and adaptation. The first determinants of learning were established, emphasizing the characteristics of teams and leadership style.

The findings regarding the learning processes triggered the following questions: First, why was the picture of the learning cycle we obtained from quantitative analysis more static than processual, even in the area of impulses? Second, why didn't the feedback mechanisms appear as a practice of obtaining knowledge in the examined ministries? In the case of both questions we stipulated that it may be the result of some integral characteristic of Polish administrative institutions. Answering these questions called for the use of different methods that would allow us to verify the reasons for the mismatch between the theoretical framework and the quantitative results. The next stage, therefore, was to use qualitative data to verify and deepen our analysis.

1.3 Stage 3: Exploring learning in-depth – interviews with leaders

The overall aim of this stage of our analysis was to enrich the framework that emerged from the quantitative data gathered among ministry employees with the perspective of public administration leaders, both from Poland and from 12 OECD countries.

We began with interviews with the heads of the studied departments in Poland. In particular, we wanted to verify two main issues. First, what day-to-day practices are

[6] Even if we take into account that some of our factors described processes (e.g. Adaptation or Reflection), we still only received static information about states rather than processes. Further analyses were designed to show the impact of individual factors emerging from the determinant, allowing the recognition process in terms of cause and effect analysis and analysis of the influence of each factor on the elements of learning.

hidden behind the static rather than processual picture that emerged from our data. Second, is feedback gathering, as a practice of obtaining knowledge, really as rare as was indicated by the quantitative analysis.

Next, we confronted the Polish situation with the first-hand experience of civil servants in selected OECD countries. We broadened the picture obtained in this way by interviewing academics specializing in public management in a given country. We focused on checking if the reality of foreign administration was coherent with the literature (occurrence of feedback and structured practices of organizational learning) and therefore different from what we had observed in Poland. We were also looking for particular practices supporting organizational learning (see: next chapter).

Analytical procedure and methods

Qualitative data collected in Poland consisted of 71 transcripts and notes from interviews with the heads of all the departments in the four ministries. Interviews were conducted using structured interview protocol (see: Annex 2), over the period of two months in 2011.[7] In order to address the questions presented at the beginning of this section, we used coding and an analytical procedure that consisted of six steps.

First, for each interview we applied an attribute coding that included: (1) The type of department (Internal service provider vs. Merit – policy department) and (2) the department's relation to EU policy (Management of EU funds vs. National issues).

In the second step, two researchers performed random selective coding to develop a detailed coding list. For this purpose we used a combination of two coding strategies: structural coding with process coding (Saldana, 2012). Our starting list of phrases was very general and followed our initial division into three types of knowledge and feedback (that could overlap with the types of knowledge). These were: (1) How do they obtain strategic knowledge? (2) How do they obtain operational knowledge? (3) How do they obtain contextual knowledge? (4) Which process is a feedback mechanism? Process coding uses gerunds to connote action in the data. It reveals routine actions that form wider tactics and strategies. This coding fitted well the description of knowledge as a process. Moreover, it allowed us to focus our search on the possible dynamics that were missing in the quantitative analysis.

In the third step, each coder moved to the 2nd coding cycle for pilot data, in order to come up with more summative groupings. We applied pattern coding (Saldana, 2012, p. 209) in a search for repeated activities and similarities.

In step four, we built inter-coder agreement. Coding pattern of one, overlapping interview was compared between two coders. Coherence was very high. Differences in coding were discussed and joint definitions were clarified. That procedure allowed us to increase reliability of the research. At this stage we also decided to introduce code categories that would allow us to explore characteristic and quality of learning

[7] The interview scenario was constructed on the basis of the literature review. Interviews were conducted by members of the research team who participated in the development of the theoretical model as well as survey and interview scenarios. The average length of interview was 45 minutes.

practices, i.e. structure, regularity, positive or negative character, and utility from the user perspective. The final list is presented on Table 2.

In the fifth step, two researchers conducted coding for the whole set of data (71 interviews), using the list of categories that emerged from the pilot coding. Again we combined two types of coding – this time provisional coding with magnitude coding. Provisional coding allows a "start list set of coded data prior to fieldwork and generated in the preliminary investigation' (Saldana, 2012, p. 144). It focuses inquiry and at the same time allows flexibility because it can be modified during the research. Magnitude coding allows assigning the intensity of frequency to particular phenomena (Saldana, 2012, p. 72). By applying this technique we were able to evaluate the extent to which each practice is structured (that is regular, organized as procedures, routines). Each fragment of the interview was also coded with multiple codes (so-called simultaneous coding) e.g. types of knowledge, regularity, knowledge source.

Table 2. Coding categories and coding results

Code	Definition	Number of coded segments
strategic knowledge	knowing why	399
operational knowledge	knowing how	284
contextual knowledge	knowing what/about	249
feedback	An impulse acquired from an external source that provides an evaluative response to action undertaken by the recipient	358
source	Sources of information acquired by a department; 16 sub-codes, including "other"	1017
regularity	The regularity of obtaining knowledge from a given source; 3 sub-codes: high, medium and low.	457
positive or negative	The positive or negative character of given feedback; binary code – 2 sub-codes	117
structured process	A formalized and/or systematic process of acquiring knowledge from a given source of information; binary code – 2 sub-codes	343
perceived utility	An explicitly stated opinion on the usefulness of a given source of information; 3 sub-codes: high, medium and low	245

Source: own study.

In the final step, we applied a mixed-methods approach in order to draw quantified results from qualitative data. We assessed the main features of knowledge acquisition practices used across the entire sample, and broke down the results according to two

types of departments, i.e. those dealing directly with EU-funds and the rest. However, quantitative analysis and interpretation of qualitative data had its limitations. Data was derived from structured questionnaires aimed at exploring key learning processes, and thus providing only partial information on the absolute frequency of a given phenomenon. Moreover, narrative could be fragmented, with a given issue surfacing in several places in the course of the interview. To address these limitations we focused on relative values, e.g. comparing the performance of two types of departments and using the code relations browser.

The second data set consisted of 114 transcripts and notes from in-depth interviews conducted during the study visits in 12 OECD countries[8]. In each country a study visit comprised of three inter-related parts: on the spot interviews, followed up by desk research and a literature review on practices of organizational learning and knowledge management. We conducted semi-structured interviews with central governmental managers and academic experts to (1) establish state-of-the-art organizational learning and knowledge management in each country, and (2) to identify promising practices of organizational learning. Interview transcripts and relevant documents identified by our interviewees were analyzed with MAXQDA software, using a basic structural coding system (Saldana, 2012, p. 84-87).

It should be noted that this part of our research did not aspire to be a systematic overview of OECD countries. Rather, it was designed as a set of national exploratory case studies. We were interested more in getting an idea of the range of existing solutions than in a review of practices in each organization. We focused mainly on identifying examples of day-to-day practices on (1) obtaining knowledge, (2) getting feedback, and (3) storing knowledge.

Findings

Applying the above-described procedures led us to number of observations. First, we describe the emerging picture of organizational learning in Polish ministries. Then we move on to report the key observations from the study visits, which influenced the final version of the organizational learning framework.

We discovered that**,** in case of Polish ministries**,** sources of knowledge are located mostly inside the administration, often inside the given institution (see: Table 3). The main channel of obtaining strategic knowledge is from heads of the ministry. Operational knowledge is drawn predominantly from training sessions and different control/audit activities. Mechanisms for acquiring contextual knowledge seem to be generally less frequent, with expert analyses and contacts with other units of public administration being most common.

Mapping sources of feedback revealed a similar pattern. The majority of impulses obtained comes from inside the public administration system, with heads of ministry and external control activities being the main sources. Typical external sources, i.e. stakeholders and clients, are responsible for only 12% of collected feedback. More

[8] The methodology of this step is described in detail in chapter 3 of this book.

than 70% of recorded feedback falls into the category of strategic knowledge, and a further quarter regards operational knowledge.

Table 3. Results of the mixed-method analysis – sources of knowledge

Sources	Type of knowledge			Feedback
	strategic	operational	contextual	
heads of the ministry	37%	2%	8%	20%
contacts within the ministry	7%	1%	8%	7%
contacts within public administration	7%	4%	16%	6%
recipients/clients	6%	1%	4%	7%
stakeholders	5%	0%	6%	5%
system of indicators	9%	1%	1%	9%
internal audit	0%	12%	0%	9%
external audit	2%	6%	0%	5%
external control	4%	14%	1%	14%
expert analyses and research	3%	6%	19%	3%
guidelines	3%	4%	3%	0%
internet	0%	3%	4%	0%
media	2%	1%	6%	3%
training	0%	20%	5%	0%
own experience and practice	4%	12%	1%	2%
other	10%	13%	17%	9%

Source: own study.

The regularity of feedback inflow is poor (see: Table 4), with almost half of observed feedback falling into the low regularity category. Systems of indicators were by far the most regular source of feedback, while impulses obtained from within the ministry were mostly of an incidental and *ad hoc* nature.

Structured feedback is rather rare, occurring only in 38% of analyzed cases, and in less than a third of cases, when it comes in response to impulses regarding strategic knowledge. Systems of indicators, expert analyses and external controls tend to provide structured feedback more often than average, while contacts within the ministry and public administration system relies mostly on unstructured communication.

Finally, negative feedback is more prevalent than positive feedback. This imbalance is particularly evident in the case of communication within the ministry.

On the basis of these observations we can come up with three more general observations related to our framework of organizational learning. First, there is a dynamic in the everyday learning of Polish departments. However, these processes

are unstructured, irregular and – most of all – internal. Our survey questions were focused on relations and interactions with the environment as the main channel of knowledge and learning. Polish ministries clearly miss this connection. That is why in the quantitative model learning elements appeared as static categories.

Table 4. Results of mixed-method analysis – characteristics of feedback

Characteristics of feedback	
structured	38% (no. of coded segments: 72)
unstructured	62% (117)
high regularity	22% (42)
medium regularity	32% (60)
low regularity	46% (86)
negative	58% (67)
positive	42% (48)

Source: own study.

Second, feedback is present in Polish ministries, but its inflow from outside the Ministry is very limited. Feedback is dominated by one source – heads of the ministries (political appointees) and it is directed solely to senior management (heads of the departments). It is both unstructured and irregular, often in form of a simple message e.g. "Well done" or "we have a problem". A statement from one of our interviews illustrates this issue well:

It [feedback] has never been formalized in any way. If I know that something is going wrong, it is usually thanks to some current feedback. But it has never happened in a systemic way. [pause]. But on the other hand, from various conversations I know that I am positively evaluated. However, it is not like there are any specified criteria for this evaluation. [Interview – Poland]

As a result, there is little concrete content to be passed from senior management to the staff of the departments. That is why our quantitative analysis that explored the staff's point of view, did not register the presence of organizational feedback.

Third, it is worth assessing the usefulness of the observed feedback from a theoretical point of view. Feedback most useful for learning should share the following characteristic (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996): be acquired from diversified sources external to the organization, be collected on a regular basis, and formulated in a constructive and structured way. Comparing this list to the Polish situation we have to state that none of these criteria is met. That means that in its current form the use of feedback for learning is very limited.

The absence of structured, regular processes of learning and lack of feedback from the environment led us to the final question: Is this a typical trait of central administration or just a peculiarity of the Polish public administration and something that could be improved? In order to solve this puzzle we moved to the last stage of our exploration – an international comparison.

As an outcome of study visits conducted in selected OECD countries, we identified 78 interesting practices of organizational learning and knowledge management.[9] We compared the results with the coded data from interviews with Polish senior civil servants and discovered only a few, quite isolated cases of similar practices in Poland[10]. These findings allowed us to conclude that the absence of structured, regular processes of learning and lack of feedback from the environment is indeed a peculiarity of public administration in transition when compared to other countries with developed administration systems.

Analysis of the interviews conducted during the study visits allowed us to introduce further improvements to our organizational learning framework. First of all, many interviewees highlighted the role of feedback in the process of organizational learning. It turned out that in more mature administration systems, the feedback is usually structured, may take many different forms, and is derived from a variety of sources. Thus, we decided to replace a narrow 'analyses and expertise' element (part of the impulses category), with a broader category of feedback.

Second, the quantitative analysis emphasized the dynamic nature of the learning process. Static categories derived from the former analytical step might be transformed into a logical sequence of steps that reflects the iterative and cyclical character of organizational functioning. Our interviewees pointed to the fact that only an on-going, cyclical process leads to accumulation of knowledge and raises the organization's effectiveness.

Third, the analysis of international practices aimed at enhancing learning processes allowed for elaborating new determinants of organizational learning. Describing the feedback, our interviewees pointed to the key role of reference frameworks. These practical systems of goals and indicators serve as a compass in the everyday work of an organization, and allows the impulses from external sources to be organized into a consistent message about the results of a department. The reflection upon incoming impulses turned out to be much more codified, than it is in the case of the Polish public administration. But these routines, checklists and procedures are not rigid. Instead, they are constantly redefined and adjusted, drawing on the experiences of an organization.

The question of the ability to fully tap the potential of organizational learning practices turned our attention to the issue of individual traits of personnel. In the CAWI questionnaire, under the personnel theme, we included only questions regarding the characteristics of work performed by a given person (workload, infrastructural barriers, etc.). Further statistical analysis proved they are not significant for organizational learning. However the qualitative stage of analysis allowed us to elaborate three individual traits that raise the capability of organizational learning, i.e. critical thinking, goal-oriented thinking and system thinking.

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[9] Their short, unified descriptions in English are available at the project webpage: www.mus.edu.pl

[10] These are namely: (1) a newsletter implemented in one of the four studied ministries, (2) a community of practice in the field of audit experts, (3) three cases of the use of performance budgeting for reflection on departmental performance, (4) use of evaluation studies and their recommendations in a few departments related to EU-fund recommendations, (5) use of regulatory impact assessment in Polish administration (a new development only mentioned in one of the interviews).

Interviews with heads of departments allowed us to look at the question of resources and relations of a department from a different perspective. The quantitative analysis, drawing on the knowledge of regular employees, failed to acknowledge the role of financial resources. It seems that the role of this issue is recognized only at the senior level, where the responsibility to allocate the funds is located. Similarly, the importance of relations with both the remote and immediate environment (especially the relations between heads of departments and their political supervisors) is better reflected at the managerial level.

To sum up, this stage of analysis put feedback back among the elements of organizational learning, and allowed to uncover the dynamic and cyclical nature of the organizational learning process. Major changes occurred in the part of the framework depicting the determinants of organizational learning. 8 new factors were elaborated, i.e. the reference framework, codification of practices, goal-oriented thinking, system thinking, and critical thinking, relationships with both the immediate and remote environment, and financial resources were included under the broadened category of financial and technological resources. Together with 7 factors elaborated in the quantitative stage, these 15 determinants were grouped under 6 thematic areas, i.e. personnel, teams, leadership style, resources, procedures and customs, and relationships with the external environment.

1.4 Conclusions – the organizational learning framework

Thanks to research carried out in the Polish ministries we know that organizational learning is a dynamic mechanism, which consists of (1) a set of learning processes and (2) factors that support these processes.

These two elements together, and the relations between them, constitute the so-called learning mechanism (see: Figure 5). The definitions of all elements of the learning mechanism, i.e. learning processes, and learning determinants are presented in Tables 6 and 7. The description includes the role that each element plays in supporting the performance of an organization or its organizational learning processes.

Learning processes form an action cycle (the blue cycle in the center of Figure 5), which allows an organization to create new knowledge, and on the basis of this knowledge – to adapt to challenges of the complex and dynamic reality. The cycle consists of four elements, i.e. impulses, reflection, knowledge and adaptation. In other words, a department obtains information from external sources (including feedback), which induces reflection. This eventually leads to creation of new knowledge, which, in turn, serves as a basis for decisions altering the current activities of a department (i.e. adaptation). A department might than learn about the outcomes of this adaptation, drawing on feedback received from the external environment. A situation such as this indicates that a full loop of the learning cycle has been completed.

The cyclical process described above should occur in regard to particular projects, issues, and tasks that a given department carries out. The performance of organizational learning depends both on the quality of particular elements of the cycle (i.e. learning processes), and on the ability to systematically combine them.

Every organization, in order to carry out its activities and reach its objectives, needs human resources (staff, teams, leaders) and physical resources (infrastructure); it also utilizes various procedures and has relationships with its external environment. The proposed organizational learning framework takes into account all of these fields. Our focus is, however, only on those dimensions of the organizational resources, procedures and relationships that influence the learning processes. These findings fit well into the results of recent research on critical success factors of organizational learning in public administration (Pokharel & Hult 2009, Barette et al., 2008). However, our framework provides a more comprehensive, multi-layer description of learning determinants, ranging from the individual level, through teams and the organizational level, to relations with the external environment. Furthermore, it includes both soft, cultural dimensions (customs, leadership style), as well as the 'hardware' of an organization (procedures, financial and technological resources).

Particular factors support only a part of the learning cycle. The study conducted in the Polish ministries allows us to indicate which processes are most likely to be influenced by a given factor. Knowing the relations between learning processes and the phenomena that support them, we can determine the set of factors that needs to be strengthened in order to enhance a given stage of the learning cycle (see: Figure 6).

It is worth noting that our framework resembles a classic Kolb's model of experiential adult learning (Kolb, 1984), which treats an organization as a living organism. This approach might prove helpful to understand**,** as well as measure**,** different inter-organizational processes.

Table 5. The practical utility of framework – tool for monitoring organizational learning

The organizational learning framework has a nested structure. This means that: (a) a list of one hundred survey items measures the frequency of certain behaviors in an organization; (b) survey items are clustered to measure elements of the organizational learning mechanism; (c) these elements are graphically arranged into wider categories: processes of learning and determinants of learning.
So, looking at Figure 5 and Annex 1, consider this example. Two survey items comprise the element labeled "Conferences and Training", while five survey items construct the element called "Feedback". These two elements are grouped under the name "Impulses", which in turn is one of the four clusters (impulses, reflection, knowledge, adaptation) that build the most general category called "Processes of Learning".
This nested logic allows public managers to measure and monitor easily all aspects of organizational learning at the different levels of their agency. Namely it allows:
(1) Collecting reliable data on the learning mechanism Employees of an organization respond anonymously to survey items. Particular questions measure the frequency of certain behavior in their organization important for organizational learning.
(2) Aggregating survey data and turning the data into information Validated formulas allow: (a) aggregation of individual responses into elements of the learning framework; (b) demonstration of the condition of each element of the learning mechanism (e.g. system thinking, mutual support, feedback) at the 1-10 scale (1 = lowest intensity, 10 = highest).

Table 5 – continued

(3) Visualizing and comparing the results of the organization The Prezi template allows combining, visualizing and animating different layers of data: (a) showing on one screen dashboard the bigger picture - intensity of all processes and determinants of learning; (b) zooming in and out of each element of the mechanism (e.g. impulses – feedback; strategic knowledge) and see results of all survey items that have built that element; (c) comparing and benchmarking results of own organization with average of Polish ministries, mean of whole organization (if survey covered different units within organization) or even, if survey has been repeated, changes over time.
(4) Conducting constructive data-driven discussion about the condition of an organization The agenda for a team meeting allows leaders and members of the organization: (a) to engage in conversation grounded in data; (b) to identify the reasons for the observed situation; (c) to discuss possible improvements in organization and (d) to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented management solution over time.
Please note that survey questions are presented in Annex 1 of this book. The template for the on-line survey, all analytical formulas, Prezi templates, data for comparison and agenda for discussion are available for download for free from project web page: www.mus.edu.pl

In the conclusions of this chapter we presented a framework of organizational learning for public administration. This framework has been empirically developed and tested, and it relies both on qualitative and quantitative analyses. It combines both the perspective of public administration under transformation, and mature administrative systems from leading OECD countries. It reflects the viewpoint of both regular employees (CAWI questionnaire), and senior management (in-depth interviews). It attempts to bridge the gap between theoretical literature and everyday practice. The universal nature of the proposed framework helps to describe the mechanism of organizational learning in various public organizations, and to re-create the causal relations leading to the current state of this phenomenon.

The framework, as it has been presented in Table 5, has high practical value. We believe that it could help the public administrations of countries in transition to begin thinking about organizational learning in a structured way. Senior management as well as staff would appreciate (as testing in the Polish ministries indicated) its usefulness in monitoring organizational learning in their agencies. This framework provides them with reliable data on the learning mechanism. It gives insight into the functioning of different levels and aspects of a given organization without losing the bigger picture of the whole organization. Finally it allows for making management decisions and testing organizational improvements based on analysis grounded in data (for detailed information see: www.mus.edu.pl). The selection of management tools designed to support elements of the learning mechanism, and eventually advance the whole organizational learning process, are presented in next chapter of this book.

Table 6. Processes of organizational learning

Name of the process	What it is	How it benefits the organization
Conferences and training	Participation of employees of a department in conferences and training related to their area of work.	Participation in conferences and training helps the organization to acquire new knowledge, find inspiration and ideas for novel approaches to challenges and to current activities.
Feedback	All information from the external environment of a department assessing the efficiency, effectiveness and usefulness of the activities carried out by this department. It can be in the form of analyses and expertise, monitoring data, principals' assessments (e.g. politicians), opinions of the stakeholders of a given policy, comparisons with other departments, etc.	Feedback is like school grades – it allows us to understand whether things are going in the right direction, and whether the tasks implemented by a department bring the expected results, and benefit their recipients.
Top-down reflection	Discussions and analyses of issues important for a whole department, conducted with the participation of a department's management.	Top-down reflection allows employees of a whole department to think about incoming information**,** relate it to their own work and eventually translate it into knowledge useful in the specific context of their department.
Bottom-up reflection	Discussion and analyses of received impulses and the current situation, which take place in a unit of a department, among its employees.	Bottom-up reflection allows employees of units and teams to think about incoming information**,** relate it to their own work and eventually translate into knowledge useful in the specific context of their unit.
Contextual knowledge	Knowledge of the environment in which a department operates and of the subject related to its tasks, held by staff of a department. The ability to explain the trends and possible causes of various phenomena in a given sector or policy area.	Helps to explain what is happening around the department, in a given policy area, subject or sector, which is linked to the activities of the department. It also allows you to relate observed changes to the situation of the department.
Strategic knowledge	Employees' knowledge of the objectives of a department, of the expected effects of the activities undertaken by a department, of its role in the ministry, in the system of public policies, and in society.	Strategic knowledge explains to employees how their work contributes to the realization of the most important tasks of the organization. It allows them to guide their activities towards a common, overarching goal.
Operational knowledge	Technical, operational knowledge (know-how), associated with the use of different tools, operating methods, application of effective processes and procedures.	Allows employees to continuously improve established processes, procedures, and operating methods. As a result, it improves workflow in a department.

Table 6 – continued

Name of the process	What it is	How it benefits the organization
Operational adaptation	Change in operational issues – the current working methods, procedures, ways of performing daily activities – made as a result of reflection on the impulses that reached a unit or a department.	Thanks to operational adaptation, an organization changes the way it performs daily activities (doing the same things more efficiently). It improves the smoothness and efficiency of work.
Strategic adaptation	Change in the future directions of a department, the tasks or the perception of the area, in which a department operates. Occurs under the influence of reflection on the impulses that have reached the organization.	With strategic adaptation, a department responds to the challenges and needs of the evolving environment. As a result, both the effectiveness and usefulness of the activities performed by a department are improved.
Political adaptation	Change in the course of action, revision of the purpose of a department, under the influence of a political or personnel change at the highest levels of the ministry.	Thanks to the political adaptation, a department adjusts to a vision put forward by the leaders of the organization – politicians.

Table 7. Determinants of organizational learning

Name of the determinant	What it is	How it supports the learning process
Goal-oriented thinking	The ability to use cause-effect reasoning, to perceive and define the activities of a department in the form of causal relationships: challenges and needs – inputs – processes – outcomes (positive changes).	Thanks to this skill employees can identify and obtain feedback from external sources, which concerns the most important outcomes of an organization's activities. They can also use this ability to pursue critical reflection, draw conclusions and strengthen their strategic knowledge.
System thinking	Identifying relationships and interdependences, perceiving the broader context in which public activities and different projects are taking place. Awareness of the dynamics of phenomena in time.	Thanks to this skill employees can identify and acquire information from external sources, related to the context and longitudinal effects of a given activity. On this basis, they can pursue critical reflection and strengthen their strategic and contextual knowledge.
Critical thinking	The ability to ask questions, to formulate problems clearly, to build arguments, to evaluate evidence and its credibility, and the ability of logical inference.	This ability allows employees to identify reliable sources of information, to build a clear argument during team discussions, and to base decisions on firm evidence. Depending on the topic, it can improve different kinds of knowledge (operational, strategic, and contextual).
Mutual support	Support provided by co-workers in the face of emerging problems.	It is a prerequisite of cooperation and fruitful discussions in the team. It also strengthens operational knowledge.
Group cohesion	Good relationships in the team, mutual kindness and a spirit of cooperation.	It benefits team cooperation, and supports common reflection on improving one's work and its effects.
Psychological safety	Freedom to express opinions (including critical ones), acceptance of different views occurring among the team members, lack of fear of risk-taking, absence of deliberate disturbance of colleagues.	It is necessary for the smooth functioning of the team. It enables collective reflection, and learning from successes and failures of a department and its teams.
Democratic leadership style – heads of department	A style of team management. Democratic leaders encourage staff to discuss and to put forward ideas, provide inspiration, and respect employees' independence. They can also clear up misunderstandings between employees. Such leaders ensure that employees are informed of their roles and the objectives and tasks of a department.	Democratic leadership enables organizations to develop reflection on the effectiveness and efficiency of the department. It strengthens contextual knowledge and strategic knowledge.

Table 7 – continued

Name of the determinant	What it is	How it supports the learning process
Democratic leadership style – heads of units	A style of team management. Democratic heads of units encourage their staff to discuss and to put forward ideas, provide inspiration, and respect employees' independence. They can clear up misunderstandings between staff members and ensure that employees are informed of their roles and the objectives and tasks of a unit.	Democratic heads of units enable their teams to develop reflection on the effectiveness and efficiency of the unit. They strengthen contextual, strategic as well as operational knowledge.
Availability of analyses and information	Availability and accessibility of databases, publications, information used in everyday work.	A source of inspiration and impulses. It supplies the reflection process with facts, and – depending on the scope of information – helps to build contextual, strategic or operational knowledge.
Financial and technological resources	The money available to a department for training, commissioning of expertise reports, obtaining information, but also for the equipment used in everyday work.	Financial resources allow participation in training, collecting feedback, and facilitating reflection processes. In turn, technological resources facilitate e.g. collection and processing of knowledge, or communication between team members.
Reference framework	The function of a department translated into a set of practical information and indicators, by which the department monitors the effects of its activities and relates them to the broader goals set at the institution level. Thus, the reference framework sets a benchmark to evaluate the performance of a department. It should include the opinions of the clients of a department and its stakeholders.	Allows the impulses from external sources to be organized into a consistent message about the results of a department. In simple terms, it tells us whether we have succeeded as an organization. Therefore, it creates a framework for meaningful top-down reflection and builds all kinds of knowledge.
Codification of practices	Well-established practices of commissioning research and expertise, of internal reflection in teams, of knowledge sharing and storing information. The codification may take the form of an internal procedure, checklist, template, action scenario, manual, or custom.	The codification of practices allows the organization to remember the modes of action which proved useful. Depending on the subject, it may support all three types of knowledge.
Relationship with immediate environment	The breadth and intensity of contacts a department has with other departments within the same ministry, as well as relationships with political superiors.	It allows useful feedback to be gathered from the immediate environment, i.e. from within the ministry.

Table 7 – continued

Name of the determinant	What it is	How it supports the learning process
Relationship with remote environment	The breadth and intensity of contacts a department has with actors from beyond the ministry – stakeholders of a given policy, academics, consultants, experts, other ministries, think tanks, etc.	Allows diverse and useful feedback to be gathered. The more sources a department has, the wider perspective it may have. As a result, a department gains a more objective view and a deeper knowledge of the needs of stakeholders and the appropriate lines of action.
Quality of expertise	The ability to obtain knowledge from independent experts, and the general assessment of the quality of external research and expertise.	Expertise of high quality is an important source of feedback. It provides essential input to reflection processes in a department, and supports contextual and strategic knowledge.

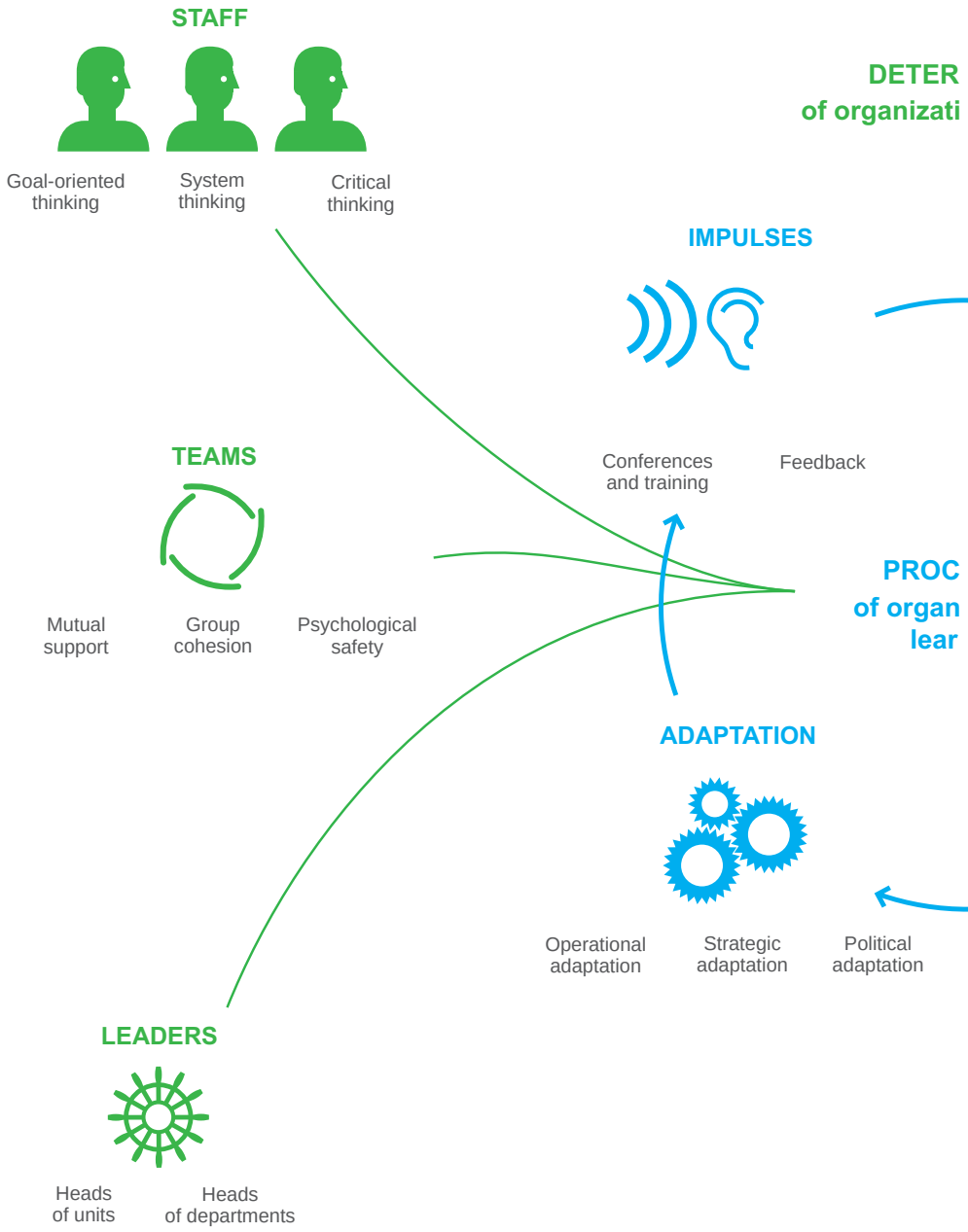
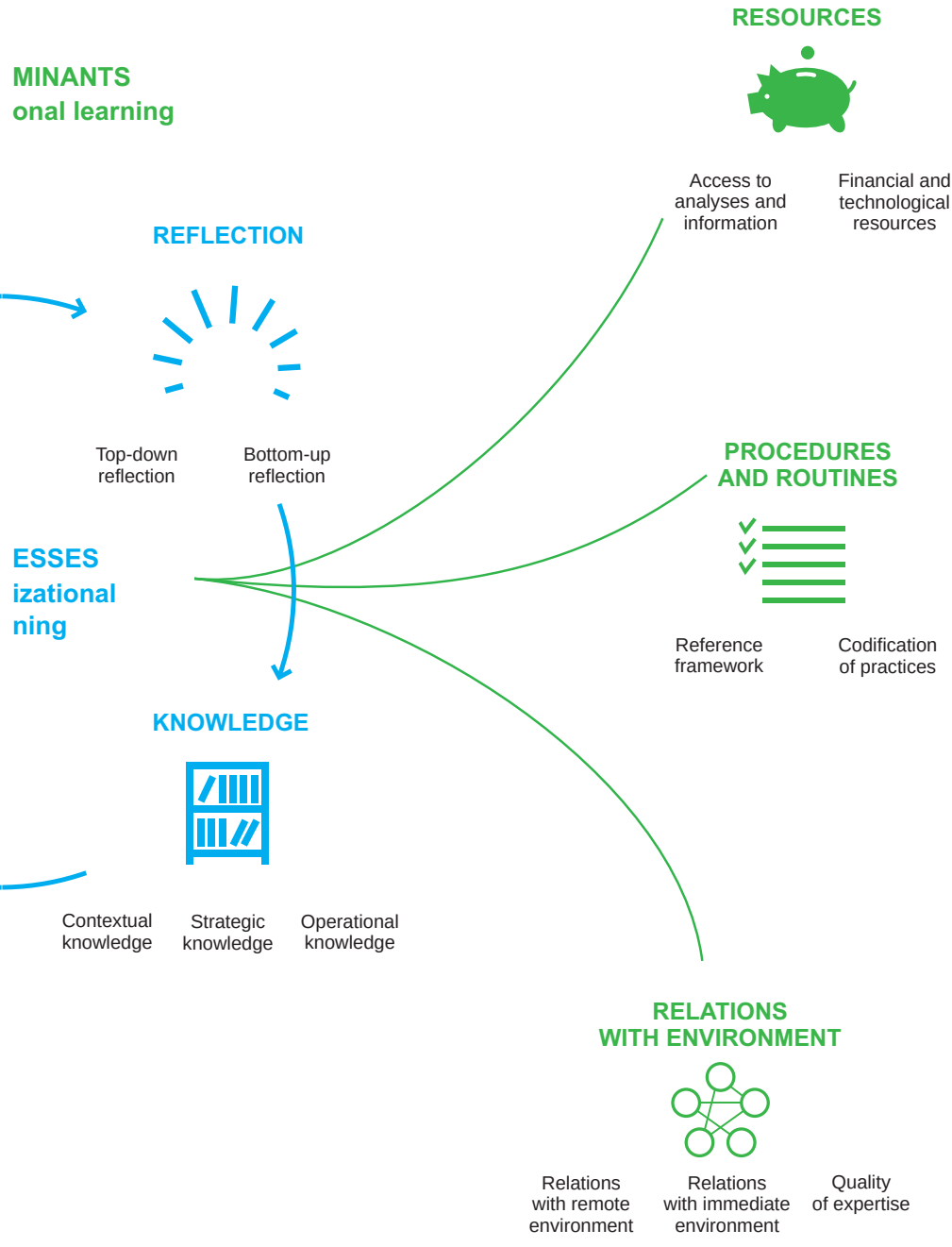


Figure 5. The mechanism of organizational learning



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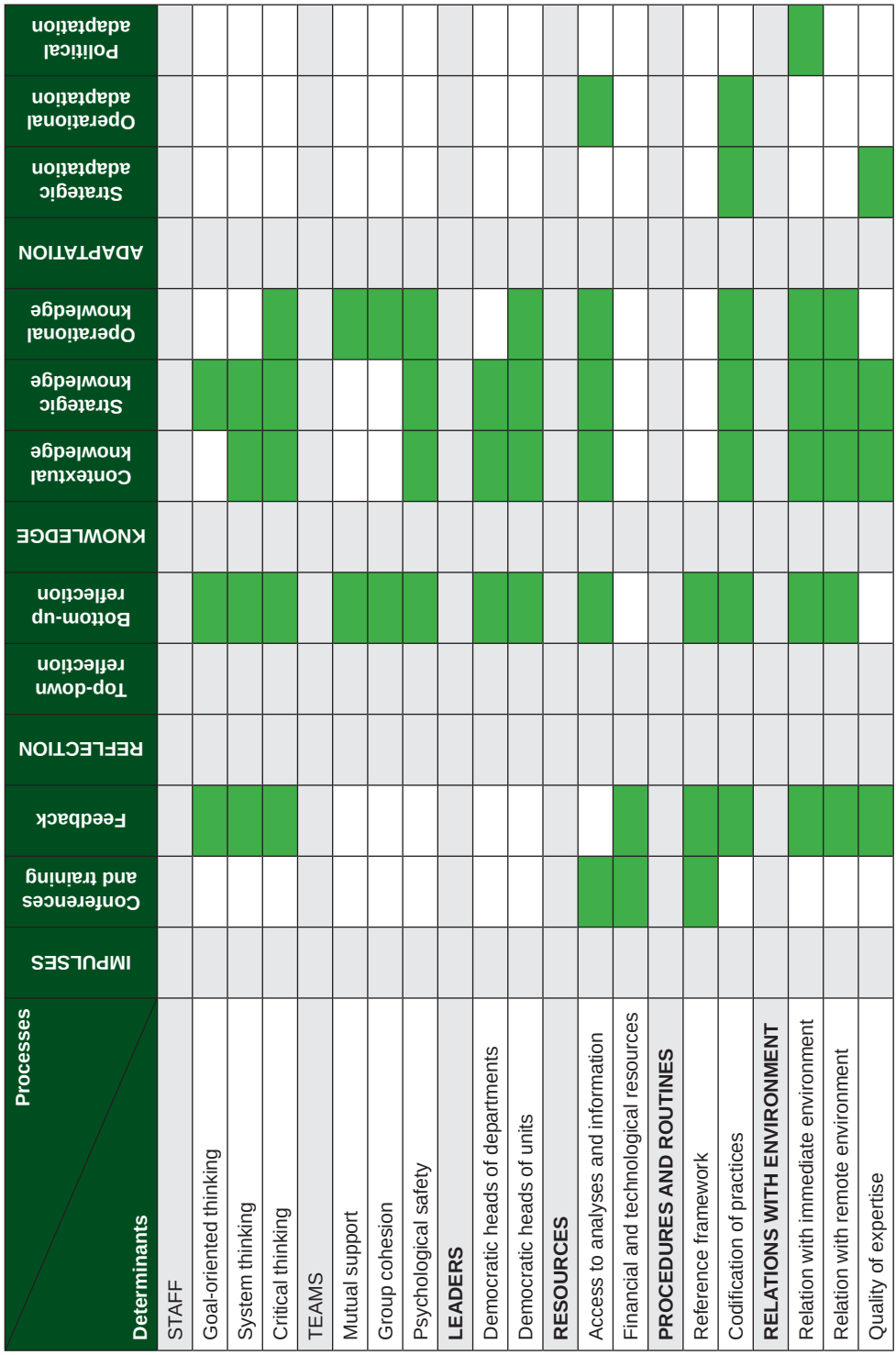

Figure 6. Relations between processes and determinants of organizational learning

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2 Searching for inspiration. Practices from twelve countries

Stanisław Mazur, Adam Płoszaj, Karol Olejniczak

In this chapter we address the question: What practices could advance learning in public organizations?

We based the search for inspirational solutions in the field of organizational learning on research conducted in twelve countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These countries are: Australia, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Japan, Canada, Norway, New Zealand, the United States of America, Switzerland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The choice was dictated by the wish to ensure representativeness, understood as a presence of different models of public administration.

The set of solutions includes:

- practices derived from systems based on rules specific to the classical model of public administration (France, Japan, Spain, Switzerland);
- examples from systems which combine classical administration with a participatory and conciliatory approach, described in the latest literature as a neo-Weberian approach (Norway, Sweden) (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011);
- practices rooted directly in market-oriented new public management (Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom); and
- solutions derived from administrative systems reconciling a market-based approach to the management of public affairs with active civic engagement in public affairs (Canada, the Netherlands, United States).

The rest of the chapter reflects this typology.

In all twelve countries, we collected data according to the same four-step research procedure. In the first step, we identified the potentially most interesting institutions, taking into account both the results of our review of sources, and the opinions and suggestions of experts from a given country cooperating with us. In the second step, we made study visits. In each country, we conducted interviews with researchers dealing with the issues of public administration (29 interviews) and with officials, i.e. people experienced in knowledge management (75 interviews). In the course of the study visits, a total of 114 interviews were conducted[11]. In the third step, we extended the analyses to additional sources of information identified by our respondents, as

[11] The interview protocol is presented in Annex 3.

well as to an own review of specialist literature. In the fourth step, we made a selection of practices which – in our opinion – are worth promoting and disseminating. This selection was dictated by the potential usefulness of practices for improvement of learning mechanisms in the Polish public administration and/or by a high degree of innovation. An important point of reference was also the learning model of government agencies developed and tested by us, as described in the previous chapter of this book.

The material we collected is intended as a source of inspiration and does not pretend to be a systematic, comparative study of knowledge management. Our aim in selecting the cases was to grasp the nature of the administrative systems from which they were gathered. We are aware that the set of identified practices includes solutions that are to some extent related to one another. However, we established that this apparent similarity often conceals an abundance of solutions shaped by the cultural context in which the solution is applied.

2.1 Examples from countries with a Weberian Model of public administration

France

The knowledge management system in the French central administration is based on solutions related to the task budget implemented particularly intensely in recent years. Other practices concern simple solutions such as a newsletter "Trajectoires: la lettre de la fonction publique" (*Trajectories: Public Service Newsletter*) or a set of good practices (*Sets of good practices in human resource management*). In particular, it is worth recommending descriptions of coaching (*Coaching in public administration – a guide*) and ways of creating and animating communities of practice (*Communities of practice*) – due to the very practical tips for improving the use of these solutions in public administration.

Below we describe two selected practices for organizational learning: *Trajectories: Public Service Newsletter* and *Coaching in public administration – a guide*.

Table 8. Trajectories: Public Service Newsletter

This *Newsletter* is issued monthly by the Ministry of Public Service.
It contains brief notes describing the latest studies and reports, new websites (or parts of existing sites), important events, etc. (usually, it consists of three or four pages).
The *Newsletter* can be downloaded from an open-access website, it can be also subscribed to– in this case, new issues are sent to the e-mail address.
The pithy and readable form allows a very quick overview of the most important events concerning the operation of public administration in France and easy access to detailed information. Essentially, the *Newsletter* serves as a guide, a list of issues or a point of access to independent texts (reports, documents, websites, articles, etc.).

Source: based on Płoszaj (2013a).

Table 9. Coaching in public administration – a guide

This *Guide* was prepared by the French Ministry of Public Service.
The *Guide* presents in a comprehensive, yet very concise way, various aspects of the use of coaching in public organizations.
It includes a review of basic issues related to the objectives, organization and delivery of coaching. Good practices, supported by valuable and communicative examples are also presented there.
A very useful part of this guide are the fragments devoted to procedural and technical issues, such as conducting public procurement procedure for services, models of contracts, performance indicators, as well as issues related to the ethical aspects of coaching in public administration.
The *Guide* provides many practical solutions. It offers advice and gives examples of public organizations which made successful use of the coaching method.
The usefulness of this guide is determined by three features: it is adapted to specific needs; it is supported by the authority of important public institutions; it is concise, with an attractive and clear graphic design.

Source: based on Płoszaj (2013a).

Japan

The practices of organizational learning used in this country provide lots of inspiration. Majority of practices are related to the management of human resources (*Job rotation of civil servants*; *Planned Development of Human Resources*, *Common rooms, Benkyo-kai Discussion Gorups*). One of unique features of Japanese administration is also a highly regulated and transparent exchange of personnel between the public and private sectors. Japanese administration has developed a number of mechanisms connected with the reflection on the effects of undertaken measures (*Evaluation*, *First-hand experience of gemba*, *Database of hiyari-hatto incidents*). Practices such as *the nemawashi and ringi decision-making process* and *Public Comment Procedure* serve to gain knowledge from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders in order to make best possible decisions.

Below we describe two particularly worthwhile practices selected from many in the field of organizational learning: *The database of hiyari-hatto incidents* and *The nemawashi and ringi decision-making process*.

Table 10. Database of hiyari-hatto incidents

The essence of *the Database of hiyari-hatto incidents* or – in the literal translation – "close-call incidents" is the regular recording and accumulation of descriptions of incidents, the consequence of which could be serious accidents or problems arising from such incidents/precedents. All employees, departments, divisions, as well as offices need to be engaged in these activities.
The practice originated in the field of occupational health and safety, and could be traced back to Heinrich's Law which argues that in a workplace, for every accident that causes a major injury, there are 29 cases of negligence causing minor injuries and 300 accidents that caused no injuries and were completely ignored.
Information about an incident is sent in the form of a report to the department responsible for the planning and implementation of public policy.

Table 10 – continued

Its task is, first of all, to register the incident in a database with all the information on its circumstances.
Secondly, it has to provide feedback in the form of guidelines for the management of risk associated with the incident or provide appropriate training.
The final step of the procedure is a supplementary report covering other cases of the incident and describing the preventive measures taken.
Collecting large amounts of data and a uniform method of registration, facilitating analysis and comparison, is crucial for the success of this practice.

Source: based on Olejniczak (2013c).

Table 11. Nemawashi and ringi decision-making process

The *ringi decision-making process* is a formal representation of the *nemawashi* practice ("laying the groundwork" or – in the literal translation – "digging around the roots of a tree, to prepare it for a transplant").
This practice refers to the process of multilateral consultations and bottom-up consensus-building, which precedes important decisions.
Its characteristic feature is empowering the lowest-ranking and usually the youngest officials to conduct the process of consultation and intensive communication between all concerned departments using a document called *ringi-sho*.
Ringi-sho is a formal proposal containing information in relation to which each interested party may submit comments and suggestions for amendments.
Acceptance of the proposal is expressed in the form of a signature or stamp on the first page of the document.
The key to the success of the practice is involving the lowest-ranking officials in the process of consultation, consensus-building and document circulation.
This practice also requires the development of a transparent documentation format, and supervision over the process of consultations with the use of this document.
The main advantage of this practice is that it supports wide-range communication and consensus-building process. As a result of this changes are implemented more efficiently and lower-ranking employees are more engaged in the decision-making and management of the organization.

Source: based on (Olejniczak, 2013c).

Spain

Within the Spanish administration, we regarded three practices in the field of organizational learning as particularly valuable. The first is related to the system of sourcing, collecting and using information through the use of information technology (*Knowledge Management 2.0*). The essence of the second of these practices is the creation of an open base of software, available for public entities interested in its use (*Andalusian software repository*). The third of these practices is related to the institutionalization of a solution involving the creation, within a large public organization, of a unit for quality and knowledge management (*Knowledge management practice in the Andalusian Employment Office*). Below we describe the *Knowledge Management 2.0 practice.*

Table 12. Knowledge Management 2.0

The *Knowledge Management 2.0* practice is an IT system, similar to the moderation of a discussion forum, thanks to which officials and the organizations cooperating with them can directly share acquired knowledge. For this purpose, a special application – a form – is used, by which employees can share information or ask questions, in other words, they can be informed and keep others informed about their work, problems encountered and their solutions. To encourage officials to share knowledge, a system of motivation in the form of a small premium granted to those who are particularly active in this regard was created. Moreover, they win the respect of their superiors, which builds their position and prestige. The practice begins with an employee reporting the need to obtain information or the desire to share own knowledge on a specific case. This signal goes to the department of knowledge management, which assesses its importance and determines a further course of action (for example, specifies the information needed to solve the problem reported by the employee). In the first step, checks are made to see if a similar issue has already been reported, which is facilitated by an extensive database of past queries and initiatives. If the answer is not in the database, an attempt is made to find a solution by: • the department of knowledge management; • employees of organizations identified as having had a similar experience; • external experts; • the agency's management (especially if it is an improvement proposal). The solution to the problem is entered into the database. In a situation where a new problem reported by an employee does not find a response through an algorithm, the interested party is informed of the search failure and is asked to attempt to solve it on his or her own, and then to submit the information obtained in the process for entry in the organizational database.

Source: based on Możdżeń (2013).

Switzerland

Public administration in Switzerland is an example of skillful synthesis of mechanisms specific to the Weberian model, the rules of the new public management, and solutions characteristic of co-management. We found four practices particularly useful. The first relates to a method of project management defined as *Hermes*. The second practice concerns the modeling of public services, the simplification of administrative procedures and the development of e-government (*SimpA*). The third of these practices is the *e-Government Development Strategy*. The fourth practice is a tool for electronic voting, serving civic activation. Below we describe the *SimpA practice.*

Table 13. SimpA practice

Modeling of administrative procedures is a practical manifestation of the use of modeling of e-government services. This tool is part of the legislative program in the Canton of Vaud, whose objective is to simplify administrative procedures.

Table 13 – continued

Modeling of administrative procedures is a method of self-evaluation of the participation level of a particular organizational unit in the field of public services. This tool is primarily focused on the relationship with the environment, that is, with citizens. However, it also refers to the institutional dimension of the administration's co-operation with other public, private and non-governmental organizations. The application of the model is supported by the thesis that**,** while the strategic aspect of designing services are commonly known, there are not many instruments which define both the vision and the methodology of their implementation in terms of the transfer of activeness and competence for greater civic interactivity. For this purpose, a matrix was created. It not only allows monitoring of the process and measuring the degree of availability of public services – and therefore their benchmarking – but is also a tool for strategic management, improving future relations with service users (citizens, business institutions, other public organizations and NGOs). Implementation of the SimpA program started in March 2010, and its achievements so far include 180 simplification proposals gathered in the so-called idea boxes, more than 50 proposals developed by an internal working group and the creation of three consultation groups with external partners – business, citizens and communes.

Source: based on Chrabąszcz (2013).

2.2 Examples from countries with a Neo-Weberian Model

Norway

In the course of its evolutionary development, the public administration in Norway developed many original practices of organizational learning (*Culture of consensual management, Flexible working conditions*). It is worth noting the practice associated with the establishment of objectives for the administration and determination of indicators for measuring them (*Missions and objectives of the administration*). Another practice, which is worth promoting, is related to the mechanisms of forming an institutional memory of public offices (*Mentoring – program of "patrons"*). The practice of a partner forum, which is a mechanism for the exchange of knowledge and experience of officials and the academic community, is particularly inspiring (*Partnerforum*). The practice described as a *Program of acquiring specialists for administration* is equally interesting. An example of the institutionalization of expert potential for the modernization of the public sector is the *Specialized Agency for Public Management*.

Below we describe two practices in the field of organizational learning, which should be given special attention: *Partnerforum* and *Program of acquiring specialists for administration.*

Table 14. Partnerforum

Partnerforum is an initiative of two higher education institutions – the University of Oslo and the Norwegian School of Business – launched in 1993, aimed at sharing knowledge and experience, and the integration of officials of ministries and central offices and academic researchers.

Initially, it involved the participation of 12 partner institutions, and currently, there are already 21 partners from public administration and the academic sector. The project is prestigious and participation in it is paid.

As a part of the *Partnerforum,* regular meetings are held. Their subject is determined by officials and oscillates, among others, around such issues as: democracy, efficiency, ethics, government policy, human resource management, competence improvement, innovation, international affairs, justice, climate policy, communication, state and local government, governance and the economy.

Meetings of the *Partnerforum* are held in the form of "breakfast meetings" (9.00-11.00 a.m., usually four times a year) and an all-day conference (half-yearly – in spring and autumn), and seminars.

The success of the initiative is based on the way it functions – it is a voluntary program and the officials participating in it have a major impact on shaping its character, the subjects of meetings and their course.

The academics conducting them focus on practical issues and a workshop model. Each quarter, assemblies of contact persons from each of the partner institutions take place, during which issues relevant to them are discussed.

The *Partnerforum* program unites different elements of the learning process. In addition, it helps to break the vertical nature of the central administration through the creation of groups of people working in different departments and ministries.

It also affects the processes of learning within the organization, because the officials participating in the meetings of the program later share the acquired knowledge and materials with office colleagues through the Intranet.

Source: based on Jakubek-Lalik (2013).

Table 15. Program of acquiring specialists for public administration

The *Program of acquiring specialists for public administration* functions, among others, in the Norwegian Agency for Public Roads.

While grappling with the problem of finding highly skilled professionals – in this case, engineers constructing roads and bridges – the said Agency decided to start a special long-term program encouraging people to connect their professional career with the public administration.

This program is based on a partnership with higher education institutions and involves, among others, financing scholarships for the most talented students, organizing paid internships with the possibility of subsequent employment, financing doctoral studies and research for already employed officials, and the incentives to undertake an academic career.

This program makes it possible to combine work in public administration with a scientific career.

The aim of this action is also to prevent the emigration of highly skilled workers for financial purposes.

Moreover, the Agency operates a Centre for Competence Development, an institution which oversees the professional development of employees.

The advantages of this practice are that high-class specialists are acquired and kept in the administration.

In addition, it serves to strengthen the scientific and didactic potential of partner higher education institutions, which cooperate with the administration training highly qualified personnel for its needs.

Source: based on Jakubek-Lalik (2013).

Sweden

Some of the practices we analyzed, drawn from the public administration in Sweden, concern extensive knowledge production mechanisms for implementing public policies (*Collective decision-making within the government*, *Research Committees*, *Substantive assessment of reports*). Other are associated with the development of administrative staff for the effective and efficient execution of public tasks (*Open access to the civil service*, *Individualization of employment conditions*, *Training focused mainly on the development of 'soft' skills and qualifications*).

Below we describe two of these practices, i.e. *Research Committees* and *Training focused mainly on development of 'soft' skills and qualifications.*

Table 16. Research committees

Research Committees within the Swedish government are established for the analysis of a particular problem requiring legislative intervention and the presentation of proposed solutions.
The Swedish government institutions use standard methods of acquiring knowledge from outside through commissioning both scientific institutions and expertise from commercial entities (e.g., advisory companies).
Research Committees are an intermediate solution between commissioning expertise outside and creating public policies based solely on own resources, i.e. experts employed in the administration.
The model of *Research Committees* makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of regulations.
The factors crucial for their success include considerable independence, adequate funding and the right composition of personnel. The essence of expert committees is the combination of different points of view.
They are usually composed of the representatives of three groups: representatives of the political division of ministries (minister, secretaries of state, political advisers); representatives of the substantive departments of ministries; representatives of academic communities, renowned experts in the field of issues dealt with by the committee.
The committees work on the basis of a mandate (terms of reference) granted by the government, which determines mainly: the public policy area covered by the interest of the committee; specific problems which should be solved by the committee; and the deadline for completion of its work.
The result is a report describing specific problems identified by the committee and presenting a proposed solution, especially through legislative intervention.
Reports by the Swedish expert committees are usually the starting point for legislative changes.

Source: based on Sześciło (2013c).

Table 17. Training focused mainly on the development of 'soft' skills and qualifications

In the Swedish government administration, in principle, recruitment is open and based on assessment of qualifications and skills. In turn, a flexible remuneration system recruitment of high-class specialists from the private sector or academic community.
People entering the Swedish government administration are already suitably qualified in the field of public policy they will be dealing with. Their preparation for work in a particular area may result from experience stemming from activities in the private sector or from scientific work. They do not need education or training in the field which they will be dealing with in the administration.

Table 17 – continued

As a result, the training policy in Swedish government institutions is focused on areas other than raising the qualifications of the officials in the fields of public policy, which they deal with every day. The following priority areas can be distinguished in the training policy of the Swedish government administration: leadership; ethical attitudes and behavior; procedures within the collective decision-making process in force in the Swedish government; operation procedures and decision-making mechanisms within the European Union; training propagating a customer-oriented model of activities; improvement of the widely understood managerial skills related to the management of teams and projects. The principal advantage of the Swedish model of training in the civil service is the increase in the managerial potential of personnel and the facilitation of the creation of leaders in administration. Therefore, the officials are specialists not only in the areas which they are dealing with. In addition, they acquire skills which enable them to manage their work better, understand its importance in the political and institutional context and understand the values and norms specific to public service.

Source: based on Sześciło (2013c).

2.3 Examples from countries with New Public Management

Australia

We observed many inspiring examples from the field of organizational learning in Australia. We found the solutions which involve building the capacity of officials in the creation of law (*Legislative preparation program*), and shaping the leaders of public programmes (*Leader preparation program)* particularly valuable. Our attention was also drawn to practices relating to the creation of conditions for tapping the potential of particularly talented people, who take up work in the public sector (*Talent Management*).

The solution aimed at gathering the views of stakeholders on the quality of functioning of public administration (*Service cards*) and the techniques of strengthening the mechanisms of organizational learning by identifying the objectives, intentions, attitudes and interests of the implementers and stakeholders of a specific public policy (*Mental models*) are also worth noticing.

Below we describe two practices of organizational learning – from among many deserving promotion – drawn from the Australian administration, i.e. *Talent management program* and *Mental models.*

Table 18. Talent management

The key role in the implementation of this program is played by the Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development, functioning in the structure of the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), directly subordinate to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet (government).

Table 18 – continued

This program consists of a year-long training course, workshops and individual training sessions addressed to mid-level officials who have the potential and aspirations for promotion to managerial positions in the administration.

The basis for classifying an officer to participate in the program is meeting the following criteria:
- very good work results;
- abilities and skills necessary to perform managerial functions (e.g., the ability to think critically, adapt to new situations, keep ethical standards);
- involvement in the creation of public policies which bring benefit to citizens;
- ability and willingness to share visions and ideas with others;
- aspirations – the desire to take up high-ranking positions in the administration.

The program includes several different tools addressed to its participants, including:
- a few days' session consisting of group work;
- group coaching;
- individual coaching;
- mentoring;
- implementation of a joint project by a group of participants;
- so-called job shadowing, that is, a simulation of situations and events which can occur in a specific position of work.

Source: based on Sześciło (2013a).

Table 19. Mental models

Mental models were key elements of efforts to strengthen the processes of organizational learning undertaken in the Ministry of Health in Australia.

These models are designed to focus the administration on the customer by mapping the objectives, intentions, attitudes and aspirations of individuals/groups for whom the public administration is operating.

The primary value of this practice is to provide an instrument to identify the objectives and motivation of the main recipients of the ministry's actions.

The use of this approach facilitates consultations and negotiations with the ministerial partners, whose needs, goals and expectations are better recognized due to these models. It also facilitates understanding and communication both between different groups of employees within the same ministry, and between its employees and external stakeholders.

The concept of *Mental models* uses a wide range of research methods, particularly surveys, interviews and focus groups.

Source: based on Sześciło (2013a).

New Zealand

The public management system in this country is rich in solutions for building the capacity of organizational learning. A significant number of these practices is related to integrated strategic management (*Multiannual plans of action*; *Performance improvement framework*). Many of the practices developed in the administration of this country refer to the management of human resources and improvement of internal communication mechanisms (*Monthly evaluation of the implementation of individual plans of professional development*, *Action Learning Sets*, *Intranet directory*

of ministry employees, *Internal communication tools*). The practice associated with the construction of leadership in public administration is particularly interesting (*Growing leaders*).

Below we describe two out of many inspiring practices in the area of organizational learning: *Performance improvement framework* and *Growing leaders.*

Table 20. Performance improvement framework

Performance improvement framework is an important part of the New Zealand experiment for directing the activities of the public administration at achieving measurable results (outputs, outcomes).
With regard to the ministries, the system of management by results is based on a specific contract concluded annually between the ministry and its political superior (i.e. the minister). This contract specifies the results (outputs, outcomes) which the ministry is expected to generate in the sphere of public policy it is responsible for. The second element of this "transaction" is the commitment of the minister to ensure funds for the ministry in the budget, in the amount allowing the achievement of planned results.
Performance improvement framework is a tool designed for the comprehensive improvement of performance of public administration institutions in New Zealand. Their objective is to facilitate the ministries, agencies and other institutions performing assessment of performance.
The subject of assessment are all the areas of the organization, including the fulfillment of its main functions towards citizens, leadership, external relations, personal development of employees, resource management and financial issues. The result of applying this method is a list of problems and areas which require improvement in a given organization.
Performance improvement framework is a tool which can be used for self-assessment of the ministry or other government agency, or for the so-called formal assessment used by external evaluators.
This tool is based on a relatively simple methodology of rating, showing the effectiveness of a given organization in each of the critical areas of its operation.
The list of specific "critical" areas subject to assessment includes, among others, the following elements: organizational culture, values and norms in the organization; leadership; vision, strategy and objectives; control and audit; organizational structure, division of roles and tasks; interaction with the minister; cooperation and partnership with external stakeholders; capacity building of the Ministry's personnel; involvement of employees; financial management.

Source: based on Sześciło (2013b).

Table 21. Growing leaders

The essence of *Growing leaders*, implemented in the Ministry of Health, is a comprehensive preparation of mid-level officials to perform managerial functions in public administration.
The program is addressed to officials who have particular predispositions to perform managerial functions in the future.
They are covered by a system of training, workshops and ongoing guidance from the unit of human resources management in the ministry.
The subject of the program is to strengthen skills related to team management and project management. It should be emphasized that it does not include training in the area of public policy which a given official is dealing with.
The main value of this practice is that it strives to ensure high-quality management personnel, which has a crucial impact on the learning mechanisms in public institutions.

Table 21 – continued

The main value of this practice is that it strives to ensure high-quality management personnel, which has a crucial impact on the learning mechanisms in public institutions. *Growing leaders* aims to strengthen the competence of the officials who achieve high results in their current work and have a predisposition for promotion to managerial positions within the organization, but who do not necessarily have the relevant skills in the area of team management and project management. A potential weakness of the program can be difficulties with selecting participants from within the organization – to what extent the units of human resource management in the ministries are able to identify the employees who have predispositions to participate in such a project.

Source: based on Sześciło (2013b).

United Kingdom

The administration of the United Kingdom provides many interesting solutions. Some of them are based on the use of feedback (*Action Learning Sets*; *360 feedback*). Others are directed at the development of leadership skills. The aim of some of these solutions is sharing knowledge in the organization and supporting the process of collective reflection (*Developmental peer-review*; *360 feedback*; *Intra-ministerial seminars – DECC School*). Further practices drawn from the British experience relate to evidence-based policy (*Database containing analyses of strategic challenges*; *Database of instruments supporting strategic thinking*; *Regulatory Impact Assessment – quality assurance mechanisms*). It is also worth noting the practice focused on strengthening operational knowledge, serving the effective organization of daily work (*Social network – Yammer*).

Below we describe two practices in the field of organizational learning; which are worth promoting: *Developmental peer-review* and *Regulatory impact assessment – quality assurance mechanisms*.

Table 22. Developmental peer-review

This practice involves direct provision of feedback on the operation of a given organization and recommendations for improvement of its functioning. The described practice is a tool for organizational change, because it is focused on the identification of areas for improvement and the development of guidelines for achieving the desired state. Details of the *Developmental peer-review* implementation process may vary depending, inter alia, on the specifics of administration in a given country or institutional environment. The following description is based on the example taken from local governments in England and Wales, where such a review system has been operating since 1999. The procedural model was developed and implemented by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). It met with great interest from local governments – annually, around 70 reviews are carried out, and almost all English local governments have undergone the review at least once (Nicolini et al., 2011).

Table 22 – continued

The process of *Developmental peer-review* should satisfy four main conditions: undergoing the review is voluntary; the reviewed organization is the owner of the process – it has a decisive impact, among others, on the selection of partners, research methods and the dissemination of results; reviewers are chosen based on experience and are properly trained – thus, they have the authority and skills to effectively provide support; research and feedback are subordinate to the priority of constructiveness and support for organizational change.

The review process consists of four main stages: process initiation and planning of the review; preparation for the review; conducting an "on-the-spot" check**;** and feedback and report.

Interested organizations apply to the institution managing the process, which selects a co-ordinator. Then, this person visits the reviewed organization in order to discuss the goals and challenges of such a process and the terms of participation.

Once the organization takes a formal decision to participate (which is associated with a fee covering the costs of the process), the coordinator meets the team of organization members responsible for the review. The aim of the meeting is to adjust the review process to the needs of the organization, and therefore, priority issues are selected, criteria for the selection of reviewers and detailed terms of the future review are established.

In the second stage, the coordinator selects members of the reviewing group (five persons and a coordinator) from the list of trained partners. Preparations for the review include, among others, informing all members of the reviewed organization about the planned review and sending documentation allowing them to prepare for the review. The review lasts a week and is carried out directly in the analyzed organizations, in relation to the diagnostic model which reflects the "ideal organization". The review methods used are participatory observation, interviews with internal and external stakeholders, and a review of documents.

Conclusions are discussed within the group, and then presented to representatives of the organization being reviewed. On the basis of the review, a written report containing conclusions and recommendations is created, the quality of which is also verified by the employees of IDeA.

The reviewed organization is required to develop a document which contains a description of measures dealing with the problems identified in the report, along with a plan for their implementation. The entire process – from the application to receipt of the final report – lasts approximately four months (Jones 2005).

Source: based on Rok (2013).

Table 23. Regulatory impact assessment – quality assurance mechanisms

The essence of this practice is to support the process of performing *Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)* – ensuring comprehensiveness, efficiency and high quality results.

The core of the practice is a diagram describing the consecutive steps in the process of verifying RIA quality, and the extension – a template of the final document of the *Regulatory Impact Assessment* and an MS Excel form, developed by experts, which facilitates calculation of the long-term effects of regulations as regards energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

The described practice is associated with evidence-based policy, since it uses a detailed cost-benefit analysis.

The need to ensure high quality RIA acquired special importance along with the advent of the global economic crisis and the return of the Conservative Party to power.

Under the banner of making savings and deregulation, Prime Minister Cameron's government decided to reduce the number of regulations and reduce their impact on the private sector (HM Government 2011).

Table 23 – continued

To this end, the following mechanisms and institutions were implemented or strengthened (HM Government in 2011; OECD 2011; RPC 2011): One in, one out: the principle conditioning the enactment of new legislation (connected with burdens for business or non-governmental organizations) with the withdrawal of an already existing regulation which imposed costs of the same size or larger; Sunsetting: each newly implemented regulation (connected with burdens for business or NGOs) will be automatically withdrawn after seven years unless under the (obligatory) evaluation of the effects of its functioning a decision is made about its maintenance during the first five years; Better Regulation Executive: an institution developing and supervising the management policy of regulations, safeguarding deregulation and the quality of enacted legislation; Better Regulation Units (BRU) operate in each ministry; Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC): an independent institution set up to verify the quality of RIA; Reducing Regulation Committee: a government sub-committee responsible for strategic oversight of the implementation of the deregulation priority; accepts draft regulations on the basis of the RIA issued by the RPC.
The process of creating and verifying the quality of RIA is consistent with the ROAMEF cycle, i.e., fits into the following logical sequence: rationale, objectives, assessment, monitoring, evaluation and feedback.
The RIA is created in parallel with the draft of each new regulation.
The author of the assessment is the team preparing a given draft, taking care of consultation with stakeholders and conducting analysis using tools supporting research procedures.
The advantage of the described practice is that it creates conditions which allow the process to be based on solid research foundations. The development of tools simplifying the performance of in-depth analyses on the impact of proposed regulations allows the use of advanced research methods by individuals without extensive expertise.

Source: based on Rok (2013).

2.4 Examples from countries with a Governance model

Canada

Organizational learning in the Canadian public administration has been institutionalized through the creation of a special knowledge management strategy and organizational units (*Chief Knowledge Officer*). In addition, administration of this country uses many practices in the area of human resource management, which aim to enhance the capacity of organizational learning (*Assessment of employees* and *Retention of knowledge of leaving employees*), evaluation of implemented projects and processes (*Summaries of completed actions*), as well as the exchange of knowledge between different parts of the organization and organizations (*Communities of practice*). A particularly interesting and inspiring idea, successfully implemented in Canada, is the *GCpedia* – Wikipedia created by and for officials.

Below we describe two of the practices in the area of organizational learning: *GCpedia* and *Summaries of completed actions.*

Table 24. GCpedia

GCpedia (Government of Canada Encyclopedia) is a web portal of a Wiki type (a type of websites where content can be created and modified in a simple and fast way, through a web browser, using a simple, intuitive language).

The creation of *GCpedia* is an initiative of the secretariat of the Treasury Board, which is one of the key institutions of central public administration in Canada.

GCpedia is created by and for the employees of the Canadian public administration; it is a solution-akin to the so-called Web 2.0, since its contents are – as mentioned – created and modified by users, as well as in cooperation with them, which is not limited in space.

This portal is an example of the use of a new approach in the public administration aimed at openness and cooperation, using technologies which are modern, but at the same time easy to use.

GCpedia has an internal nature – only employees of the Canadian public administration have access to it, both passive (viewing content) and active (modifying content).

GCpedia is used not only to create thematic entries, but also to create and share common documents, projects, reports, notes from meetings, summaries of evaluations and other publications, as well as for discussion. Therefore, it also functions as a thematic Internet forum managed by users.

The aim of the initiators of *GCpedia* was to create a platform for the easy exchange of information between employees of the Canadian administration, regardless of where they work (which is a particularly important aspect in such a big country), as well as organizational – the portal also aims to overcome division of public administration into silos (Bostelaar, 2010).

GCpedia uses the MediaWiki software – free and open, distributed free of charge by the Wikimedia Foundation.

The portal was launched in 2008 and relatively quickly gained popularity among officials. As of May 2012, *GCpedia* had over 32 thousand registered users and over 18 thousand pages, which were visited nearly 15 million times.

The biggest challenge faced by *GCpedia* is ensuring the spontaneous activity of many people (in order to fulfill its function, it must include a critical mass of articles, which, moreover, must be updated regularly) and establishing a knowledge sharing culture.

Source: based on Płoszaj (2013b).

Table 25. Summaries of completed actions

The *Summary of completed actions* is a simple and widespread practice of knowledge management. Its aim is to draw conclusions from implemented actions, projects and processes.

The essence of this approach is the analysis of completed actions in order to use the experience gained in the future.

Such initiatives form a fairly broad group of organizational practices known under various names: after-action review, learning histories, case studies, lessons learned, project postmortem, post-project reviews.

Individual approaches differ in terms of organization and emphasis, but their essence is always similar. The key objective is that a given project or process, when it is finished, is always subjected to analysis, in order to address questions such as: What was done successfully and why? What was done unsuccessfully and why? What could be done better? What should be paid attention to when implementing similar actions in the future?

Analysis of the implemented project or process is generally carried out during a meeting with the people involved in a given action.

Exchange of experience, different perspectives and discussion are essential for gaining a proper understanding of what happened, what worked and what did not.

Table 25 – continued

Reliable diagnosis is the basis for the formulation of reliable conclusions and recommendations, usually taking the form of a short document (note), which then can be used as a knowledge base in the implementation of similar actions in the future (also by other members of the organization). The main advantage of the use of summaries of completed actions is that they create the opportunity to both learn from mistakes, and identify good practices. When applying this practice, a certain formalization of the process is important. Firstly, procedures must be in place ensuring that every important action is completed with the relevant summary. Secondly, the process of evaluating and drawing conclusions should have a defined course. Thirdly, organization of the process should ensure real commitment from the appropriate people.

Source: based on Płoszaj (2013b).

The Netherlands

In the case of organizational practices used in the administration of the Netherlands, the specific mechanisms for the creation of organizational innovation (*Laboratory of innovation*), the methods for the synthesis of sources and critical reflection (*Argument maps*), and the cause and effect description of the activities of public sector entities (*Logic models)* are particularly worth noting.

Below we describe two practices, in our opinion particularly valuable, in the field of organizational learning, i.e. *Laboratory of innovation* and *Knowledge brokers.*

Table 26. Laboratory of innovation

The *Laboratory of innovation* (LI) is a practice aimed at testing innovative solutions without running the risks of core actions performed by the organization. The LI is a small interdepartmental team, consisting of people with experience in research and management. Its members are delegated to it part-time and are subordinate to the board of directors. This practice is used in two offices in the Netherlands – the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Netherlands Statistics Office (NSO). An employee who has an idea for improving the office's work through the use of new management techniques may report it to the LI. The LI team along with the originator tries to specify the idea**,** outline a plan for its implementation, and then implement it jointly. If an idea proves worthwhile, it is usually incorporated into the regular actions of the organization. What motivates employees to submit ideas is self-development and recognition among the co-workers. This practice reaches out directly to the inventiveness and knowledge of employees, and creates a safe space to take risks and test potentially useful solutions.

Source: based on Olejniczak (2013a).

Table 27. Knowledge brokers

Knowledge brokers are public institutions, which act as intermediaries between the scientific sphere and the world of public policy.

Examples of such "knowledge brokers" are: the Knowledge Institute for Mobility Policy (KIM) and the Crime and Justice Research Centre (CJRC). Both of these institutions are associated with ministries (the KIM with the Ministry of Transport, the CJRC with the Ministry of Justice), but at the same time have the status of independent units.

Brokers make syntheses and translate research results into the pragmatic language of policy makers and government administration. They provide information constituting the basis of decision-making and outline the available options, but do not participate in the decision-making process, remaining impartial.

Due to its size (20 employees), the KIM is focused on the preparation of so-called meta-analyses, mainly in the form of short reports, and even just notes, describing the current state of knowledge on a given topic in the field of transport.

These notes (prepared within a few days) are called "Knowledge at the Table"; they are characterized by precision, unambiguity and simplicity, being a valuable and fast source of information for decision-makers.

The functions of the CJRC are more complex. In addition to the creation of meta-analyses and synthesis notes, it also conducts its own research, undertakes innovative issues, and has a special meta-base linking statistics and data sources from the field of crime and the judiciary.

The employees of both institutions are mainly analysts with university degrees.

Each year, both the KIM and the CJRC conduct an opinion poll of information needs among their ministries, which results in the creation of a framework research plan. This plan provides these organizations with responsiveness and flexibility. They are in fact open to the current needs of the ministries and are able to anticipate their expectations by identifying and analyzing issues potentially important for for future public debate.

Source: based on Olejniczak (2013a).

The United States of America

The practices of organizational learning, used in the American administrative system, are an example of an adequate mix of market management mechanisms with a pragmatic approach to the performance of clerical tasks and the ethos of public service. The examples of practices derived from the business sector are solutions for the measurement of objectives and results of action (*Mission, goals, performance indicators*; *Data-driven performance reviews*, *Dashboards*, *Ranking of agencies*). In turn, examples of solutions rooted in the pragmatism of the American administration are concepts relating to the exploration of good practices (*Sessions for sharing good practices*, *Contest of project ideas*, *Employees' suggestion program*). The intention of building the potential of organizational learning by strengthening the public service ethos can be seen in the mechanisms associated with the formation of communities of practitioners, who are interested in sharing their knowledge for the better performance of public tasks (*Communities of practice*) or the creation of conditions for changes in administration by a specific system of recruitment (*Cohort recruitment*).

Below we describe two particularly interesting practices used in the American administration in the field of organizational learning: *Data-driven performance reviews* and *Communities of practice*.

Table 28. Data-driven performance reviews

The *Data-driven performance review* is a strategic tool of managing an organization. It consists of regular, structured meetings, focusing on the review of key data about the progress of the organization in achieving results. This practice is an element of a broader, result-oriented management trend (performance measurement). This practice is essential for the implementation of public policies based on evidence. It puts a discussion in order and places it on substantive tracks.
The central element of such discussions is quantitative data, but qualitative data is also used to improve the work of the American administration.
The meetings differ from the typical working meetings – they have a regular form, with an ordered structure and discussion procedure.
Participants of the meeting include management staff and employee representatives.
The analyzed indicators cover all the elements of a logical model, which forms the basis of operations in a given department, but the emphasis is placed on a products and results.
Employees preparing the meeting are expected to: collect the required data and summarize them in a transparent manner; identify, in cooperation with the management, the main issues and questions for discussion; inform participants of the meeting about the program.
The meetings are based on several key principles: participants should be aware that the data set is not perfect and complete, data is only the basis for discussion; an open atmosphere of discussion should be maintained, personal references should be avoided, even in case of unsatisfactory results, and emphasis should be placed on common discussion and solving problems.
After the meeting, the employees responsible for the *Performance Reviews* maintain continuity in the process of improving actions. In practice, this means consistent implementation of decisions taken at the meeting and recording the degree of implementation of the adopted findings.
The effectiveness of this practice is based on the continuous commitment of the management (employees must see that the collected data is actually the axis of discussion) and the efficiency of the process of identifying, collecting and preparing data (it should be important and have a transparent form of presentation).

Source: based on Olejniczak (2013b), Hatry & Davies (2011).

Table 29. Communities of practice

Communities of practice are informal social networks of people with similar goals and professional interests.
The participants of networks discuss challenges, and share knowledge, best practices, successful solutions and ideas on how to solve problems which are the subject of meetings of a given community.
Several communities of practice operate in the America Government Accountability Office (GAO) (e.g., for contacts with the media, for new research methods).
All *Communities of practice* are horizontal and connect people from different parts and levels of the organization.
Meetings of these communities are held during working hours, and their form and frequency depend on the participants. For example, the “HR” Community of practice meets every month during a lunch break.
The Group includes between 20 and 30 people working in different departments and at different levels of the GAO. These people are either employed in human resource departments or the issue of human capital is one of the fields of research and control pursued by them in other organizations.

Table 29 – continued

Participants of a session share information on what they do at work; from time to time, they invite external guests (experts, academics specializing in human resources).
The work of this group is coordinated by two people.
Ideas for the subjects of meetings are proposed by all members.
Communities of practice can be also implemented for an agency and its stakeholders. Department of Labor (DOL), in the division dealing with grants for training (given to state administrations), the *Community of practice* takes the form of an internal Internet platform connecting various stakeholders of the program.
An internal forum is the place for discussions, suggesting problems and ideas by grant recipients (in this case, individual state institutions). The DOL administers the website, places materials on it and monitors the intensity of discussion threads. The main topics are then discussed at the monthly meetings with grant recipients, and the emerging ideas also give rise to the modification of procedures.
Practice shows that three factors are crucial for the success of the *Communities of practice*. The first is the involvement of the group participants. This in turn results from the attractiveness of the subject addressed. The second factor are active coordinators of the group. The third factor is the support of superiors.

Source: based on Olejniczak (2013b).

2.5 Conclusions from the international comparison

The differentiated solutions in the field of organizational learning used by public administrations in the twelve countries covered by our study prompt us to make comparisons and formulate general regularities, as well as present emerging trends.

Organizational learning is becoming increasingly important

Organizational learning has always been present in public administration. In recent decades, however, it has acquired special importance and its nature has changed significantly. The reason is the growing comprehensiveness of public affairs and the related need to seek more effective ways to manage them. The search is accompanied by two phenomena occurring in parallel. The first one is associated with attempts to limit public spending. The second phenomenon is associated with the increase in social expectations towards the administration, in particular with regard to the quality of public services it provides. The way to reconcile what is economically possible with what is socially expected is seen, among others, in strengthening the capacity of organizational learning in public administration. This trend, focusing on the relationship between the potential learning capacity of public organizations and the quality of public policy, is becoming increasingly evident in the field of organizational learning. Many researchers raise questions about the sources and mechanisms of organizational learning and how the acquired knowledge can improve the quality of decision-making processes, and contribute to solving public problems more effectively.

Factors encouraging public administration to improve organizational learning

The level of professionalization in public administration is visible in the practices of organizational learning. On the one hand, these practices should lead to the elimination of malfunctioning, and on the other – raise the administration's ability to fulfill its function towards the social and market spheres. Administration lacking this ability fails to creatively adapt to transformations (taking place in its environment or internally) and instead of solving socio-economic problems it becomes a problem itself. The factors which particularly induce the state and its administration to use practices of organizational learning include:

- the need to rationalize spending and balance budgets in a way which respects the acquired rights and privileges of citizens and social groups;
- the need for a greater openness of the public administration to the inclusion of stakeholders in the management of public affairs;
- an increase in social expectations towards the standards of public administration;
- increasing pressure on broadening the scope of public services, improving their accessibility and increasing their quality;
- the "overloading and uncontrollability" of the state, forcing the search for alternative methods of implementing its tasks;
- dynamic socio-economic changes, requiring from the state a capacity for anticipatory response, critical reflection and subject adjustment of its objectives and actions;
- the erosion of its omnipotent hierarchical power, forcing the need to interact with different social and economic actors;
- the growing popularity of "public policies based on evidence", which cannot be carried out without the capacity of public administration for organizational learning;
- the development of academic communities, conducting research on organizational learning in the public sector and promoting a culture conducive to learning.

Three orders of organizational learning

Organizational learning occurs in a variety of administrative orders. The administrative order is related to the Weberian model of bureaucracy. The market order is associated with a managerial model of the administration, while co-management is related to the participatory formula of organizing the state. These orders can coexist within a single administrative system, although the scope and intensity of their presence in a given system are different (e.g., in one, the bureaucratic order may dominate, in another – the market order).

In the bureaucratic order, an office responds only to a small extent to pressures from its environment. While there are procedural mechanisms for collecting opinions on the office, they are rarely the subject of analysis leading to the modification of the rules of its operation. An important source of organizational learning are the results of controls and audits which generally concentrate on procedural and formal issues. Organizational learning is focused on improving knowledge of legal regulations and management procedures. In most cases, it takes the form of studies (mainly legal or

administrative) and specialized courses. The learning process usually occurs at the individual level. The bureaucratic order has little scope for introducing organizational innovation; there is no tolerance of risk. This order is dominated by so-called single-loop learning, which is characteristic of organizations focused on carrying out routine and repetitive tasks. Actors who use this type of approach often operate in a routine and schematic way, although this kind of behavior should not be dismissed entirely.

In the market order, signals received from the office's environment are an important impulse which leads to reflection and modification of the rules and mechanisms used to govern public affairs. This approach promotes a culture of innovation and experimentation. Learning, of particularly aimed at economizing actions and improving the quality of public services, becomes the obligation of public officials. Sources of improving professional competence include both positively verified experience of other offices and public organizations, and solutions used in the private sector. Organizational learning takes the form of so-called double-loop learning, which involves changing ways of thinking about the objectives of the organization and significantly modifying the rules and mechanisms of its operation. Here, it is important not only to correct the irregularities that occur, but above all to eliminate their sources.

Organizational learning in the co-management order is seen as a process of social learning, with the participation of actors with different formal status. Sources of knowledge include intensive collection of information, data, expert opinions, research findings, statistics, stakeholder opinions, consultations and the public policy assessment results. An important feature of the administration's functioning in accordance to this logic is networking. The functionally specialized networks not only permit the exchange of information and data for constructing and implementing public policies, but primarily lead to the production of knowledge, promotion of innovative solutions and dissemination of positively verified management instruments. In the co-management order, the learning processes correspond to the logic of so-called meta-learning. This involves not only correcting the organization's operational and strategic rules and mechanisms of operation, but primarily the ability of self-reflection and auto-modification of the rules and mechanisms of learning (learning to learn).

Absent concepts

The organizational practice in the public administrations of the twelve countries studied very rarely refers to the concepts of knowledge management, organizational learning and learning organizations. These terms appear rarely – or even not at all – in official documents, reports, or – more broadly – in the discourse on public administration. However, the Canadian administration is a departure from this general tendency. Among the twelve OECD countries analyzed, it is only in Canada that the concepts of knowledge management and organizational learning are present in the practice of the central public administration. This is reflected both in the presence of various types of document, especially regarding knowledge management strategy, and in the creation of jobs or organizational units which are to coordinate the processes of organizational learning. These features testify to the advanced level

of knowledge management in the Canadian administration. In the remaining eleven countries, the concepts of knowledge management, organizational learning and learning organizations are not a major point of reference for the operation of the central administration.

Other concepts and terms are used in the context of the modernization of administration. The idea of new public management is particularly widespread, but there are also other ideas, such as innovation in public management, accountability, performance management and e-government. The lack of references to knowledge management and learning in public organizations does not mean that there are no measures implemented in this regard. On the contrary, such initiatives are proving to be very widespread. Nor does the lack of references to the theoretical concepts of organizational learning mean that these actions are taken in a chaotic, ill-considered way. In the countries observed, they are embedded in other discourses and concepts of modernization. On the one hand, this shows that the concepts of "knowledge management" and "organizational learning" do not need to be used in order to implement these processes. On the other hand, this indicates that actions which can be interpreted as practices of knowledge management and organizational learning usually cooperate very well with other concepts of modernization of public administration.

Typology of organizational learning practices in public administration

On the basis of the set of practices of organizational learning, collected as a part of the study, we can venture to create a typology. This not only helps to order them, but can also provide a basis for identifying the state and development of organizational learning practices in public administration.

The typology developed refers to the model of organizational learning (the MUS model), developed within the Learning Ministries project (see the previous chapter of this book). This model shows the mechanism of organizational learning consisting of two blocks: learning processes occurring in the organization, and factors influencing these processes. The learning processes consist of: stimuli, reflection, knowledge and adaptation, while the factors influencing the learning processes (learning determinants) are: personnel, teams, leaders, resources, procedures and practices, relations with the environment. Using this logic, the first key to grouping international practices is to determine which factor (learning determinant) a given practice refers to. With this approach, we obtain six groups of practices related to:

- personnel – practices aimed at attracting highly qualified personnel and developing the knowledge, competencies and skills of employees;
- teams – practices aimed at creating effective relationships between employees within the same organizational units, cooperation, trust and communication;
- leaders (leadership styles) – supporting the competencies and actions of the organization's management (including middle management);
- resources (infrastructure) – consisting primarily in the creation and improvement of solutions using ICT;
- procedures and practices, including repetitive practices, structured routines and developed approaches or sequences of actions;

- relations with the environment of a given institution – both with the closer environment (contacts between teams and organizational units within one organization), and the more distant environment (stakeholders of a given policy, expert communities, other organizations, public opinion). These categories are not exclusive. Individual practice can influence, and usually influences, several fields. We can rather talk about intensity (how strongly a given practice is associated with a particular field, e.g., does it affect primarily the personnel or teams), and not exclusiveness (see Table 30).

The comparison of the eighty-eight practices identified during study visits with the six groups of learning determinants gives rise to several observations worth presenting. Firstly, practices concerning procedures and practices clearly dominate. However, within this group, there is a relatively sparse subset of system solutions, horizontal procedures of operation covering the entire administration or its main departments (e.g., the requirement for missions and objectives in the American, Australian, Norwegian, and French task budgets**;** multiannual plans of action in New Zealand**;** public comment and evaluation requirements in Japan**;** Swiss e-government development strategies and the HERMES management system). Procedures/practices applied at the level of individual departments or teams and solutions with a relatively low level of formalization – approaches developed for solving problems, addressing issues or routine cooperation – are very widespread. Examples include the communities of practice (Canada, France, the United States of America, Japan) and various structured summarizing discussions (the United States of America, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the Netherlands).

Secondly, there is a large group of practices concerning relations with the environment. On the one hand, this can involve the construction of a network of relations either within given institutions (e.g., DECC School seminars, job rotation) or between departments for the entire administration (social networks – the Canadian GCpedia and the British Yammer), on the other – creating relations with stakeholders of public policies and using their knowledge (knowledge brokers in the Netherlands, the Norwegian partnerforum or the Japanese visitations of officials).

Thirdly, many practices are concentrated around the activity of teams. They often overlap the issue of procedures and practices. In this category, there are discussion groups, collections of good practices, discussion sessions and staff meetings conducted using formalized guidelines.

Finally, many practices using ICT also refer to teams, relations with the environment and procedures. This supports the observation that the times when technology was considered as a sufficient condition for the development of organizational learning in knowledge management have passed (Nicolay, 2002, p. 65). The approach to knowledge management based on the principle "buy a database, and people will begin using it" was virtually absent in our observations. The accumulated list of practices shows, however, that the IT infrastructure is a tool supporting communication processes and the formation of social capital in organizations, and provides tools to support procedures and practices in a way which is unobtrusive and easily accessible to users. As shown by the Spanish example – there is a clear evolution towards

Table 30. Typology of action fields of organizational learning practices

Name of practice	Country	Staff	Teams	Leaders	Resources	Procedures & practices	Relations with the environment
Introductory day for new employees of public administration	AU	x					
Service cards	AU					x	x
Mental models	AU					x	x
Legislative preparation program	AU			x		x	
Leader training program	AU			x			
Talent management program	AU	x		x			
Management through the mission and objectives	AU					x	
Task budget (LOLF)	FR					x	
Coaching in public administration – guide	FR	x		x		x	
Newsletter – *Trajectoires: la lettre de la fonction publique*	FR				x		
Creation and animation of communities of practice	FR		x			x	x
Collections of good practices in human resource management	FR	x	x		x	x	
Gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process	ES					x	
Andalusian software repository	ES				x		x
Knowledge management practice in the Andalusian Employment Office	ES					x	
Knowledge management system in Andalucia Emprende (KM 1.0)	ES				x	x	
Knowledge management system in Andalucia Emprende (KM 2.0)	ES		x		x	x	
Organizational learning audit	NL					x	x

Table 30 – continued

Name of practice	Country	Staff	Teams	Leaders	Resources	Procedures & practices	Relations with the environment
Knowledge brokers	NL						x
Selection criteria of offers for the implementation of research	NL					x	
Laboratory of innovation	NL					x	
Argument maps	NL					x	
Logic models	NL					x	x
Post project review	NL					x	
Database of incidents (*Hyari-hatto*)	JP				x	x	
Evaluation in the cycle of public actions	JP					x	
Discussion groups (*benkyo-kai*)	JP		x			x	
Public comment	JP				x	x	x
Mapping strategic areas	JP					x	x
Cross-sectoral exchange of human resources	JP	x					x
Planned development of human resources	JP	x	x				
Job rotation of civil servants	JP	x					x
The *obeya* system	JP		x		x		
System of *ringi* and *nemawashi*	JP					x	
Gemba visits	JP					x	x
Chief Knowledge Officer	CA			x		x	

Table 30 – continued

Name of practice	Country	Staff	Teams	Leaders	Resources	Procedures & practices	Relations with the environment
GCpedia	CA		x		x		x
Assessment of employees	CA		x			x	
Summary of completed actions	CA					x	
Retention of knowledge of leaving employees	CA	x	x			x	
Knowledge management strategy	CA					x	
Communities of practice	CA		x			x	x
Flexible working conditions	NO	x					
Culture of consensual management	NO		x				
Mentoring – program of "patrons"	NO	x	x			x	
Mission and objectives of administration	NO					x	
Partnerforum	NO	x					x
Program of acquiring specialists for administration	NO	x					
Specialized agency for public management	NO	x	x	x	x	x	x
Monthly evaluation of the implementation of individual professional development plans	NZ					x	
Intranet directory of ministry employees	NZ		x		x	x	
Internal communication tools	NZ		x		x		
Action Learning Sets	NZ		x			x	
Growing Leaders	NZ			x			

Table 30 – continued

Name of practice	Country	Staff	Teams	Leaders	Resources	Procedures & practices	Relations with the environment
Performance Improvement Framework	NZ					x	
Multiannual plans of action (*Statement of Intent*)	NZ			x		x	
Bases, people, taxonomies	US				x		
Shared-goal exercise	US		x				
Contest of project ideas	US					x	
Mission, goals, performance indicators	US					x	
Employee suggestion program	US					x	
Data-driven performance reviews	US					x	
Ranking of agencies	US				x	x	
After Action Reviews – AAR	US		x			x	
Recommendations from evaluation	US					x	
Cohort recruitment	US	x					
Sessions of good practice	US		x			x	
Town hall meetings	US		x	x		x	
Dashboards	USA				x	x	
Communities of practice	USA		x			x	x
The *smart-voting* mechanisms	CH				x		x
Modeling of administrative procedures – SimpA	CH				x		x

Table 30 – continued

Name of practice	Country	Staff	Teams	Leaders	Resources	Procedures & practices	Relations with the environment
Project management system – HERMES	CH					x	
Swiss e-government development strategy	CH					x	
Individualization of employment conditions	SE	x					
Collective decision-making within the government	SE					x	
Research Committees	SE					x	
Substantive assessment of reports	SE					x	
Open access to the civil service	SE	x					
Training focused on development of 'soft' skills and qualifications	SE	x					
Database of instruments supporting strategic thinking – HSC Toolkit	UK				x	x	
Database containing the analyses of strategic challenges – Sigma Scan	UK				x		
Office social network – Yammer	UK		x		x		x
Action Learning Sets	UK			x		x	
360 feedback	UK			x			
Regulatory Impact Assessment	UK				x	x	
Program of inter-ministerial seminars (*DECC School*)	UK	x				x	x
Developmental peer-review	UK					x	x

Source: Mazur, Olejniczak & Płoszaj (2013).

Knowledge Management 2.0. These new solutions are flexible, interactive and level out organizational structures.

Popularizing the practices of organizational learning

The practices of organizational learning, applied to an increasing extent in different administrative systems, gradually become alike. Even if concepts drawn directly from a dictionary of organizational learning are not used to describe them, they belong to the field of organizational change. A kind of convergence takes place here. In many cases, this is due to the internationalized nature of reforms of public management mechanisms. Their international and often global nature of interaction promotes, to a greater or lesser extent, directly or indirectly, the mechanisms of organizational learning in public administration. The intensity and scope of using specific organizational practices can be demonstrates the transformation occurring in public administration in the field of organizational learning. Currently, introduced practices are characterized, first and foremost, by their orientation to build the capacity of public organizations for self-reflection, responsiveness, anticipatory action, creativity and innovation embedded in the logic of social networks, consisting of partners with diverse objectives and formal statuses. In other words, this type of organizational learning, associated with the co-management order, seems to indicate the course of change in most administrative systems. The practices of organizational learning are used also by the Polish public administration to an increasing extent. Such initiatives rarely bear the labels used in organizational learning. However, their nature and the objectives underlying their introduction clearly indicate that they belong to this sphere of organizational improvement. It is worth highlighting that, in many cases, these practices are identical to those introduced in the administrative systems of countries perceived as the vanguard of public management reforms. This is proven by the fact that the practices found in the Polish central administration are convergent with those described in this book. These are, for example, "communities of practice", experiments with different types of training, coaching**,** and as well as more or less complex solutions in the field of ICT.

Factors conducive to organizational learning

The primary factor creating favorable conditions for organizational learning in the studied central administrations is developed strategic planning, understood as setting objectives, identifying ways of achieving them and indicators to assess the degree of their implementation. This approach to the organization of public administration work is essential**,** both at the highest level, i.e. the general strategy, for example, in the form of a task budget, and at the level of organizational units (which often have their own, specific, more technical and operational objectives), and even at the level of individual officials. The multi-level system of objectives in an organization requires adequate vertical coordination in order for the actions of employees to realize their objectives, and for the effects of these actions to influence the realization of the objectives of individual organizational units and organizations, eventually contributing to the objectives of the administration as a whole.

An important element of vertical integration is not only an elaborate plan of the whole strategic structure, but also the awareness of individual members of an organization of how their actions affect the realization of the organization's objectives. Awareness of one's place in the whole picture reduces the risk of feeling that the work is alienated (which seems to be particularly important in the case of complex administrative structures, where a direct and tangible result of work is rarely seen). But not only. Self-awareness involves reflection, which is one of the elements of organizational learning.

Another aspect of strategic planning, conducive to organizational learning, is the fact that it forms the basis for gathering information on the effects of organizational operations. Good strategic planning assumes the creation of a system of indicators to measure implemented actions. The collection, analysis and interpretation of indicators can create exceptionally good stimuli for organizational learning. In the light of the experience of the twelve studied administrations, it seems that strategic planning is of great importance (although, it may be neither a necessary condition nor a sufficient one).

Another factor contributing to effective learning in organizations is the presence of a leader, who through actions as well as his or her own attitude – in this case, the symbolic function of leadership is also important – initiates, stimulates, supports and maintains the processes of organizational learning. Highlighting the key role of a leader may seem trivial at first (a good leader is the condition for effective functioning of the organization in general). However, the significance of this factor cannot be underestimated, although the presence alone of such a person is not sufficient. He or she should want and be able to adequately manage the processes of organizational learning. Therefore, it is important to what extent a leader is aware of the importance and capabilities of organizational learning.

A particularly important aspect is the attitude of leaders towards experimentation (testing new solutions), which are an important component of organizational learning. Experiment involves risk, i.e. the possibility of failure. Permission to take risks (within certain limits) is an important skill of an effective leader. Only a person such as this can create a climate conducive to organizational learning by treating failures as potentially valuable experience (learning from mistakes), and not only an opportunity to punish those at fault.

Knowledge management is often seen through the prism of applying new technologies, especially ICT. However, as demonstrated by the extensive literature on the subject, their use cannot be equated with knowledge management and organizational learning (these are far broader concepts). Nevertheless, at present, it is difficult to imagine an effective public administration which does not use ICT. Technology forms the infrastructure for knowledge management and facilitates many processes of organizational learning (collecting and processing data, monitoring indicators, obtaining feedback, exchanging information within the organization and between organizations, contacts with stakeholders, etc.). In this case the key question is not whether to use technologies, but how to use them.

Finally, the last factor that fundamentally determines organizational learning of administrations in the analyzed countries is the importance of the evolutionary nature of practices in this area. Effective measures are generally achieved through incremental, gradual changes, step by step adjustments to new circumstances and challenges. The significance of this factor stems from the fact that learning is a process in which knowledge is acquired gradually, and new skills and competencies are based on earlier ones. A practical conclusion can be drawn on this basis. It is not enough to implement a given tool of organizational learning once only. Each solution should be subject to constant analysis of its effectiveness and, if necessary, to appropriate modifications (including resignation from a failed idea). It can be said that the processes supporting learning should also themselves be the subject of organizational learning.

There is no transfer without adaptation

We have analyzed the organizational practices used in different countries, often with different systems of public administration and significant cultural differences. However, in this diversity a number of common threads, repeated solutions and concepts can be observed. It even seems that the list of basic practices of organizational learning is quite universal, and diversity manifests itself in the specific applications of the same ideas. An example might be diversity of the ways of implementing the "Summary of completed actions" practice (see "Summary of completed actions" in the section on Canada; "Post project review" in the section on the Netherlands; "After Action Reviews" in the section on the USA). This demonstrates the need to adapt the concept of actions to the conditions of a given organization, but also to the conditions of a more general nature, such as the political system, administrative structure and organizational culture, and even the characteristics of a given society. The effective transfer of good practices between countries and organizations can never rely on the transfer of the solution, "one to one" in isolation from the above-mentioned conditions. It is always necessary to adapt to the conditions and needs of a given organization (see Minniberger, Plaschnik, Schmidt & Płoszaj, 2012). This is mainly due to the fact that each organization is – to some extent – unique. Thus, good practices should be seen as an inspiration rather than a ready-made recipe for success. In other words: "more important than the pursuit of illusory solutions proven in the world is to maintain a sustainable ability to find the right ones" (Galar, 2009, p. 304).

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3 Moving towards accountability for learning

Karol Olejniczak, Kathryn Newcomer

Managers in public organizations operate and learn in an organizational context shaped by public expectations, management paradigms and democratic values. One of the fundamental issues in democratic governments has been how to ensure accountability for public sector operations and expenditures. In the 1980s a concept borrowed from the business world was added to deliberations about accountability – "performance." Employing tools to ensure that public leaders and managers are accountable for performance is also a mantra of the public management reforms (New Public Management, New Public Governance, Neo-Weberian approach) (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). The open question is how the processes for holding leaders and managers accountable for performance affect organizational learning within public agencies. In the last chapter of this book we examine how demands placed on public agencies for accountability and performance shape organizational learning in the public sector.

In the first part of the chapter we give a brief overview of accountability and performance, and we discuss potential tensions between the exercise of performance accountability and organizational learning. In the following three sections of the chapter we propose changes that could help governments more intentionally promote organizational learning. We offer mechanisms to build learning friendly environments within public organizations, while enhancing performance and fulfilling public expectations for accountability.

3.1 Accountability and performance

Public calls to improve governmental performance in the U.S. and Europe are affected by economic crises and subsequent pressures for budget cuts as well as new trends in public management. Accountability for the efficient use of precious public funds, as well as for performance of the public delivery networks is typically a key focus of politicians and the public. As scholars writing about accountability amidst current challenges and demands for empirical data on performance point out, the fundamental question for public leaders and managers is: for what and to whom are they accountable? (For example, see Dubnick & Fredericksen 2011; Behn, 2006; Ebrahim, 2005).

Public leaders and managers have traditionally been called to account for adherence with procedural issues, and narrowly defined effectiveness and efficiency criteria. Fear of failure in terms of violation of rules and regulations, and/or inefficiencies frequently results in risk avoidance, and low tolerance for trial (testing), and especially for errors. Risk-averse leaders and managers are unlikely to provide room for flexibility and experimentation – the necessary condition for innovation. Since western governments began requiring measurement of performance along with many New Public Management (NPM) reforms, there has been a tension between demonstrating accountability for performance and learning from performance data (Newcomer, 1997; Fredericksen & Fredericksen, 2006; Van Dooren, 2011). Civil servants work in an environment in which they must balance spending time and resources to report on performance versus allocating time and resources to support organizational learning. Accountability efforts typically win, thus constraining constructive searches for new solutions. Let us then look closely at the nature of accountability in public sector and the potential spots for collision with organizational learning.

Accountability for What?

Accountability is an often-cited value, or virtue, in democracies that has been the subject of many scholars. Within the public sector, accountability typically is viewed as relational, or social in nature. As Dubnick and Fredericksen note, accountability has "two major characteristics: (1) it is a social relationship between at least two parties (2) in which at least one party to the relationship perceives a demand or expectation for account giving between the two" (Dubnick & Fredericksen, 2011, p. 6).

There are many distinctions that scholars have made in terms of when and how the account giving occurs. In terms of timing, for example, account giving may take place after the occurrence of an accountable matter or event – "post-factum," or before actions by the account giving individuals or groups act – "pre-factum" (Dubnick & Fredericksen, 2011, pp. 7-8). Alnoor Ebrahim provides a useful schema in which he categorizes accountability mechanisms by: how they operate (tools or processes); the direction the accountability runs (upward, downward or internally); the focus, or for what the account givers give account (finances, governance, performance or mission); and the types of inducements given (internal or external) (Ebrahim, 2010, p. 28). In government, traditionally, account giving has been directed upward for finances and externally to overseeing bodies.

In his review of the inspector general community in the U.S. federal government, Paul Light focused scholarly attention on the idea of giving account for performance, in addition to finances (1993). And Robert Behn articulated further the distinction between accountability for "the proper use of public funds and fair treatment of citizens, or the how of government," versus for the what of government – or performance, and he elaborated on the tradeoffs account takers make between the two types of accountability (Behn, 2001, pp. 8-11).

The notion of accountability for performance has become viewed as a basic tenant in the New Public Management agenda, although the notion of how performance should be assessed has varied (Behn, 2001; Dubnick, 2005; Mayne, 2007; Dubnick

& Fredericksen, 2011). John Mayne offers a thoughtful critique of how performance accountability is typically understood (2007). He notes that many scholars, including himself, suggest that accountability should move "away from a process of shaming and blaming toward one of learning and improving from past experiences" (Mayne, 2007, p. 66). However, he also notes that moving away from blaming to learning is perhaps the biggest challenge due to the way that politicians and the media tend to respond to errors made within government agencies.

Reflecting the focus of the New Public Management, the Auditor General of Canada (2002, p. 5) offers a useful articulation of performance accountability as: "Accountability is a relationship based on obligations to demonstrate, review, and take responsibility for performance, both the results achieved in light of agreed expectations, and the means used." The Canadian definition of performance accountability is useful since it focuses on both the means for achieving results and the results, and it leaves room for learning.

In practice, accountability is always related to the decision of what to measure and what criteria should be used for assessment. Some of the most common criteria are presented in Table 31.

Table 31. Common criteria used for assessing accountability in the public sector

Criterion	Scope of assessment
Legality	The extent to which activities are performed in line with rules and regulations.
Transparency	The extent to which processes are clear, understandable and transparent to public scrutiny.
Efficiency	The ratio of products or services delivered to costs, and the extent to which costs expended to obtain the products and services were reasonable.
Effectiveness	The extent to which initially planned objectives and targets have been achieved.
Utility	The extent to which the real effects of the intervention correspond to the society's needs and socio-economic issues to be solved.
Sustainability	The ability of effects of the interventions to last beyond the actual financing of the activities.

The criteria employed to assess accountability depend to a large extent on the public management model adopted in the particular government. For bureaucratic organizations, for example, the main criteria are legality, transparency and adherence with narrow process milestone, e.g., delivery in line with schedule. The New Public Management agenda focuses on effectiveness (reaching planned objectives), financial efficiency and utility measured directly by client satisfaction and other externally imposed criteria regarding effectiveness.

Measuring Performance and Learning?

The likelihood that organizational learning (by public managers) occurs within performance measurement and reporting processes inside government has been

questioned for a variety of reasons (Newcomer, 1997; Ebrahim, 2005, 2010; Moynihan, 2008; Moynihan & Landuyt 2009; Radin, 2006, 2009; Mayne, 2007; Dubnick & Fredericksen, 2011). Some critics have pointed out that simply deciding what to measure is subjective; managers are likely to devote limited resources to collecting data for external account-takers, and such data are unlikely to be useful to inform internal learning (Newcomer, 1997; Moynihan, 2008). Some have stressed that the compliance mentality that tends to accompany adherence to performance reporting requirements is inconsistent with support of organizational learning (Ebrahim, 2005, 2010; Newcomer & Redburn, 2009). Relatedly, Beryl Radin argues that the focus on performance measurement and reporting has created tensions and misfits between expectations and practices that have produced pernicious consequences, rendering the chances of organizational learning quite low (Radin, 2006, 2009). And empirical studies of performance measurement and reporting have certainly documented many negative consequences, and little evidence of organizational learning (Heinrich, 1999, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2012; Heinrich & Marschke, 2010; Moynihan, 2010, 2012).

Both theory and practice suggest that there are likely to be tensions between expectations and behaviors associated with holding managers accountable for performance versus focusing on and rewarding learning. We summarize likely tensions in Table 32. Basic tensions arise surrounding the collection and reporting of data on program performance because making the data available to the public – which includes political bodies overseeing performance – simply raises the stakes for making errors or for not reaching specified performance targets. Perceptions of the higher stakes are likely to push executives and managers to reduce risks by not collecting data, or not risking innovative strategies.

When performance data are to be made public, leaders and managers may be incentivized to collect data on processes or outputs that are easier and safer to measure. As a result, the assessment criteria are likely to be: legality, effectiveness understood as being in line with a schedule and financial efficiency, which often – especially in Poland and new democracies – is understood as employing the cheapest solutions. The criterions that are more difficult to measure, such as policy or program results (including assessment of side-effects) and sustainability (assessing longer-term benefits and losses), are more likely to be ignored.

Finally, due to the risk-averse culture common in public agencies, as discussed earlier, holding public leaders and managers accountable for measured performance is likely to reinforce tendencies to rely on incremental adaptation of existing strategies and processes (March, 1991).

Given the fairly ubiquitous acceptance of the value of holding public managers accountable for performance across the world, how might performance measurement and reporting be leveraged to produce real organizational learning? The Organizational Learning and Learning Organization research has been focused mainly on the private sector, and therefore, does not explore the public sector accountability challenges. And the performance accountability literature focuses more on mechanisms for streamlining performance management procedures, and less on leveraging potential organizational learning. Thus, in both literatures there is little insight on how to

manage expectations and performance while encouraging both learning and performance accountability in the public sector.

Table 32. Contrasting expectations and behaviors associated with performance accountability and organizational learning

	Performance accountability	Organizational Learning
Driving logic	Follow procedures and fulfill the plans without errors	Experiment, use trial and error processes
Scope of performance	Focus on process and clearly measurable products, here and now	Envision desired outcomes and analyze trends in performance over time
Information basis	Routine information, structured data, monitoring and indicators	Nonroutine information, opinions, feedback from diversified sources
Typical behavior	Exploitation – repeat what already works	Exploration – search for new solutions

Building upon recent research in behavioral public policies, cognitive psychology, and realist evaluation, and the findings from our research, we offer several strategies to address the challenge of balancing organizational learning and performance accountability in public agencies. In the next section we present strategies to facilitate organizational learning that focus on:

1. Changing the way we understand public interventions;
2. Redefining failure and creating space for experimentation; and
3. Refocusing accountability to promote learning.

3.2 Changing the way we understand public interventions

Public interventions are intended to shape the economy and society in desirable ways (Shafir, 2013, p. 1). They are responses of public decision-makers to arising socio-economic problems and challenges. Interventions can take the form of projects delivering services, programs, policies or legal regulations (Ledbury et al., 2006, p. 4; Tucker, 2005).

The traditional and prevalent approach to the analysis of public interventions is based on rational choice theory. It assumes that people have an unchanging set of preferences, they are guided by personal utility, and make insightful, well-calculated decisions based on prior careful planning (Amadae, 2007). During an intervention's design, implementation and evaluation, logic models are likely used to support this traditional approach. Logic models, or logical frameworks, are graphic illustration of causal, linear chains that link resources to activities, and to the products or services that are provided, and then to desired results, or impact.

Recent empirical findings from cognitive psychology research suggest that the rational choice assumptions do not match reality (Kahneman, 2011). Actual human

behaviors are more complex results of heuristics and rules of thumb, and they may lead to systematic errors and biases. Relatedly, recent behavioral economics studies on the impact of rules on behaviors suggest that choices can be constructed rather than elicited by social situations, regardless of socio-economic and institutional contexts (Sunstein, 2000, pp. 1-10).

The findings from cognitive psychology and behavioral economics hold important implications for the study of economics, law and public policy. In the case of economics, findings from behavioral economics have challenged assumptions on decision-making, forcing the economics discipline to rethink economic models, and have increased the use of experimental approaches (Rabin, 1998). In the discipline of law, findings from cognitive psychology have raised the question, "How does law actually affect people and what do people do in response to regulations?" (Sunstein, 2000, p. 1). Recent research has placed scientific explanation and prediction of human behavior at the heart of effective law (Ulen, 2012, p. 19).

A somewhat parallel development has been taking place in the field of public program evaluation.[12] Evaluators search for causal mechanisms that operate to produce desired performance of interventions in specific context (the so-called realist approach, see: Henry et al. 1998; and Pawson, 2013). This way of describing interventions is heavily influenced by recent sociological research (Demeulenaere, 2011; Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). Recently, scholars have drawn from these different disciplines to suggest that their combined contributions be drawn under the umbrella term of "behavioral public policies" (Shafir, 2013).

Since the traditional approach to policy analysis (based on rational choice) does not offer a reliable explanation of the behavioral factors involve in implementing public interventions, we offer a revised approach that draws upon promising developments in "behavioral public policies." As Pawson sharply puts it "interventions do not work in and of themselves; rather it is their subjects' choice (i.e. target groups) that makes for success or failure" (2013, p. 133). Thus, an effective intervention must depend on an in-depth understanding of human behavior, since behaviors are usually the drivers of change mechanisms (Shafir, 2013, p. 1).

We suggest that public interventions (project, programs, policies and regulations) be viewed as levers that are designed to activate certain change mechanisms that in turn should lead to desired effects (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010; Cartright, 2013). They can be described in the form of "theory in use" – an assumption about the causal relationship between implemented activities (IF…), the behavioral response they trigger in a target group (THEN…) and the final, expected effect – a socioeconomic change (AND THEN…). Implementation of a public program involves testing the "theory" in a certain context and time. This approach has already become a cornerstone of evaluation practice of projects and programs (known as "Theory Driven Evaluation" (Chen, 2004; Coryn et al., 2011; Donaldson, 2007; Leeuw, 2003; Leeuw and Vaessen, 2009).

[12] Evaluation is applied research grounded in sociology, economics, and organizational behavior studies, focused on assessing the value and worth of public interventions.

On the practical side, this approach requires modification of traditional logic models used for describing public interventions. We suggest that logic models include additional elements to clarify the sequence of a change mechanism. The proposed, more detailed approach is presented in Figure 7. Definitions of each concept are discussed in Tables 33 and 34.

Table 33. Elements of the logic model

Element	Description and Examples
Detailed premises	Premises are the reasons and evidences upon which key decision-makers and stakeholders rely when they build the justification for the intervention. Examples include facts, results of former research and studies, information, earlier experiences, opinions (including assessments of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), or even convictions held such as that "the death penalty reduces crime."
Key issue	Grounded in detailed premises, a key issue is an opportunity, problem or need that is to be addressed by the proposed intervention, such as decreasing unemployment.
Inputs	Inputs are any resources that are required in order to implement a planned intervention, including financial resources, personnel, technical means, and office space.
Actions	Actions are concrete activities, interactions, and procedures undertaken by personnel involved in the implementation of an intervention, including the way the everyday work is organized, stages of implementation, and activities that are undertaken to reach milestones of the plan. *Examples: For a local project designed to decrease unemployment by increasing the competencies of unemployed people, the actions would likely include designing the course content, organizing training sessions, and providing lecturers, books, IT support, and evaluation of participants' progress.*
Outputs	Outputs are the direct products of the activities created and delivered to the targeted beneficiaries of the intervention. Outputs could come in different forms: (1) things (IT systems, books, infrastructure buildings), (2) services (e.g. trainings), (3) information (campaigns, networking), (4) disincentives, bans and punishments, (5) incentives, and (6) choice architecture – the way choices are framed (they are subtle environment cues that guide people towards actions and decisions which are deemed to be in their longer-term best interest).[13] *Examples: For an integrated program of promoting public transportation in a metropolitan area, outputs could include: new buses (things), new bus tops and bus lanes in downtown areas (infrastructure), information campaigns about new available connections, increases in parking fees for private cars downtown (disincentives for traveling by private transportation), promotion prices for monthly or quarterly tickets for public transport (incentives), and establishing bikes-for-use networks in downtown areas to encourage cycling (choice architecture).*

[13] For more about choice architecture see: Thaler & Sunstein, 2009; Jones et al., 2013.

Table 33 – continued

Element	Description and Examples
Reaction of intervention's subjects	The way in which targeted beneficiaries react to the interventions matter, and include immediate changes in their thinking, reasoning and behaviors affected by the intervention. *Examples: For the training of unemployed, reactions may include changes in their knowledge and skills, and later changes in their behaviors such as active searches for job. For the program on public transportation, important reactions would include changes in public transportation usage (more people using public transport than cars to commute).*
Heuristics and biases	Heuristics and biases occur in judgment and decision-making of humans. Studies on psychology and human cognition identify a vast number of patterns in our bounded-rationality. Some of the most common and significant biases for public policies include: inertia and procrastination (unfamiliarity with an issue lead people to postpone decisions and as a result have a strong bias of the status quo), valuing losses more heavily than gains, anchoring bias (inclination to judge things relative to some arbitrary reference point), social influences (individual behavior influenced by the perceived behavior of other people), etc. These heuristics and biases strongly determine the real reaction of the target group to a given intervention, thus they have to be taken into account when designing the intervention.[14] *Example: The UK government aimed at increasing punctuality of tax payments. As a mode of intervention, they mailed letter to taxpayers explaining consequences of early payments. Two heuristics were taken into account when designing the intervention: (1) the letter pointed out the high % of neighbors who had already paid (re-enforcing the human tendency to follow social pressure), and (2) how large the loss of money would be if the payment was delayed (relying on the human tendency to be more incentivized by concrete losses than by promised gains). The choice architecture constructed by the proper wording of the letter proved to be highly effective in convincing taxpayers to pay on time* (Behavioural Insights Team, 2012).
Context	Contextual factors are aspects of the environment of the targeted beneficiaries that lay beyond the scope of the intervention's activities but that could have an impact on the intervention's performance. *Examples: In the case of training of the unemployed, contextual factors would include an overall situation at the local labor market, and the ability of local employers to offer jobs to the newly trained labor force.*
Effects	Effects are the real, observed changes that resulted due to the activities of intervention. This term also includes side-effects understood as impact that occurred but it was not foreseen when an intervention was designed and launched. Effects may be fairly immediate, or may be longer-term and structural change, than lasts after activities of the intervention end, and its financing has been completed. *For the project of training of the unemployed the results would be: (1) number of trained participants who found and kept job for at least one year. (2) no substitution effect on the local labor market (that is, trained unemployed did not push out already employed personnel).*

[14] For more about heuristics and biases see: Kahneman, 2011; Sunstein, 2011.

Table 34. Elements of the logic models – theories

Element	Description and examples
Underlying Theories	Underlying theories include the knowledge, experiences and convictions decision-makers hold about the factors and mechanisms that could produce the desired change, and are used to design interventions. *Example: The conviction of decision-makers that regional growth is by nature spatially uneven, and that it tend to accumulate in urban centers, thus cities are engines of growth. This conviction may lead decision-makers to conclude that a strategy to boost development in their region that is likely to be effective is to implement public interventions targeted at strengthening metropolitan functions of the strongest cities in their region.*
Theory of Implementation	The theory of implementation involves a set of technical activities undertaken in a specified sequence and in accordance with the underlying theory. *Example: In order to implement a project designed to improve public transportation in a city, the theory of implementation could include a sequence of: analysis of current passenger flows and routes, adjustments of timetables, tender for buying additional busses, public tender for an IT system for coordination of busses and trams, and tests of the system.*
Theory of Change	The theory of change is the set of assumptions about the causal mechanisms that would be triggered in a target group or area by the intervention that would eventually result in the desired change. Example*: The assumptions underlying a program supporting development of a metropolitan public transportation system could be: IF we support an integrated public transport system that covers an entire metropolitan area and facilitates commuting, THEN people from neighboring areas would have easier access to the city labor market and they would be convinced to commute to the metropolis, THAT in turn would increase flows between the city and its region and THEN the metropolis would experience economic growth.*

Source: based on Olejniczak, 2012, p. 45.

The more detailed framework presented here could be used for design, management and evaluation of all types of public interventions, including projects, programs, policies and legal regulations. It offers three important advantages in relation to learning and accountability over more traditional logic models. First, it extends attention from implementation processes to focusing on causal mechanisms that must be triggered to produce changes in behaviors. The quality and completeness of implementation present just one of many explanatory factors affecting achievement of desired outcomes. Other factors are accuracy of the mechanism prediction, the appropriate choice of instruments for guiding desired behavioral reactions, and contextual factors outside of the control of the implementers.

Second, this framework allows us to learn about change mechanisms and effects, plus it helps us to examine the dynamics between actions and context. And third, it allows us to analyze interventions in a comprehensive and systemic way, that is, as a causal chain performed in a specific context, under certain circumstances.

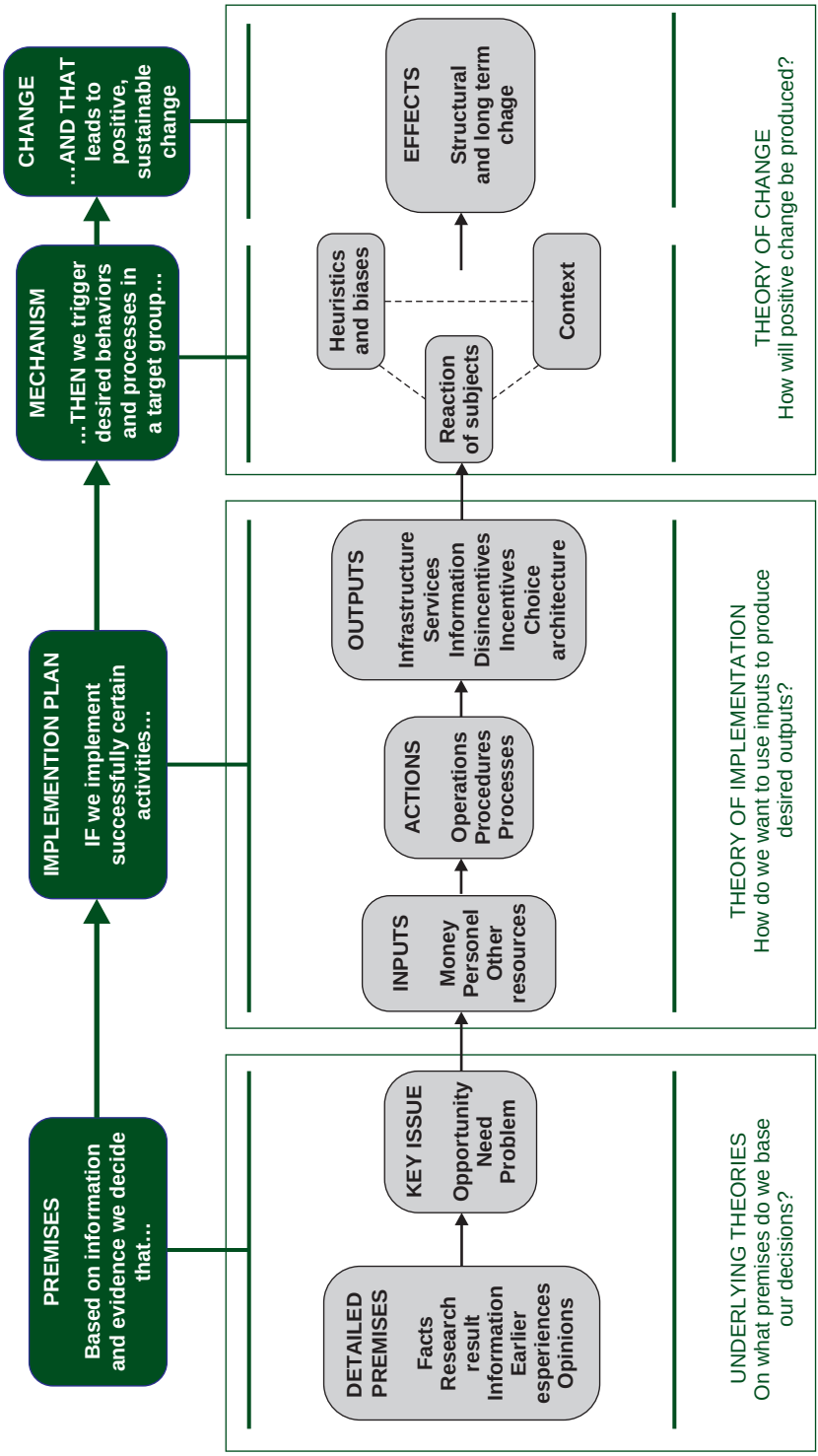

Figure 7. A more realistic logic model for planning and evaluating public interventions

Source: Based on K.Olejniczak (2014)

3.3 Redefining failure and creating space for experimentation

In the previous section we portrayed interventions as testing out theories in specific contexts. This perspective embraces the entire policy process as "a trial and error, problem solving process" (Bardach, 2006, p. 350). Assuming this position requires us to examine on how we define errors and failures in public organizations.

Traditionally, as we discussed in first section of this chapter, public sector overseers and leaders have a low tolerance for risk and errors. Any departure from an initially set plan is typically interpreted as a failure. This perspective is likely to work for routine, simple activities; however, in the case of complex interventions, this narrow view hampers learning and innovation, and discourages risk-taking.

We propose a more balanced and nuanced approach that allows for a spectrum of errors with different consequences. We support the call from Barrados and Mayne (2003) to develop an error-embracing culture in public sector. Amy Edmondson has provided a tool that holds promise for helping revise views about error in companies (2011). We adapted her model to public sector agencies. It is presented in Figure 8. It delineates errors to distinguish between more blameworthy and more praiseworthy errors.

Applying Edmondson's conceptualization of error to the public sector has five important consequences. First, failures that are result of conscious deviances from rules and regulations, or incompetence, should be addressed immediately.

Second, failures that result from inadequate procedures should be investigated. The power of using checklists should not be underestimated. Checklists can codify institutional memory and learning from earlier experiences. If designed well and tested, checklists are very useful tools for dealing even with complex processes and situations (see Gawande, 2011). However, checklists should not become static rules for use by accountability officials. They should be under continuous inquiry and open to adjustments. Over time checklists should be reassessed and time should be devoted to ascertaining their continued relevance in a changing world. In other words, checklists should evolve to codify what has been learned through their application over time.

Third, some failures result due to the limited predictability and the complexity of the socio-economics processes that we try to regulate in the public sector. Sometimes failures result from inconsistent decisions or processes, and they may accumulate over time. That type of failure cannot be corrected easily without prior inquiry into the causal mechanisms that are producing emerging problems.

Fourth, not all errors should be treated as bad. Some failures are inevitable results of experimentation, and provide valuable feedback in the learning cycle. Examining such "failures" allows us to better understand causal mechanisms, and to identify factors that affect achievement of desired outcomes. That type of failure should not be viewed as blameworthy, as long as we learn from the error and avoid repeating it in the future.

Finally, in the public sector there is a need for exploratory testing. Such inquiry is praiseworthy as long as it has been undertaken cautiously, in a limited scale and followed by an inquiry that allows learning from the experience. In fact, all pilot

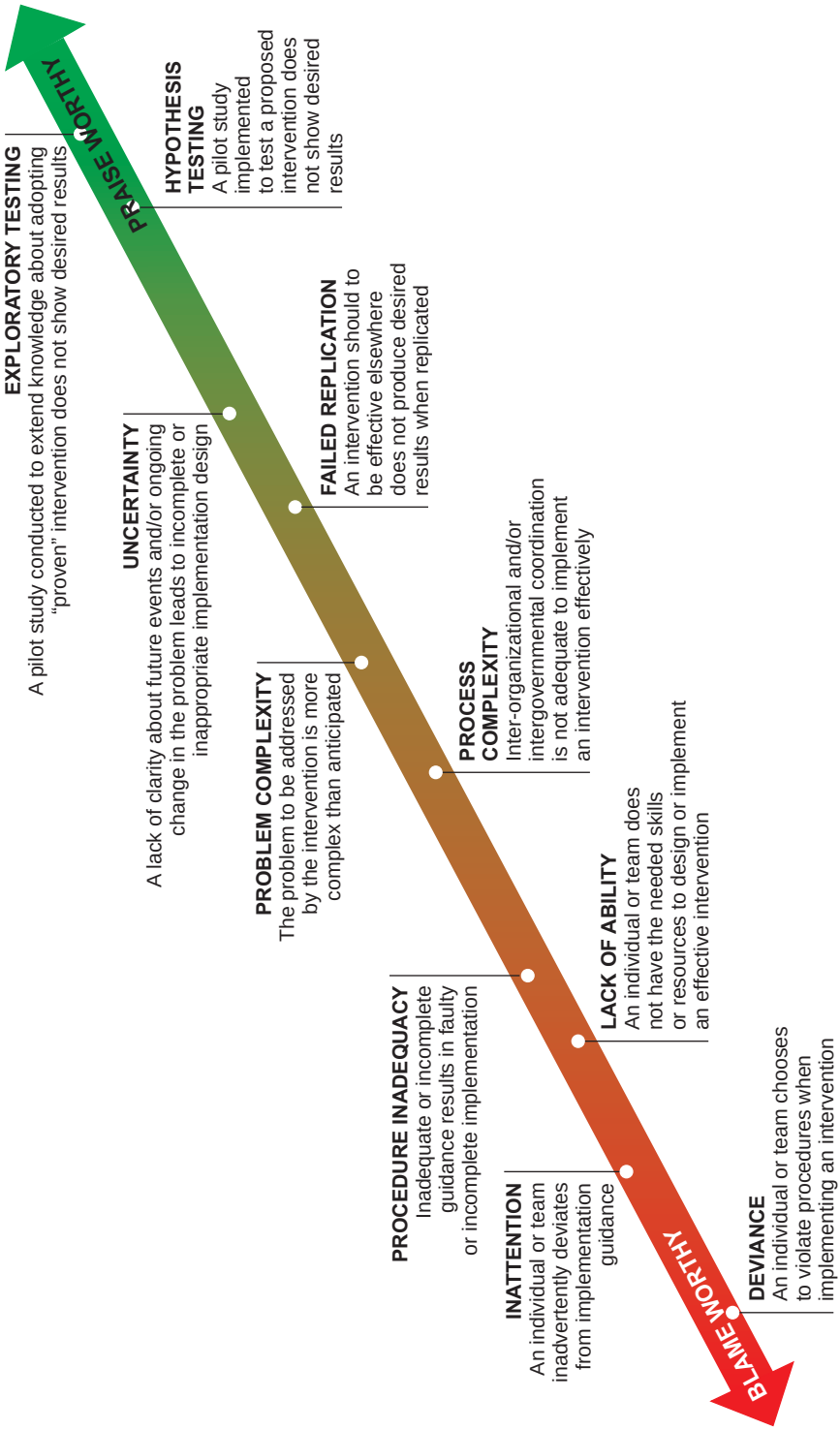

Figure 8. A spectrum of reasons for errors in implementing public sector interventions

Source: based on Edmondson, 2011.

projects and small scale testing interventions provide inexpensive ways to avoid big scale mistakes and policy failures. Small-scale pilots are not so invasive or costly, and they do not destabilize the working of systems. Learning from small investments demonstrates the benefits of creating space for experimentation in public organizations. The practices presented in chapter 2 of this book provide good examples of creating blame-free space for experimentation (e.g., the laboratory of innovation in The Netherlands – see Table 26)). The goal of creating safe space for experimentation leads us to consider accountability criteria that could encourage account experimentation in public agencies

3.4 Refocusing accountability to promote learning

Within the public sector the criteria that are typically employed by overseers to assess accountability constrain innovative thinking and behavior. Therefore, our third postulate for strengthening learning cultures in public agencies focuses on the exercise of accountability for public action. The criteria used for accountability assessment need to be revised. We propose that public leaders and managers be held accountable for understanding, learning and for implementing lessons learned. We suggest following revisions of accountability criteria.

First, the fundamental criterion for judging the value of public interventions should be the utility of their consequences. A global assessment of all planned and side effects produced by an intervention is needed. The reference point for judging effects should be initial socio-economic conditions – the problem or challenge that was the rationale for taking public action.

Judging the effectiveness of interventions is more challenging than simply making pre- and post- comparisons. Some of the results produced by interventions may take time to emerge, others may be misplaced in space, i.e., side effects observable among groups or communities other than those targeted. Also some effects of public interventions may not be easily measured and clearly attributed to the intervention activities. Acknowledging measurement limitations, this criterion moves attention from process issues to the bigger picture – the net, systemic balance of costs and benefits for intended beneficiaries as well as for other groups influenced by the intervention.

Furthermore, the utility of a public intervention should not be judged solely, or even primarily by the efficiency criterion – understood, in a simplistic way as choosing the cheapest option available. Over reliance on the efficiency criteria can paralyze activities in countries under transition, and in the end lead to more public expenditures. Cheapest options in public tenders are usually available at the expense of quality; in the long run, low quality services or infrastructure costs citizens much more than an initial price. The total costs and effects are only visible with a time delay, and thus are more difficult or allusive to account for upfront.

Focusing more systematically on assessing all of an intervention's effects – not simply initial costs of effects – could also improve public perceptions of civil servants, and citizen trust in government. Personnel of ministries and public organizations

would not be viewed as bureaucrats who deal with applicants (the Bureaucracy model), nor managers who deliver services to clients (the New Public Management paradigm), but as civil servants who cooperate with citizens in order to address complex problems facing society in a transparent fashion (the New Public Service model, see Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011).

As a second criterion for the exercise of accountability we propose "learning progress," that is, holding public leaders and managers accountable for learning. Assessment of learning could focus on at least three processes:

- actively looking for solutions for observed problems – that includes comparing current interventions with similar interventions to search for ways for improvement, and networking and searching for advice from organizations and managers with similar projects and programmes;
- intentionally exploring the context during implementation, and accumulating information to help underperformance or over performance, and to further understanding of root problems, and not just symptoms; and
- implementing lessons learned, and consciously avoiding making the same mistakes, and discontinuing programs or policies that are found to be ineffective or to be producing more costly side effects.

To put it simply, we suggest holding accountable public leaders and managers, including political decision-makers, not for single failures in experiments, but for learning and implementing new knowledge. We suggest embracing the value and need for learning across the policy cycle, from problem definition to evaluation of policy impact. That logic has been already implemented in some of the audit activities in The Netherlands and Canada (as described in earlier publications of MUS project).

Moving toward holding public agents accountable for learning substantially changes discussions about the efficacy of public interventions. This perspective moves public dialogue away from focusing on *ad hoc* reactions for events and single errors interpreted as failures. Instead, the focus is on constructive, incremental building of understanding of patterns, structural processes and underlying mechanisms. As a result, deepening understanding and devising more appropriate policy tools to the problems and challenges becomes praiseworthy.

How can public leaders and managers move away from the exercise of traditional performance accountability to a learning-oriented accountability regime? An analysis of what behaviors are punished and what behaviors are rewarded in any organizational culture will surface the important underlying values. Identifying what behaviors are desired, and then consistently rewarding those behaviors signals to all the "right" ways to do business. Organizational leaders and overseers can intentionally reward learning and redefine what will be praiseworthy and what will be blameworthy through the use of consistent and visible incentives. A list of practices that can promote learning in this fashion appears in Table 35.

Table 35. Transition from traditional performance accountability to accountability for learning

Traditional Performance Accountability		Accountability for Learning
Punishing for:	→	Rewarding for:
Unsuccessful innovations and/or pilots	→	Analyzing and improving tools and procedures
Unmet targets (especially at the level of process and products)	→	Explaining why targets were not met and understanding mechanism of change
Failure to show progress	→	Identifying factors underlying trends
Procedural violations	→	Re-envisioning new solutions and incentives
Collaboration/sharing data with potentially competing external actors	→	Cross-organizational networking and communities of practices
Failure to achieve narrow milestones in progress	→	Appreciation and conceptualization of complex tasks and environment
Immediate actions that appear in error	→	Learning over time through trial and error

3.5 Conclusions

Given the challenges facing governments across the world to address socio-economic problems that are complex and dynamic in nature, and rising expectations for evidence-based public management, this study analyzed how public organizations are currently employing smart strategies to turn data into meaningful knowledge. We addressed three pressing questions:

1. How does learning work in our public organizations?
2. What promising practices can we implement to advance learning in public organizations?
3. What changes in public management are required to combine learning with growing demands of performance and accountability?

In chapter one of this book, we have provided readers with a scientifically validated framework for systematic measurement and monitoring of organizational learning in public agencies. In chapter two we explored promising practices currently in use in the public administrations of twelve OECD countries that appear to advance organizational learning. To identify avenues in need of change, in this last chapter, we have highlighted ways in which traditional approaches to policy analysis and evaluation have been incomplete, and how the traditional exercise of accountability in the public sector has failed to promote organizational learning.

We suggest that to address complex problems effectively, and to consistently promote trial and error learning, we need to re-envision how public sector interventions actually work. Building upon recent research in behavioral public policies, cognitive psychology, and realist evaluation, we offer a more nuanced framework for analyzing public interventions the can be used to improve planning both policy implementation and evaluation. We offer suggestions on how incentive systems in organizational cultures in public agencies need to be revised in order to facilitate forward-looking

public service-oriented performance. In light of the heavy focus on punishing errors in existing public sector accountability regimes, we suggest that to reward learning, we must rethink which errors are blameworthy, and which are praiseworthy.

Moving into the uncertain future, in order to effectively address complex problems, above all, our public leaders need to reward learning, and build trust among employees and between leadership and employees. Consistent with previous literature, intentionally building incentive systems to reward learning within organizations and a given cultural context is key (Örtenblad, 2013). Organizational leaders are in the position to create and sustain learning in their organizations. They need the support of political overseers who design and operate the accountability regime by specifying the criteria for success, and the sorts of errors that are blameworthy. Political will, as well as wise and effective leadership, is needed to improve the ways we analyze the increasingly complex problems that governments address, design appropriately complex and adaptive interventions to address the problems, and consistently reward innovative thinking and learning within government.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Survey items that measure Mechanism of Organizational Learning

The validity of the survey has been empirically confirmed in two studies of Polish ministries in 2011 and 2014 (for more information see: Chapter one of this book and project web page - www.mus.edu.pl).

All questions in the survey (with an exception of three items) are designed as closed statements to be answered by interviewees on the five point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Questions in the survey relate to two typical levels of public organization structures. Departments of ministries are entities with twenty to fifty personnel. Units are basic thematic or operational teams of five to ten people within the departments.

Questions in this Annex are grouped in line with the elements of the Organizational Learning Framework (i.e. learning processes and determinants of learning – compare Figure 5). This order does not reflect the structure of the web survey.

The web survey that was administered took approximately 20 minutes to complete. The template for on-line survey can be found at the webpage of MUS project (www.mus.edu.pl).

Processes of organizational learning
IMPULSES – CONFERENCES AND TRAINING
In my unit, the employees regularly attend conferences associated with the field of their work.
In my unit, the employees regularly attend trainings associated with the field of their work.
IMPULSES – FEEDBACK
In my department, we often order expert opinions/ analyses/ research.
In my department, we often use studies/ analyses to assess the work of the department.
In my department, we often use studies/ analyses to assess the field of operation of our department.
In my department, we often receive opinions regarding outcomes of our work from internal stakeholders (other departments, subordinate and superordinate institutions, controlling institutions etc.).

In my department, we often receive opinions regarding outcomes of our work from external stakeholders (media, citizens, enterprises and chambers of commerce, non-governmental organizations, etc.).
BOTTOM-UP REFLECTION
In my unit, we often wonder about and discuss the results of our work.
In my unit, we compare our work to the work of other units departments, other ministries or public institutions of other countries.
In my unit, after completion of a given task/project, we analyze what was done well and what could have been done better.
In my unit, usually, when a problem emerges, we analyze the causes together and wonder how to solve it.
When critical findings from internal sources emerge (e.g. audits/inspections/controls), concerning the field of operation of our unit, we attempt to reach a solution to the problem together.
When critical findings from internal sources emerge (e.g. audits/inspections/controls), concerning the field of operation of our unit, we analyze them together to avoid the same problems in the future.
TOP-DOWN REFLECTION
If the effects of work of our department are assessed negatively, leaders of our department adjust the objectives and the scope of action.
In my unit, results of analyses, studies and audits concerning our department are used for discussions with the department management about the adjustment of tasks of our department.
In my department, discussions on issues that are of significance for the department are conducted regularly.
In my department, when a change or a novelty is introduced, after some time from implementation of this new solution, discussion is initiated on its usability and functioning.
When critical findings from external sources emerge (e.g. analyses/studies/audits/inspections/ media), concerning the field of operation of our department, we attempt to reach a solution to the problem together.
When critical findings from external sources emerge (e.g. analyses/studies/audits/ inspections/ media), concerning the field of operation of our department, we analyze them together to avoid the same problems in the future.
CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE
In my unit, staff know how political changes will impact their work.
In my unit, staff have sufficient knowledge of the environment of the ministry and legal regulations that exert impact on their work.
In my unit, staff have sufficient knowledge of the trends and directions of changes in the area dealt with by our department.
STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE
What is the main objective of activities carried out by your department? [open-ended question].
In my unit, staff know how their work affects the work of others (is correlated with work of others).
In my unit, staff know how their work contributes to achievement of objectives of the department.
In my unit, staff have the sufficient knowledge of the results expected from the entire department.
In my unit, staff are aware of the effects of their work.

OPERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE
In my unit, staff usually find a way to complete the tasks assigned to them.
In my unit, staff have the sufficient know-how to perform given tasks.
In my unit, staff have the sufficient technical knowledge (e.g. computer skills, software use).
In my unit, staff have the sufficient knowledge on working as a team smoothly.
OPERATIONAL ADAPTATION
In my unit, after each inspection, a valid set of recommendations is developed, taking into account the inspection results.
In my unit, as a result of analyses/studies/audits/inspections, the modes of dealing with specific issues usually change.
In my unit, as a result of analyses/studies/audits/inspections, the assignement for individual employees usually change.
In my unit, as a result of analyses/studies/audits/inspections, the scope of duties of individual employees usually changes.
STRATEGIC ADAPTATION
In my unit, sometimes, the research results received change our perception of the field of our work.
In my unit, sometimes, the research results received change directions of our department activities.
POLITICAL ADAPTATION
As a result of political changes (replacement of the political leadership of the ministry after the election), within the framework of the department, we adjust our objectives on our own to adapt quickly to the program of the new political leaders of the ministry.
In my unit, the direction of our activity usually changes as a result of changes that take place at the ministerial level (HR, political, organizational).

DETERMINANTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING
STAFF – GOAL-ORIENTED THINKING
What is the main objective of activities carried out by your department?
In my unit, we use an 'input-actions-expected outcomes' framework while working on our key tasks.
I am aware of the results of my department's activities.
STAFF – SYSTEM THINKING
I am aware how the context of the department influences the effectiveness of our work.
STAFF – CRITICAL THINKING
I make evidence-based decision, after comparing different arguments and premises.
In my work, I often refer to particular data, sources of information, results of studies and analyses, etc.
Upon receiving a document prepared by someone else (e.g. a decision or a study), I examine arguments and premises used by the author of this document.
TEAMS – MUTUAL SUPPORT
If I encounter a problem, I ask colleagues from my unit for advice.

TEAMS – GROUPS COHESION
In my unit, people itch in to help each other out.
In my unit, people tend to get along with each other.
In my unit, people take personal interest in one another.
In my unit, there is a lot of “team spirit” among our staff.
I feel like I have a lot in common with the people I know in my unit.
TEAMS – PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY
In my unit, if you make a mistake, it is often held against you.
In my unit, staff are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
In my unit, people sometimes reject others for being different.
In my unit, it is safe to take a risk.
In my unit, it is difficult to ask others for help.
In my unit, no one would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
In my unit, when working with others, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.
LEADERS – HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS
Head of my department inspires group discussions and implements solutions adopted by the group.
Head of my department encourages employees to put forward their ideas.
Head of my department encourages that employees are well informed about the objectives of the team and its role in the organization.
Head of my department acts as a source of new ideas, inspires new thoughts, and one can learn a lot from him/her.
Head of my department is guided only by his/her own opinion, he/she gives instructions, but does not justify them.
Head of my department treats everyone equally – based on rules and regulations.
Head of my department does not interfere in the actions of individial employees, but only merges the results of their work.
Head of my department refers to regulations, plans and decisions of his/her superiors.
Head of my department discourages searching for better methods of work and putting forward one's own ideas.
Head of my department shows his/her commanding position more often than it is necessary.
Head of my department cares only about the task, regardless of the cost that it incurs for employees undertaking this task.
LEADERS – HEADS OF UNITS
Head of my unit inspires group discussions and implements solutions adopted by the group.
Head of my unit encourages employees to put forward their ideas.
Head of my unit ensures that employees are well informed about the objectives of the team and its role in the organization.
Head of my unit acts as a source of new ideas, inspires new thoughts, and one can learn a lot from him/her.
Head of my unit is guided only by his/her own opinion, he/she gives instructions, but does not justify them.

Head of my unit treats everyone equally – based on rules and regulations.
Head of my unit does not interfere in the actions of individial employees, but only merges the results of their work.
Head of my unit refers to regulations, plans and decisions of his/her superiors.
Head of my unit discourages searching for better methods of work and putting forward one's own ideas.
Head of my unit shows his/her commanding position more often than it is necessary.
Head of my unit cares only about the task, regardless of the cost that it incurs for employees undertaking this task.
RESOURCES – ACCESS TO ANALYSES AND INFORMATION
Availability of analyses and information needed for my work is high.
Databases and materials, that I use most often in my everyday work:
• Are available in the intranet open for all employees
• Are located on a shared disk or in one place in the department
• I had to gather them on my own, and I keep them on my drive (or printed, at my desk).
RESOURCES – FINANCIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES
In my work, I frequently use the training opportunities.
In my department, we use specialized software (apart from MS Office) that facilitates our work.
PROCEDURES AND ROUTINES – REFERENCE FRAMEWORK
Performance budgeting system provides us with clear information on the objectives of our department and progress in achieving them.
System of control provides us with useful information on the effectivenes of activities carried out by our department.
In my department, we have our own set of indicators that provides us with knowledge on the effects of our work.
PROCEDURES AND ROUTINES – CODIFICATION OF PRACTICES
In my unit, mode of action that has proved effective is then registered as an internal procedure, instruction or described in a note.
In my department, we have internal procedures that facilitate the execution of tasks in a correct, efficient and effective way.
In my department, we have a habit of regular meetings where we share our experiences.
RELATIONS WITH ENVIRONMENT – RELATION WITH REMOTE ENVIRONMENT
My unit cooperates with:
• Consultancies, research companies
• Scientific institutions (universities, research institutes)
• Non-governmental organizations
• Independent experts
• Other ministries
• Subordinate institutions
• EU institutions
• International organizations

• Foreign public administration organizations
• Other institutions, organizations (please specify)
RELATIONS WITH ENVIRONMENT – RELATION WITH IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT
Please indicate what your overall assessment of relations between your unit and other units from the same department is.
Please indicate what your overall assessment of relations between your department and other departments from the ministry is.
My unit cooperates with: [list of departments from a given ministry]
RELATIONS WITH ENVIRONMENT – QUALITY OF EXPERTISE
Usually, we don't have a problem with acquiring useful knowledge from independent experts.
Please indicate what your overall assessment of expertise and external analyses used in the department is.

Following seven empirical studies were major inspirations for the development of selected survey items:

1. Edmondson, A. (1999), "Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350-383. – items measuring psychological safety.

2. Hryniewicz, J. (2007), *Stosunki pracy w polskich organizacjach*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar. – items measuring leadership styles.

3. Koys, D. & DeCotiis, T. (1991), "Inductive Measures of Psychological Climate", *Human Relations*, 44(3), 265-285 – items measuring group cohesion.

4. Marsick, V.J. & Watkins, K.E. (1999), *Facilitating Learning Organizations: Making Learning Count*, Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company. – items measuring feedback, reflection, adaptation.

5. Perez-Lopez, S., Peon, J. & Ordas, J. (2004), "Managing knowledge: the link between culture and organizational learning", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 8(6), 93-104. – items measuring feedback, reflection, adaptation.

6. Preskill, H. & Torres, D.R.T. (1999), *Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations*, Thousands Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. – items measuring feedback, reflection, adaptation.

7. Tannenbaum, S. (1997), "Enhancing continuous learning: diagnostic findings from multiple companies", *Human Resource Management*, 36(4), 437-452. – item measuring.

Annex 2. Interview protocol for interviews in Polish ministries

Questions about STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE – goals and effects

1. **How your superiors communicate the goals of the Ministry to you?**
2. **How do you usually measure the quality of your department's performance?** How do you know if the department works well or badly? (internal signals, external signals)
3. **What does the good reputation of your department in your superiors' eyes depend on?** On what base the effectiveness of your department's work is evaluated?
4. **Can you give an example of your department's accomplishment in the last year?** (something that makes you especially proud, satisfied)

Follow-up Qs: How did you know it was a success? Was it a signal from your superiors, from the press etc.? Was it an isolated case? Was this a typical example of measurement of success?

Questions about OPERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE – efficiency and legality

1. **Where do you obtain the knowledge to support efficient operation and better organization of everyday work?**
2. **How do you assess the usefulness of control mechanisms** (e.g. internal audits)?
3. **Can you give an example of a last-year audit, the results of which, in hindsight, were useful for you?**

Follow-up Qs: What factors influence the usefulness of this audit? What can be done so such a positive event would occur more often?

Questions about CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE – trends, changes

1. **Where do you obtain information about the changes that are occurring in the most important fields of action of your department?**

Follow-up Qs: Why this particular fields and information are the most important for you?

2. **Can you give an example of any expertise or research, which has recently proved to be extremely useful for you?** (ask about last year)

Follow-up Qs: What factors, in your opinion, were decisive for its usefulness? What can be done so such a positive event would occur more often?

Annex 3. Interview protocol used during international study visits

This interview protocol has been used during the interviews with practitioners in twelve countries of OECD. Interviews with academics varied because the field of specialization of each participant determined its content.

RULES for the interviewer

Let your interviewee speak, let her/him become a story teller

Listen carefully and attentively

Ask follow-up questions: how it happens, who is involved, the successful examples…

If possible, ask for copies of real-life materials, checklists, guides used in their organization.

INTRODUCTION – Information about study, anonymity issues, use of results

This interview is one part of an applied research project that aims at improving organizational learning in the Polish Ministries. We are interviewing practitioners of public administrations in 12 different countries: Australia, Canada, France, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America, United Kingdom.

This project is executed for the Office of the Prime Minister of Poland and co-financed by the European Union, European Social Fund. It is implemented by a team of academics from the University of Warsaw and the Cracow University of Economics, in cooperation with researchers from 12 countries.

We guarantee anonymity of the presented opinions. The analysis based on the results of all interviews conducted in your country, will be published in Polish, as a volume "Lessons learnt from country X". The English summary of overall project results will be available in English, by the end of 2013. We will send you a PDF copy of the report.

Can I record our interview?

AIM of this INTERVIEW

The purpose of this interview is to learn from you how your organization has been learning, that is using knowledge and experience to improve performance over time.

Introduction

Q1: How did you start your work in the public sector?

Q2: What is the main activity of your organization?

Q3: What is your role in the organization?

Note: by "organization" we mean the bureau or unit in which you work

Concepts

Q4: Does your organization use in its official policy and/or every day activities terms such as: organizational learning, knowledge management, or learning organization?

Practice

Q5: How do you know that your organization does a good job? How do you learn about the performance of your organization?

Follow up Qs: ***Where does the feedback come from?*** *How regular it is? Is it mainly positive or negative? What does the process look like?*

Q6: Could you give me a recent example of the situation when your organization experienced success? How did your organization dealt with this?

Follow up Qs: Was it typical way of how your organization deals with success?

Q7: Could you give me a recent example of the situation when your organization experienced a failure? How did your organization dealt with this?

Follow up Qs: Was it typical way of how your organization deals with failures?

Q8: How do you change or try new things in your organization?

Follow up Qs: Where do the impulse or ideas come from? How does the process look? Who is involved? In what way? Trying new things is risky – how you cope with risk? Could you give an example of a successful case?

Q9: How do you store and share knowledge and experience in your organization?

Follow up Qs: What kind of infrastructure do you use? How does the process look? Who is involved? In what way? Could you give an example of a successful case?

Summing up

Q10: In your opinion, on the basis of the experience of your organization, what are the key factors that are indispensable for effectiveness of the processes you have been describing?

Q11: In your opinion, what is the role of a leader in the process that you have been describing?

Thank you very much for your time.

Every time public managers and policymakers address a new policy issue they have to use research results and reflect on previous experiences to find out what works for whom and in what context. This requires intense organizational learning in public agencies.

This book aims at strengthening organizational learning by:

1. Presenting a scientifically validated framework for systematic measurement and monitoring of organizational learning in public agencies;
2. Reviewing promising practices gathered from administration of twelve OECD countries that advance learning in our organizations;
3. Proposing ideas for moving towards accountability for learning.

We hope that this summary of our research could be useful both for practitioners of public organizations and for academics interested in improving performance of government agencies.

Karol Olejniczak, PhD
Co-editor of the volume

This publication is both innovative and useful for practitioners. It is innovative because it tries to address the issues that are just emerging, such as how our public institutions could effectively learn new tasks and roles in the changing environment of global economy. It is useful because it provides us with a wide spectrum of inspiration by bringing together practices from twelve countries with different administrative structures, traditions and management models.

Professor Piotr Dutkiewicz
Director of Center for Governance and Public Management
Carleton University, Canada

The English summary of the MUS research project presents a unique, practical and comprehensive approach to organizational learning in public agencies. Authors in a straightforward way advocate for modernization of public administration towards evidence-based public management and agile public agencies that are committed to continuous improvement of performance. It is a valuable reading for analytics, experts, civil servants and policymakers involved in the processes of reforming public administration. It is also a source for training civil service of government agencies.

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