Change Management Success Factors
in Polish Public Administration

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Abstract:

Purpose: *Since change and change management are significant in most concepts of public management, the authors of the article identified and assessed critical factors which determine the successful implementation of change in public organizations.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *Firstly, the literature on change management in public organizations was reviewed, and secondly, the elicited factors were subjected to the assessment of employees of various public organizations in Poland. For this purpose, survey studies were conducted with a questionnaire, which included 13 factors in public organizations identified in the previous literature review.*

Findings: *A literature review revealed that identifying factors most commonly indicated as necessary for success is indeed possible. Empirical research confirms that the critical factors include communication within the organization, the accumulation of sufficient resources, and the motivation of employees to embrace change.*

Practical Implications: *The identification of factors that determine the success of change in public organizations may constitute practical recommendations for public managers in supporting employees in the process of going through a change in a public organization.*

Originality/Value: *The presented results should be perceived as helpful for public managers in identifying the areas that need to become their point of focus in change management. Finally, the results may also serve as a basis for further research into change management in public organizations.*

Keywords: *Change, change management, public organisation, public management.*

JEL codes: *H83, H19.*

Paper Type: *Research article.*

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1. Introduction

Public management is defined as a change in the structure and processes in a public organization (Pollit and Bouckaert, 2000). This change may involve a redefinition of the essential procedures which serve the citizens, the establishment of standards regarding the quality of life, education, or the system for the recruitment, training, education, and promotion of employees. The change should be aimed to increase the organization's efficacy (Philippidou, Soderquist, and Prastacos, 2004).

Fundamental structural changes of public administration were initiated in the second half of the 18th century. This period marks the beginnings of political and intellectual events that considerably influenced changes in public administration, such as the establishment of the Napoleonic Code, Rechtsstaat, and bureaucracy; the latter development was later described by M. Weber (Raadschelders, 1995) (Tompkins, 2005).

The importance of change management in public organizations is also emphasized in the New Public Management (NPM), which promotes, as one of its leading trends, a transformation of the style of decision-making and cooperation in countries where public administration is rooted in a long-standing tradition (Hood, 1991). The criticism of NPM-related concepts and traditional public management gave rise to a theory called good governance (Jessop, 2007), grounded in a new public order named the New Public Governance (NPG), which also highlights the openness of public organizations to change. The New Business Models for Public-Sector Innovation offer yet another framework for the functioning of organizations and are based on the general trend of change management in public organizations (Micheli *et al.,* 2012). They emphasize the importance of encouraging public managers to focus more on material benefits to the citizens that can be obtained through improvements and changes in public services. Some authors observe that such an approach helps overcome organizational resistance towards change and the aversion to risk presented by public managers (Brown, Ryan, and Parker, 2000).

In conclusion, it may be asserted that change and change management are a crucial part of most concepts of public management. Therefore, it is essential to identify the critical factors that determine the successful implementation of change in public organizations.

This paper aims to identify and assess key success factors in the change management of a public organization.

2. Literature Review

Change in public organizations is often implemented by following top-down strategies regarding political power (Ferlie, Fitzgerald, and Pettigrew, 1996). This tendency may be of strategic importance for the functioning of organizations.

Change is achieved through a pre-planned top-down implementation procedure consistent with the new strategy (Dunphy, 2000). Source literature on change management in the public sector reveals that the complexity and ambiguity of the procedure are greater in public organizations than in the private sector. The importance of the environment in the procedure is particularly highlighted (Lutrin and Shani, 1998). For one, the implementation of change is affected by the centralization of management within a public organization. Because of centralization, making any decisions without a manager's approval proves impossible (Van der Voet, 2014; Kellis and Ran, 2015).

Consequently, the freedom to introduce changes, even non-consequential ones, is primarily impaired. Other elements of the environment that influence the functioning of public sector entities include technological, economic, cultural, and ecological conditions and the demographic profile of society (Rainey, 2009). The context of change implementation is also affected by a high level of formalization, which is the corollary of the bureaucratic character of public organizations. Finally, in a discussion on change management in public organizations, it should be observed that contradicting or ambiguous goals often lead to political conflicts in organizations.

Literature analysis reveals that both change and change management are affected by specific qualities of public organizations (Isett, Glied, Sparer, and Brown, 2013). The internal context of changes results from differences between public and private organizations in the area of goals and the effectiveness and efficiency of their attainment (Berman, 2006). Typical changes involve introducing new processes, systems, and procedures in public organizations (e.g., the introduction of new accounting systems, efficiency indicators, information technologies) (Krukowski and Raczyńska, 2019). However, they may also refer to aspects related to human resource management (Krukowski and Raczyńska, 2020), innovations (Borins, 2002), and reorganization (Boyne, 2006). The outcomes of change, which should be regarded as substantive results of change implementation, may be intentional or unintentional, positive or negative. Public organizations often highlight the importance of values as an outcome of change (Kuipers, Higgs, Kickert, Tummers, Grandia, and Van der Voet, 2014). Another factor that impacts change management is leadership (Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

Success factors in the change management of public organizations are identified in study results provided by source literature. Most commonly, these studies refer to the performance of organizations in all areas. However, there is a group focused on selected areas of change management and presenting the influence of individual factors.

A comprehensive analysis of success factors in managing organizational change in the public sector is provided by Fernandez and Rainey (2006). They identified eight

key factors which, in their mind, constitute an action plan for public managers responsible for the introduction of changes. The factors include:

- − informing about the need for change – studies show that the implementation of planned changes requires leaders to verify the need for change and to convince other organisation members and external stakeholders of its importance;
- − providing a plan – the organisation must have a plan for the implementation of change. Such a plan is used by the organisation as a roadmap which sets out the direction for reaching the desired end result. The plan should identify obstacles and countermeasures;
- − building internal support for change and overcoming resistance – the managers must build an internal support system for the change. The resistance of employees towards the change should be overcome by ensuring their universal involvement in the process;
- − ensuring top-management support and commitment – the support of top managers for the process of change and their commitment thereto are a crucial success factor;
- − building external support – public managers must garner support from politicians and key external stakeholders. The influence of those entities on the outcomes of change results partially from their authority to introduce legislative changes and control the flow of important resources to the organisation;
- − providing resources – changes require sufficient resources. Planning an organisational change involves a transfer or a relocation of limited organisational resources. The lack of adequate means to support planned change leads to poor outcomes, higher levels of interpersonal stress, and even the neglect of basic activities and functions of the organisation;
- − institutionalising change – to ensure a lasting effect, organisation members need to integrate new rules or innovations into their daily activities. Employees have to learn those behaviours quickly and include them in their routines, whereas leaders have to institutionalise them "in the long run" so that new patterns of conduct can replace the older ones;
- − implementing systemic change in the organisation – public managers have to ensure a comprehensive approach to change by integrating it with other subsystems of the organisation. A change introduced in one or two subsystems will not generate enough force to stimulate organisational change.

Success factors in implementing change in organizations have been similarly defined by Kikert (2014), who has compiled the factors indicated by Fernandez and Rainey (2006) for a public organization, and by Kotter (2002), who has done the same for a private organization. According to Kikert (2014), success factors include: creating a sense of urgency, ensuring the need for change; developing and presenting a vision

and a strategy for change, communicating change, authorizing employees to act, ensuring top-management support and commitment, building external support, providing adequate resources, institutionalizing change and anchoring it in the organizational culture, pursuing sweeping change.

Upon research into Australian public organizations, Stewart and Kringas (2003) have identified success factors in effective change implementation. According to those authors, even though success depends on many factors, crucial importance includes an appropriate change model, effective leadership, sufficient resources, attention to communication within the organization, the degree of negotiation involved, and support of politicians and external stakeholders.

Baker (2007) observes that the management of public organizations also largely depends on managers' awareness regarding the internal specificity of their organization. The author believes that in the process of change, an efficient manager should focus on (Baker, 2007), ensuring that all employees add value in the process of change, ensuring that employees feel involved, integrated, and valued, building a group that shares a common goal, ensuring that managers have relevant skills in employee management, finding a balance between risk and the sense of change, improving the internal reputation of the organization.

The studies presented in source literature also highlight the importance of individual factors for successful change management. The most commonly studied factor in change implementation is the role of leaders. For instance, Hennessy (1998) asserts that the competencies of leaders are correlative to the level of cultural change in public organizations. The same results were presented by Kester and Painter (1991), who researched the members of local British governments. Other studies have revealed that a public organization should easily create, implement and maintain change in selected work areas in the conditions of solid organizational leadership (Stewart and Kringas, 2003). They have shown that leadership is highly correlative to the success of a change program. Therefore, during change implementation in public organizations, it is essential not to overlook the leadership role of managers (Van der Voet, 2014). There are several essential skills that public managers must have (or learn) and use to ensure the effectiveness of change management (Baker, 2007). Leadership is an essential success factor in change implementation also appears in the research conducted by Kash *et al.* (2014). Furthermore, researchers have observed that public sector leaders may use their political mandate and external opportunities for exerting influence to verify and communicate the need for change (Abramson and Lawrence, 2001).

Another crucial factor for the introduction of change in the public sector is the involvement of employees in the implementation of a change program. Alhaqbani (2013) suggests that to avoid resistance from employees, they should have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process concerning change implementation. Other studies have highlighted the readiness of employees to

introduce change as the critical success factor in change implementation in an organization (Higgs and Rowland, 2005). The effort to include employees in the change process may involve relevant training, which is also indicated as a success factor in change implementation in the public sector (Kash, Spaulding, Johnson and Gamm, 2014).

Some studies on change management in public organizations point to the importance of resources owned by the organization. Their role as a success factor is observed mainly in improvements in public services (Boyne, 2003). Another identified success factor in enhancing the services of public organizations is the use of innovative and digitalized technologies (El Badawy and Attia, 2014; Plesner, Justesen, and Glerup, 2018). The factors related to change implementation in public services also include a relaxing of the procedures and a limitation of bureaucratic audits (Thompson, 1999). Another factor said to carry great importance in implementing organizational change is the organizational culture (Eisenstat, Spector, and Beer, 1990). The recognition of organizational culture in the processes of change is crucial as it defines the parameters of organizational change and can be the object of change itself, especially in the area concerning efforts to increase the number of public services targeted at the citizen (Junge, Kelleher, and Hadjivassiliou, 2006).

The literature also emphasizes the importance of introducing an "agent of change" in the process (Stewart and Kringas, 2003) (Specht, Kuonath, Pachler, Weisweiler, and Frey, 2018). In public organizations, the importance of change agents is related to leadership. For instance, transformational leaders impact the process of change management because of their ability to involve supporters and unite them by creating mutual bonds, which can boost motivation and set the focus on common goals (Austen-Tynda, 2009). Literature also highlights the role of the organizational environment in determining change parameters; agents of change may represent the environment. More often than not, the environment of public organizations is affected by politics. Therefore, political support for change (or lack thereof) is critical (Rosenbloom, 1993). Political supervision over an organization may influence planned changes since it creates and communicates a vision that explains the need for change.

The literature review on change management in public organizations has allowed for identifying factors most commonly indicated as the determinants of success. They include:

- KSF1 - creating a sense of urgency (need) for change (finding a balance between risk and the sense of change);
- KSF2 - a plan for change implementation (a vision, a strategy);
- KSF3 - a model of change implementation;
- KSF4 - communication within the organisation;
- KSF5 - the accumulation of sufficient resources;

- KSF6 - strong leadership;
- KSF7 - the motivation of employees to embrace change (ensuring they feel involved, integrated, and valued);
- KSF8 - anchoring the outcomes of change in the organisational culture;
- KSF9 - political support for the change;
- KSF10 - the introduction of an agent of change;
- KSF11 - the introduction of innovative and digitalised technologies;
- KSF12 - easing procedures and limiting bureaucratic audits,
- KSF13 - finding a balance between risk and the sense of change.

Success factors were identified based on the available literature, which contains studies conducted in various public organizations. This paper presents the study in which success factors were assessed by employees of various public organizations who evaluated the importance of certain critical factors for the implementation of change in their institutions. Therefore, the literature review has led to the following hypothesis: H0 – success factors are independent of the type of organization; H1 – success factors are dependent on the type of organization.

The study was conducted among employees representing self-governmental administration, governmental agency, education, healthcare, and higher education. Such a selection was intended to determine whether the importance of certain success factors depends on the type of institution involved.

3. Research Methodology

Survey studies were conducted in October 2019. The survey questionnaire, targeted at public organization employees, included 13 factors of change in public organizations identified in the literature review. The respondents could also indicate other factors which they believed to be important in the examined area. The sample included 220 returned questionnaires that were correctly filled out. In the questionnaires, the respondents indicated factors they considered necessary for change implementation in their organizations. All factors were assessed with the use of a Likert scale, where number 1 indicated a factor of no importance, 2 – a factor of minor importance, 3 – a factor of average importance, 4 – a factor of high importance, and 5 – a factor of very high importance. For most respondents, change implementation was not an essential element of their job (72.3%) (Table 1). Qualifications in change management may affect the perception of the importance of specific factors, but most employees did not hold any (72.3% of the respondents). However, the results have revealed that all the respondents participated in change implementation in their organizations.

Most of the respondents were employed in higher education (41,7%). Moreover, only 17.3% of the respondents worked in managerial positions. Considering the possibility of the common method bias (CMB), Brewer's method of dividing the

sample was used when creating the questionnaire (Brewer, 2006). This approach was intended to eliminate CMB by using one sample of respondents to evaluate an independent variable and the other to measure a dependent variable. In the presented research, administrative data (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff, 2012; Jakobsen and Jensen, 2015) was the independent variable, i.e., the type of public organization. The risk of experiencing the common method bias should also be reduced because the respondents were to assess the currently appearing factors and by addressing the questionnaire to many people who participated in the change management process in the surveyed organizations (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). In addition, respondents with sufficient specialist knowledge were selected for the study to reduce the error so that the answers to the questions did not relate to vague concepts. The next step was conducting the Cronbach's alpha test, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test, and Barlett's test (Table 2).

Table 1. *Characteristics of the research sample*

Change implementation is a key element of my job	number	%
no	159	72,3
yes	61	27,7
I am qualified in the change management area	number	%
no	159	72,3
yes	61	27,7
Job position	number	%
managerial	38	17,3
non-managerial	182	82,7
Type of institution	number	%
Higher education	94	42,7
Self-governmental administration	46	20,9
Governmental agency	29	13,2
Governmental administration	11	5,0
Education	19	8,6
Healthcare	21	9,5

Source: *Own work based on research results.*

Table 2. *Measures properties Alpha test, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test, and Barlett's test.*

Cronbach's Alfa Test	Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test	Bartlett's Test
0,799624	0,762	962,206

* p <0,000.
Source: *Own work based on research results.*

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Due to the results of the Cronbach's and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin tests, the reliability of the research tool has been confirmed. The authors are aware that the factors selected for the study are correlated with one another. However, this is because they relate to one phenomenon. However, the purpose of the study was not to indicate their relationship but to identify their occurrence and assess them in the context of the type of entity.

In order to test the hypothesis, the stochastic independence of the identified success factors and the type of public organizations was examined. The analysis was conducted with the use of Pearson's chi-squared test ($\chi2$). The significance level was set to $\alpha=0.05$. Statistical calculations were performed using STATISTICA.

According to the survey concerning individual success factors in the change management of public organisations, the highest assessment was received by the following factors: communication within the organisation (*Me*=5; *Mo*=5; *M*=4.56;

SD=0,65), the motivation of employees to embrace change (*Me*=5; *Mo*=5; *M*=4.52; *SD*=0.70), a plan for change implementation (a vision, a strategy) (*Me*=5; *Mo*=5; *M*=4.52; *SD*=0.79), and the accumulation of sufficient resources (*Me*=5; *Mo*=5; *M*=4.40; *SD*=0.77) (Table 2). Meanwhile, political support for change (*Me*=3; *moda*=3; *M*=2.94; *SD*=1.38) and the introduction of a change agent (*Me*=3; *Mo*=3; *M*=2.90; *SD*=1.27) received the lowest assessment (Table 3).

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics for the assessment of success factors*

Factor	Mean (*M*)	Median (*Me*)	Mode *(Mo)*	Lower quartile	Upper quartile	Standard deviation (*SD*)
KSF1	4,03	4,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	0,91
KSF2	4,41	5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	0,76
KSF3	4,25	4,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	0,79
KSF4	4,56	5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	0,65
KSF5	4,40	5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	0,77
KSF6	3,90	4,00	4,00	3,00	5,00	0,96
KSF7	4,52	5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	0,70
KSF8	3,86	4,00	4,00	3,00	5,00	0,99
KSF9	2,94	3,00	3,00	2,00	4,00	1,38
KSF10	2,90	3,00	3,00	2,00	4,00	1,27
KSF11	3,61	4,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	1,08
KSF12	3,98	4,00	5,00	3,00	5,00	0,99
KSF13	4,00	4,00	4,00	3,50	5,00	1,00

Source: *Own work based on research results.*

Employees assessed the importance of the identified factors expressed in points (Table 4). The distribution of answers reveals that the highest importance was assigned to communication within the organization (64.1% of the answers indicated number 5) and the motivation of employees to embrace change (61.8% of the answers). A similar situation occurred when the assessments indicative of high or very high importance (numbers 4 and 5) were calculated cumulatively. For both factors, these assessments accounted for more than 90% of the answers. Other factors that received an assessment indicative of high importance included the accumulation of sufficient resources (88.6% of the answers indicating number 4 or 5), a plan for change implementation (a vision, a strategy) (88.2% of the answers indicating number 4 or 5). This assessment is consistent with the findings of the analysis of descriptive statistics. Therefore, those success factors may be deemed the most important in change implementation in the public organizations examined.

Political support for change and the introduction of a change agent received the lowest assessment, which implies that, in the respondents' eyes, they were the least important factors in change implementation in public organizations.

Table 4. *Scores of the success factors (% of responses)*

Factor	Point assessment					Sum of points 4 and 5	Position
	1	2	3	4	5		
	(% of indications)						
KSF4	0,0	0,9	5,9	29,1	64,1	93,2	1
KSF7	0,5	0,9	6,4	30,5	61,8	92,3	2
KSF5	0,5	1,8	9,1	34,5	54,1	88,6	3
KSF2	0,5	1,4	10,0	33,2	55,0	88,2	4
KSF3	0,9	0,5	15,0	39,5	44,1	83,6	5
KSF1	1,4	5,0	16,8	43,2	33,6	76,8	6
KSF13	3,6	3,2	18,2	39,1	35,9	75,0	7
KSF12	1,8	4,5	25,0	30,9	37,7	68,6	8
KSF6	2,3	4,1	25,5	38,2	30,0	68,2	9
KSF8	2,7	5,5	23,6	39,5	28,6	68,2	10
KSF11	3,6	11,4	28,6	32,7	23,6	56,4	11
KSF9	22,3	13,6	29,1	17,7	17,3	35,0	12
KSF10	18,2	16,8	36,4	14,1	14,5	28,6	13

Source: *Own work based on research results.*

The hypothesis was tested with the use of Pearson's chi-squared test (χ^2). The significance level was set to $\alpha=0.05$ (Table 5).

Table 5. *Test of independence of success factors* chi2 *(n=220) (α=0,05)*

Factor	p
KSF4 - communication within the organisation	p=,01697
KSF8 - anchoring the outcomes of change in the organisational culture	p=,01879

Source: *Own work based on research results.*

The calculations showed that there were no grounds for rejecting the zero hypothesis for 11 success factors due to the lack of any significant correlation with the type of public organization. These factors may be deemed universal for all public organizations. In the case of only two success factors, communication and anchoring the outcomes of change in the organizational culture, the analysis results disprove the zero hypothesis as their importance in change implementation depends on the type of public organization. Both factors are characteristic of particular organizations. Communication within an organization largely depends on its organizational structure, whereas organizational culture results from many variables such as values and norms of conduct characteristic of a given organization.

4. Discussion

The respondents indicated three areas in terms of factors assessed as very important (answers 4 and 5). They include communication within the organization, the motivation of employees to embrace change, and the accumulation of sufficient resources. In the first two factors, more than 60% of the answers indicated their high importance for change implementation. Denhardt and Denhardt (1999) describe how effective self-governmental managers verify the need for change by listening and learning and then communicate this need in a way that creates support for change.

Kjaerbeck also pointed to the importance of communication in her research into hospital changes (Kjaerbeck 2017).

The importance of sufficient resources in change implementation was indicated by Kikert (2014) and Denhardt and Denhardt (1999). These researchers have emphasized that the failure to provide adequate resources leads to a higher level of interpersonal stress and neglect of basic activities within an organization. According to Baker, the other two factors regarded as highly important (communication and employee motivation) relate to the skills of organizational leaders (Baker, 2007). Some researchers indicate that implementing many changes without understanding the structure and the character of links between subsystems, i.e., without an understanding of communication, may lead to additional costs and a more extended implementation period (Hannan, Polos, and Carroll, 2003). Literature on public management points to organizational culture as a factor influencing innovation in an organization (Kelman, 2005).

What seems particularly interesting is the assessment of political support as a factor of minor importance, whereas the study results presented in the literature point to the contrary. The importance of this factor was observed by Kikert (2014), Denhardt and Denhardt (1999), and Stewart and Kringas (2003). As a factor influencing changes, state policy was indicated, for example, in studies on changes in accounting systems in public organizations (Alsharari, 2018).

Though assessed by the respondents as a matter of minor importance, the introduction of an agent of change into the organization is also a success factor in the literature, though indicated less commonly than political support. For an "agent of change," a low assessment may be due to the absence of such a position in the actual management structure of the examined institutions.

5. Conclusions

Identifying factors that determine the success of change in public organizations is a worthwhile endeavor that provides a better insight into the matter of effective management of the public sector entities. The analysis shows that it does not suffice to convince members of an organization of the need for change. To ensure effective implementation, public managers need to make decisions concerning various areas of the organization. The analysis of literature on change management in public organizations and the studies conducted in Polish public organizations lead to the conclusion that the identification of factors most commonly indicated as necessary for success is indeed possible. They include communication within the organization, the accumulation of sufficient resources, and the motivation of employees to embrace change. The results show that communication and anchoring the outcomes of changes in the organizational culture depend on the type of organization, whereas other factors may be considered "universal" in their application in various types of public organizations.

It should be remembered that employees resist change for many reasons. For instance, the change may be ill-conceived, unwarranted, or negatively affect organization members. Hence the importance of empirical research conducted in Polish public organizations within the scope of factors determining the success of change implementation and the change process itself.

The literature studies conducted suffer from some limitations due to the selection of papers for analysis and the narrow body of research results published on the topic of change management in public sector organizations. In the case of empirical studies, the limitation involves the fact that the sample is not representative. However, the results obtained should help public managers identify the areas that need to become their point of focus in change management. Finally, the results may also serve as a basis for further research into change management in public organizations.

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