

COLLABORATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS AS AN INNOVATIVE CHANGE

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The aim of this paper is to analyse opportunities and constraints of collaboration between public and civic organizations as an innovative change. The research relies on the sample of the Malopolska offices of local territorial units (LTU). All research questionnaires comprised common questions, the bulk of them in those targeted at commune mayors and personnel officers, being the persons that have the largest impact on people as participants of organizational processes (130 questionnaires). It enabled illustration of the key issues from a range of viewpoints. Discussions held enabled to set forth the key conditions for efficient collaboration of public organizations with their environment, notably with non-governmental organizations. On the whole, local government offices need transformations which facilitate surmounting the barriers and removing constraints for enhancing orientation towards collaboration between public and civic organizations. Therefore, one can expect for decrease in more efficient public management in LTU of Malopolska region.

Key words: public management, civic organisations, collaboration, innovativity

JEL codes: M190, Z180.

Introduction

Nowadays we observe a necessity to streamline the operations of the public sector. In this process an immense significance is given to collaboration. Changes in the external environment of the public organizations manifest certain similarities to those occurring in business organizations. Here and there they relate to organizational structures and people, who are expected to function more efficiently and economically within these new structures, accomplishing the goals for which the organization was established. By oversimplifying, it may be asserted that in large measure similarities pertain to areas and aspects with regard to quantity changes. Substantial distinctions, however, emerge in quantity aspects due to multifarious values and different rationality criteria in the public and business sectors.

The recent observations have showed that present organizations participate in varied interactions with elements of their environment. They are examined with in terms of their direct or indirect impact, whether they mean competition, neutrality or collaboration, and further, whether these interactions are one-off or continuous in their nature.

With the growing complexity of processes taking place in the organization itself and its environment, there emerges a need for collaboration which goes beyond the organizations and increasingly beyond the borders of the sectors. For these reasons, collaboration between organizations gains in significance. Collaboration has diverse implications in the light of organizational objectives. In reference literature collaboration between enterprises is best explored (Lank 2007, Kanter, 1994), but it does not concern public organisations. Nevertheless, from the fundamental nature of the public organizations arises obligatory collaboration with other organizations no matter whether these organizations are from the same or other sectors. A similar case is

true for social organizations, with the difference that theoretical decisions on collaboration with other organizations are voluntary and autonomous. However, in real circumstances in which they operate, collaboration is proven essential.

For some researchers it is solely a predilection of being a good partner, and for others a kind of invisible product of collaboration such as results from sharing knowledge and mutual understanding. Others view collaborative advantage as a complex category, agreeing with its fundamental concept which includes benefits produced by collaboration that without which were unlikely to be achieved (Huxham, 1996; Lank, 2007).

The aim of this paper is to analyse constraints and opportunities of collaboration between public and civic organizations as an innovative change. This demonstrates that efficient collaboration between public and non-governmental organizations in a local community, alongside the conditions underlying the organizational environment, heavily relies on intra-organizational specifics, which especially relates to changes in management tools and activities performed by people within the organizations.

The research involved literature study, not least in theoretical foundations for efficient collaboration between public and governmental organizations in the local community. The emphasis was placed on the efficacy of management in the context of requirements to be met so that the management was geared for collaboration with public organizations and enhanced delivery of organizational targets in a more effective way. Own empirical research was conducted in the LTU offices located in the Malopolska region. In the spotlight were persons involved in making and accomplishing decisions on collaboration as well as on personnel matters. These include LTU mayors and officers serving as their deputies, specialist officers charged with human resources (HR) functions as well as collaboration with non-governmental organizations. 29 questionnaires by commune mayors, 32 by personnel specialists, 31 by collaboration specialists and 38 questionnaires by experts were identified, that is a total of 130 questionnaires.

1. Inter-organisational collaboration as an innovative tool of public management

Having in mind contemporary collaboration (Heimbürger, 2012; Padaki, 2003; Ryan, 2004), attention is directed to interactions between inter-organizational relations. In contrast to other connections they are more orderly. They are relatively durable in their character and embrace relatively long-term transactions, resources flow and other interactions between organizations. Among the type of relations the most frequently indicated are trade arrangements, arrangement between non-profit organizations, joint ventures, common programmes, relations between two organization types: – financial institution and beneficiary – sponsor (Denhardt, 2011).

A public management concept, adopted for ongoing considerations, covers both changes in public organizations themselves as well as changes spurred by dynamic shifts in the surroundings of the organizations and in the surroundings of the management system as a whole (Farnham, 1996; Boyne, 2002).

An important element of modern public management models is innovativity in creating collaborative links with the external environment of public organisations. For offices of local territorial units the main collaborators are civic organizations. (Kozuch, 2011^a; Kozuch, 2011^b).

A broad definition of innovation includes implementation of new or significantly refined: article or service, that is product or process, new marketing methods or new organizational methods in economic practice, workplace organization or organization in relation with environment (The mesurenents ..., 2012).

Previous findings have shown that innovative shifts in the sphere of organization and management are distinguished by:

- varied degree of saturation with innovations, adequacy for new theories and concepts,
- step changes in operational circumstances,
- technological breakthrough,
- capability to produce results that match modified mission.

Specifically, it is assumed that a minimal requirement for enabling innovation is to introduce a new or significantly advanced product, process, marketing method or organizational method from the perspective of the implementing organization. These include articles and services as well as processes and methods, both devised for the first time, as well those adopted from other organizations.

Innovation may consist in implementing one substantial change or a series of minor changes which altogether constitute a significant change. On occasions this property leads to misleading opinion regarding innovation. As previously stressed, one of the distinctive features of innovation is step change which unequivocally contradicts continuity. It may be discerned in another context, namely in the orientation towards innovation, so one may talk about innovative behaviour in the organization in the longer term.

Organizational innovation compared with other organizational changes is widely defined (The mesurenents ..., 2012) as first-time implementation of new organizational method in the, embraced by the organization, manner of conducting business, workplace organization, external relation which is a consequence of strategic decisions made by managing personnel in the organization.

By applying terms from the field of organization and management studies, innovations may be defined as replacing methods of resolving management problems used in the organization with new untapped organizational methods with regard to principles for organization management, work system and management of external relations of the organization.

Innovations in management principles involve implementing new order and procedures for work management, e.g. introducing principles for organizational learning and sharing knowledge in the organization, setting new procedures related to employees' development, implementation of new management concepts, in particular management based on results, project management, benchmarking, quality management and human resources management (HRM).

Innovations in the work system includes establishment of new work allocation, new forms of work, e.g. telework, more flexible working time, as well as im-

plementation of new methods for delegating powers and responsibility, such as introduction of participatory management, enhancing and giving more independence, introduction of new forms of team work.

Innovations in management of external relations in the organization encompass implementation of new methods for shaping organizational relations with environment, e.g. crucial change in ties between suppliers and buyers as a result of creating new inter-organizational networks, and participation in it of the whole organization or selected teams, introduction of loyalty schemes, extension of relational connections.

The analyses conducted show that the core nature of organizational innovations relies on implementing organizational changes that tend to be characterized as cutting-edge in terms of management principles, as well as crafting relations throughout organization and with its environment. An inherent feature of organizational innovation is its implementation. It takes place when new organizational methods are actually utilized in the organization.

Innovation processes occurring in public administration have a similar, though specific logic as in the case of market products (Rothwell, 1992). Organizational innovations in the public sector fundamentally apply to new services, new policies and programmes, new approaches and new processes for rendering public services. These innovations may include new elements, new configurations of existing elements, departure from traditional manners of operations, as well as radical change.

Emphasis on the necessity for innovation itself in the context of modernizing administration has long been present. At first innovation was analyzed, among others, in the context of theory and concept of organizational change and intervention policy, as well as conditions for creating innovative public organizations, including public entrepreneurship. The focus was brought to significance of budget decision processes, management based on results and the role of innovations in reforming and governance processes. There were individual studies which explored technological and organizational innovations in public sector.

Long-term research and experience based on practice made it possible to widely understand innovations in public administration management (Alberti, 2006).

Innovations in public management are typified as creative ideas implemented in management practice geared for resolving persistent problems faced when realizing public interest, e.g. increasing access to public services, inclusion of non-governmental organizations in solving public affairs. Organizational innovations in public administration are any organizational methods meaning a positive change in providing services to citizens. They cover both within the organization, e.g. city municipality, as well as external relations with environment provided that it is the first-time use of the given method by the specific organization.

Among innovations for handling public affairs, which are management principles in the office, for example the following may be identified:

- embracing client's perspective and transforming processes in the office when implementing quality management systems;
- change in approach to the organization's resources through focus on employees' knowledge manifested by establishing new bases of best practice; formulat-

ing conclusions and other codified knowledge in a manner securing other people possibly easy access to this base;

- departure from handling public affairs based on procedures and introduction of the first time training schemes to build effective teams that integrate employees from various departments and task areas, e.g. task teams;

- conferring new meaning to control processes through first-time introduction of integrated system for monitoring operations, and enhancing self-control.

While as exemplary innovations in the work system, that is innovations covering organizational behaviour of people in public administration, including local government, may be exhibited:

- first-time introduction of decentralization of official tasks for officers, e.g. devolution of significantly greater control and responsibility to promotion and development department;

- first-time assigning formal and informal working groups for sharing knowledge;

- first-time introducing a system for anonymous reporting of errors or threats in order to identify their causes and decrease their occurrence.

Whereas organizational innovations in relations with environment for example may include:

- providing new opportunities for communicating;

- first-time application of outsourcing;

- first-time commencement collaboration with non-governmental organization on definite terms and conditions.

2. Data and results

In the context of theoretical findings with regard to collaboration between public and civic organizations (Brinkerhoff, 2002, Bryson, 2001, Manley, 2007), opinions articulated by managerial staff in the offices surveyed and specialists responsible for collaboration with non-governmental organizations appear interesting.

The respondents (32 persons) indicated a key and additional reason for embarking on collaboration by the office with non-governmental organizations. In the view of officers tasked with collaboration the fundamental reasons include: undertaking activities beneficial for local environment (25 answers) and performing legal obligation (14 answers). Almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the surveyed reported that the reason behind collaboration is bolstering efficiency of operations in the offices. Such options as discharging previous obligations, obtaining extra resources, or good interpersonal relations between officers and non-governmental organizations occurred in 2 up to 4 answers.

The opinions received show that local government officers charged with collaboration with civic organizations principally have an appropriate attitude to this collaboration which is one of the initial requirements for the development.

What is important in the context of collaboration is recognition of resulting benefits. The respondents did not point out any more than 3 key benefits.

Table 1. Opinions on the benefits of collaboration between the office and non-governmental organizations. (N=130)

Specification	Total	Experts	LTU mayors	HR specialists	Collaboration specialists
More effective fulfilment of citizens' needs	105	30	24	23	28
Providing assistance to inhabitants' grassroots initiatives	57	13	17	12	15
Devolution of powers of the process of managing public affairs	55	19	17	6	13
Sharing knowledge	38	6	7	3	22
Learning actual social needs	34	14	7	10	3
Opportunities to information exchange	29	9	2	9	9
More efficient functioning of the office	21	11	1	4	5
Outsourcing of public services	19	9	5	2	3
Shortage of significant benefits	0		0	0	0
Others	1		0	1	0

Source: study based on own survey 2010

Analysis of the data from Table 1 demonstrates that the respondents accord tremendous significance to focus on citizens and customers, evidenced by the most frequent marking of more efficient fulfilment of citizens' needs as a benefit produced by collaboration between public organizations with non-governmental (105 answers). The answers validate sensitivity of public managers and officer-specialists to uppermost weighting of modelling relations between public organizations with non-governmental ones.

Further key benefits include providing assistance to inhabitants' grassroots initiatives and devolution of powers of the process of managing public affairs, which was marked in 112 answers in total. A similar standpoint is quite widely presented by public management practitioners.

Another benefit, i.e. sharing knowledge (38 answers) was, to the largest degree, discerned by collaboration specialists; by others to a lesser degree. This difference may be construed in terms of distinctive character of relations into which this group of the surveyed enters with civic organizations. Namely, collaboration specialists keep a direct contact with these organizations, whereas the others contact is indirect in most cases. This, at least partially, clarifies crucial differences in the answers.

Quite frequently the respondents pay attention to a possibility to information exchange. It suggests their giving remarkable importance to the most basic results of inter-organizational collaboration. In practice it acts as a starting point for gaining further collaboration advantages.

By examining and observing the functioning of public managers and specialist officers, intriguing conclusions may be drawn. Related opinions are shown in Table 2. The surveyed selected 5 key limitations and ranked them from the most (1) to the least important (5). Answers regarding the rank four and five were scattered and do not demonstrate any correlation.

Table 2. Major barriers and constrains of efficient operations of employees in the office in the views of the surveyed (N=130)

Answer	Rank 1.		Rank 2.		Rank 3	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. No sense of responsibility of officers for final results established in plans and programmes	36	31.4	17	14.8	11	9.6
2. Imprecise planning of resources	6	5.2	7	6.1	5	4.3
3. Overtly general formulation of goals	14	12.2	16	13.9	3	2.6
4. Losing from sight the mission of the office	12	10.4	12	10.4	5	4.3
5. Unrealistic expectations from top managing personnel	4	3.5	6	5.2	6	5.2
6. Insufficient awareness of accomplishment of the goal among officers working on various sections of the plans and programmes	5	4.3	6	5.2	23	20.0
7. No involvement of officers in planning works	7	6.1	9	7.8	4	3.5
8. Lack of adequate empowerment for heads of organizational units and teams in the organizational structure	2	1.7	7	6.1	4	3.5
9. Disruptions in collective management	3	2.6	6	5.2	6	5.2
10. Safeguarding particularistic interests of organizational sections	4	3.5	8	7.0	12	10.5
11. Implementation of too many procedures	8	7.0	8	7.0	12	10.5
12. In the case of assigning teams: ambiguity of double subordination of team members	2	1.7	5	4.3	10	8.7
13. Employment of people for considerations other than their qualifications	6	5.2	4	3.5	9	7.8
14. Deficiency in experience of officers as internal customers	6	5.2	4	3.5	5	4.3
Total	115	100.0	115	100.0	115	100.0

Source: study based on own survey 2010

According to those under survey, key limitations and barriers include lack of sense of responsibility among officers for final outcomes set in plans and programmes. From 130 questioned, answers were provided by 115 persons – the remaining had no opinions in this regard. This limitation was predominantly indicated as ranked the first – 64, second – 17 and third – 11. It shows that focus on outcomes tends to be unfamiliar to surveyed officers. It may also imply deficiencies in planning and strategic management.

The next most frequently marked barriers and constraints proved to be too general formulation of goals and unawareness of connections between launched ac-

tions and the mission of the office. As already seen, certain blurring of organizational goals is a defining trait of all public organizations. A portion of them identify their goals, including their mission with legal provisions, others attempt to simultaneously satisfy numerous significantly differing groups of stakeholders. Both of these approaches result in imprecisely formulated goals. Then they lose the benefit of guidance for all involved in processes of rendering public services.

Implementation of too numerous procedures poses another impediment to key limitations and barriers for efficient operations of officers in the office in the view of the surveyed. Likewise a lack of sense of responsibility and general formulation, which deficiency stems from typical troubles plaguing public administration units. In this case, this is a substantial level of red tape.

Its justification fundamentally results from the necessity to observe law and, paradoxically, from the need for transparency of operations. In practice, however, the level of bureaucracy is excessive as officers are not prepared for running public affairs in a manner different from bureaucratic. No shifts have taken hold in organizational behaviour in the wake of recently introduced changes in electronic circulation of documents or elements of e-administration as well as manners of communication with citizens and other customers of the office. This barrier as one of the three top ranks was indicated by 28 persons in total.

Slightly fewer, 24 respondents classified safeguarding particularistic interests of organizational sections as barriers. This is a threat faced in each type of organization. Surmounting this type of inefficiency requires a high degree of universal competency among public managers.

Conclusions

1. Based on discussions held, the conclusion may be formulated that it is crucial to identify current opportunities and limitations in the operations of offices and to analyze them in the context of ongoing challenges faced by public organizations. Therefore, it is made possible to determine major opportunities for collaboration of public organizations with civic ones, to a large extent overcoming existing deficiencies. Discussions held enabled to set forth the key conditions for efficient collaboration of public organizations with their environment, notably with non-governmental organizations. On the whole, LTU offices need transformations which facilitate surmounting the barriers and constraints for enhancing orientation towards inter-organisational collaboration.

2. In the light of arguments adduced collaboration between public and civic organizations as an innovative change in local public management needs the demand for the following directions for intra-organizational changes in the aspect of collaboration:

- changes in LTU officers' competencies as a basis for affecting associates and employees;
- shaping modern relations with internal and external stakeholders, partially civic organizations;

- setting up and modifying organizational units and leveraging the phenomenon of networks;
- stepping up capabilities for inter-organizational collaboration.

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VIEŠŪJŲ IR PILIETINIŲ ORGANIZACIJŲ BENDRADARBIAVIMAS KAIP INOVACINIS POKYTIS

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Santrauka

Šio straipsnio tikslas – išanalizuoti viešųjų ir pilietinių organizacijų bendradarbiavimo, traktuojant jį kaip inovacinį pokytį, galimybes ir kliūtis. Tyrimas vykdytas Mažosios Lenkijos pagrindinio teritorinės savivaldos lygmens organizacijose. Buvo parengtos anketos vaitams ir burmistrams, personalo specialistams, bendradarbiavimo su pilietinėmis organizacijomis specialistams, viešosios vadybos ekspertams. Jose buvo pateikti klausimai apie tiriamų institucijų organizacinius procesus, ypač apie bendradarbiavimą tarp organizacijų. Atlikta analizė leido nustatyti sąlygas viešųjų organizacijų veiksmingam bendradarbiavimui su jų aplinka, ypač su pilietinėmis organizacijomis. Bendradarbiavimo tarp viešųjų ir pilietinių organizacijų empirinis tyrimas tapo gera šaltinių studijų pagrindu suformuluotų teiginių iliustracija. Nors atliktas tyrimas nėra pakankamas apibendrinimams formuluoti, tačiau leidžia giliau pažvelgti į analizuojamą problematiką. Pasirodė, kad savivaldybių valdymo praktikų dažnai deklaruojamos vadybinės žinios nepasitvirtina kasdienėje valdymo veikloje. Valdininkai dėl užimtumo kita veikla neskatina bendradarbiavimo, dažniausiai tik reaguoja į nevyriausybinių organizacijų iniciatyvas. Bendra tyrimo išvada – teritorinės savivaldos organizacijos turi įveikti egzistuojančias kliūtis ir orientuotis į bendradarbiavimą su pilietinėmis organizacijomis, tokiu būdu padidinant viešojo valdymo veiksmingumą.

Raktiniai žodžiai: viešasis valdymas, pilietinės organizacijos, bendradarbiavimas, inovacinumas.

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