

LEARNING ORGANIZATION - A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF EFFICIENT PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Alexei STURZA,
Master Degree in Management APA

REZUMAT

Articolul de față conține idei și concluzii esențiale, la care a ajuns autorul on cadrul cercetării, obiectualizate on teza de master cu aceeași denumire, care a fost susținută public pe data de 13 iulie 2007.

Organizațiile secolului XXI funcționează on epoca revoluției informaționale și manageriale, care are drept rezultat apariția paradigmei organizației cognitive, fiind aplicabilă tuturor instituțiilor, inclusiv și celor publice on cadrul concepției noului management public.

On procesul de tranziție a Republicii Moldova la economia de piață și cea a cunoștințelor, apare o necesitate evidentă a unor noi concepții, forme și metode manageriale, una din acestea fiind organizația cognitivă.

Sectorul public al țării noastre se află on procesul de transformări continue, onă nu ontotdeauna reușite. Modernizarea acestuia, mai deosebit reforma administrației publice centrale, constituie o prioritate majoră a unui management public performant.

Academia de Administrare Publică pe longă Președintele Republicii Moldova, grație statului său unic, are o șansă deosebită și o misiune de onoare să aprindă făclia mișcării pentru organizația cognitivă pentru sectorul public autohton. Numai devenind electronică și bazată pe cunoștințe, Academia noastră poate avea succes pe acest tăróm, astfel dovedind ipoteza, că organizația cognitivă este cea mai optimală formă managerială on condițiile unui mediu organizațional extern onalt turbulent, inclusiv și pentru instituții publice.

Key words: learning organization, knowledge economy, new public management, public sector modernization, reform of central public administration, e-government, e-Academy.

Introduction

We live in the period of the learning and managerial revolution, resulting in the concept of learning organizations; the latter leads to the formation of learning (knowledge-based) society

and economy.

At present, the term “learning organization” draws the increasing attention of managers, consultants, professors, and researchers. Those times, when only top-managers worked out strategies and

mastered new knowledge, while employees implemented their decisions, have passed. In the future and even at present those companies will be successful that will learn to use people's commitment and their ability to learn.

Research Material and Methods

The methodology of the research is based on the systemic approach and the use of different methods of scientific investigation:

- Universal (analysis, inclusive comparative, dynamic, synthesis, induction, deduction);
- General (statistical, graphic, sociological (questionnaire survey));
- Special (system and situational managerial approaches, SWOT analysis, organization chart, knowledge matrix);
- Empiric (observation), etc.

Research Results and Discussions

The term learning organization was introduced in scientific circulation by the American researcher Peter Senge in 1990 in his bestseller *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. P. Senge distinguished five disciplines (principles) of learning organizations [6, pp. 6-11]:

1. **Personal mastery** – people continually clarify and deepen their personal vision of objective reality and their values. It implies a high level of professionalism;

2. **Mental models** – assumptions and generalizations that influence how one understands and interprets the organization;

3. **Building shared vision** – picture of its future, shared by all members of the organization;

4. **Team learning** – teams are the fun-

damental learning units of the modern organization that can produce synergic effect;

5. **Systems thinking** - the conceptual cornerstone of Senge's approach to the learning organization. It is the fifth discipline that integrates the others, fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice.

Gradually, P. Senge's concept developed in the direction of identifying and describing the characteristics of learning organizations. But up to now there is no single model of them; it is rather a philosophy, a system of views on future organizations. Therefore, every organization should seek own ways of transforming into a learning one.

Thus, the learning organization is an open social system, an organizational structure that fosters the capacity and aspiration of every and all of its members continuously to learn, experiment, and take acceptable risks at all managerial levels and subdivisions in order to anticipate and develop proactive response to permanent changes and challenges of the high-turbulent external environment, and to attain both organizational and personal objectives. The key resources of learning organizations are intangible: human capital, knowledge, intellectual property, informational resources, etc.

In these conditions, the learning organization seems to be the most adequate, perspective, and leading form of managing modern organizations that will remove traditional ones in Darwinian process of natural selection, because they are much more flexible in order to adapt to a more and more complex and changeable environment.

The new public management paradigm lay the foundation of applying the learning organization concept in the public sector [5, p. 331]. Public learning organizations combine the advantages both of the public (social equity, legitimized access, affordability/nonprofit character) and of the private sector (efficiency, quality, broad choice). Learning organizations in the public sector have some specifics, for example, in the domain of human resource management, they require more stability of personnel than in the private sector.

The transition of Moldovan economy to the market rails, its integration in the global community, informatization and other factors caused radical transformations in all the spheres of human activity, which, in their turn, caused considerable organizational and managerial changes. In these new conditions, Moldovan organizations (most of them being at present low efficient and uncompetitive now on the international and even on the national market) feel the necessity for innovational forms and methods of management, including the learning organization concept. The latter is not so widely spread in Moldova yet; therefore, we cannot say that there is a certain Moldovan model of the learning organization. Nevertheless, there are attempts to create examples of them in Moldova in the public, business and noncommercial sectors.

There are many barriers in transforming the existent Moldovan organizations into learning ones. The barriers can and must be overcome by considerable managerial efforts in such spheres as systems thinking, shared vision and strategy, individual and team

learning, organization structure and culture, leadership, information and communication technologies.

Public sector modernization, especially the reform of central public administration, is a major priority of public management in the Republic of Moldova. Recent research has revealed the following key problems in this domain:

- Lack of organizational capacity;
- Legal imperfection;
- More tactical than strategic management;
- Inefficiency of the decisional process;
- Inadequate human resource management;
- Non-optimal public financial management;
- A weak use of information technologies, especially for e-Governance.

These key problems make up the main directions of the Central Executive Reform [3], which consists of:

- Public sector reorganization;
- Optimization of the decision-making process;
- Improving human resource management;
- Increasing the quality of public financial management.

An important step in creating Moldovan learning organizations became the National Strategy on Building the Information Society "e-Moldova" [4] and the Conception of e-Governance [1]. Information and communication technologies are a strong tool for increasing resource productivity, managerial efficiency, intellectual capital, competitiveness of Moldovan organizations on national and international markets, and

the growth of the knowledge economy. E-Government means a more effective interaction of the three main sectors: private, public, and the third (civil society, citizens).

Educational and research institutions have a good chance to become pioneers of Moldovan learning organizations. The Academy of Public Administration by the President's Office of the Republic of Moldova, as the national centre for promotion of the state policy in the field of public administration, training of public personnel, and for providing scientific and methodological support to the activity of public authorities, should play this honorable role in the public sector. However, there are some barriers in transforming the Academy into a learning organization:

- A non-optimal structure;
- Deficit and inefficient use of all the resources;
- Excessive bureaucracy,
- Lack of strategic human resource management;
- A high level of personnel fluctuation;
- A low percentage of staff professors;
- Psychological barriers (low-motivation of personnel and students to work and learn, skepticism in assessing the Academy's future),
- A weak informational infrastructure,
- Absence of a developed knowledge management system, etc.

Their overcoming is a major priority for the Academy's managerial team in the mid-term perspective. The shared vision (strategy) of the future Academy should become the e-Academy.

Knowledge management is a very useful managerial concept for building learning organizations. Information and communication technologies play a key role in advancing learning organizations.

Having studied the problem of increasing the efficiency of the public management system of the Republic of Moldova based on the learning organization concept, we consider useful to make the following recommendations:

- Concentration on the basic characteristics of the learning organization (Peter Senge's five disciplines) in developing strategies of transformation of Moldovan organizations;
- Usage of the systemic and situational approaches to transforming the existent organizations into learning ones;
- Reconsideration and liberalization of Moldovan legislation, especially, related to regulating business companies (the regulatory reform) and public institutions in the spirit of the learning organization;
- De-bureaucratization of the public administration system in the Republic of Moldova;
- Introduction of the philosophy and methodology of business management (new public management) in the process of public sector modernization, especially, integration of "3E" (economy, efficiency, and effectiveness) in managerial mentality;
- Consequent and insistent implementation of the Strategy "e-Moldova", in particular, e-government, e-education and e-science;
- More optimal human resource

management in the public sector, in particular, within the Academy (increasing salaries in order to have motivation effects; creating more favorable working conditions; consolidation, rejuvenation and development of personnel; creating a structure under the Governmental Office, responsible for conducting human resource policy in the public sector);

- Giving more autonomy, especially financial one, to public managers of Moldova;

- Increase of the efficiency of time- and self-management of public administrators;

- Introduction of 3 vice-rector positions and a technical and operational maintenance sector within the organizational structure of the Academy of Public Administration (with an optimal combination of in- and out-sourcing);

- Consolidation of the technical-material base of the Academy (in particular, creation and development of the informational infrastructure);

- Study and implementation of the knowledge management concept and intelligent systems in the activity of the Academy (as a pilot project) and in other public and private organizations of Moldova;

- Implementation of the project "e-Academy" (e-office, e-classroom, distance learning, e-science, e-library, e-personnel, e-document circulation, training and certification of the public personnel in the domain of information-communication technologies and e-governance).

Conclusions

Learning organizations are sure to

become the leading organizations of the future. Public institutions, not to mention private companies, are to become learning organizations in order to adapt to a more complex, changeable environment, to survive, at least, and to prosper better. Moldovan organizations are not an exception here. The public sector of Moldova is in the process of continuous, but not always successful transformations. Efficient public management (on the example of the Academy of Public Administration) should be based on the learning organization paradigm, systemic implementation of informational technologies, human resources and knowledge management.

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