Searching for Inspiration. Practices from Twelve Countries

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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

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[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.

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.

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 co-exist 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		x		
Creation and animation of communities of practice	FR		x			x	x
Collections of good practices in human resource management	FR	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			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	
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	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	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	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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