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Moving Toward Learning In Public Organizations

Author: Juliana Ribeiro do Amaral Teixeira

Advisor: Kathryn Newcomer

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Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this paper reflect research efforts towards Organizational Learning and do not necessarily express the views of The Rio de Janeiro State Finance Secretariat.

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Members come and go, and leadership changes, but organizations' memories preserve certain behaviors, mental maps, norms, and values over time.

Bo Hedberg

Introduction

The Bureaucratic administrative system, popularized by Max Weber as the most efficient form of organization (Swedberg and Ageval, 2005), molded public agencies management around the world in the 19th century, based on the assumption that traditional rationalities should be replaced by value and goal rationalities, transitioning from the social to the worker professional spectrum. Through control mechanisms such as detailed rules, daily routines, hierarchical chains of command, and formal documents reports, the Bureaucratic system was intended to avoid nepotism and favoritism in order to enable efficiency and rise new professional classes and groups in society (Styhre, 2008).

The Bureaucratic system has been criticized by several authors[1], who considered the large control mechanism introduced by bureaucratic management, pointing to the "dysfunctions of bureaucracy", such as a failure market, killing the worker ambition as the expertize is concentrate in the authority (Styhre, 2008). As Von Mises (1994, p. 56) said "i*t makes the bureaucrat look for instructions, not at material and real success*".

Turnover from good to bad to decreasing management, excess of control, rules of procedure and compliance, and ritualistic, distancing from the goals and "*producing

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[1] As Talcott Parsons, Robert L. Merton, Peter Blau and Philp Selznick.

dysfunctional and contraprodutive organization behavior" (JAFEE, D., 2001, p. 95) can be attributed the bureaucratic system. Sooner other system of public management were adopted by many countries, the so-called post bureaucracy model, where self-control and flexibility are based on the sense of identification with the institution values, trust and shared responsibility, moving to a higher democratic environment (JAFEE, D., 2001).

The Weberian Bureaucratic system still remains attached to part of the public administrative sectors of the Brazilian State has the benefits of establish rules and control mechanisms, but also the noxious side of the model affects the efficacy of the services offered to the citizens. Excessive formalism and weak communication between the federal government, states, and municipalities in Brazil lead to inefficiencies in the current system. In addition to that, the agencies on the same level struggle to interact with each other, increasing the malperformance of the public institutions.

Despite numerous acts, rules and programs to reduce the bureaucratic obstruction in public services, such as more flexibility of bidding procedures, the increase of accountability, several partnerships with non-profit private organisms and the fiscal responsibility law lead to improvements in the system. However, the country is still affected by the excess of bureaucracy, directly reflecting on the nation development in many aspects, such as economic and social. So much attention is paid to the rules and procedures that the goals are hardly achieved and the cost of human and financial resources are misused.

In the year of 2012 the Sao Paulo's Industry Federation (FIESP) published the results of economic research that valued the financial cost of Brazil's bureaucratic constraints. Using reports of the World Bank -The Doing Business Research and of The Institute of Management

Development-IMD, called The World Competitive Yearbook, The FIESP estimated US$ 9,4 billion are expended every year by the private and government organizations. Under a private aspect, the wasted resources could be allocated in reducing productivity costs, raises the purchase power of final costumers and decrease the informal market. On the other side, at the government arena, the money wasted with red tape and less tax revenue (assuming the private companies' productivity losses) could increase the efficiency of public expenditure, effectiveness of public policies and higher investments at key development sectors such as infrastructure and education.

If we review *Doing Business: Going Beyond Efficiency*[2] (2015), which rates countries through *measuring business regulation and the protection of property rights and their effect on businesses, especially small and medium-size domestic firms* (World Bank, 2015), the data collected at the of the two largest business cities of Brazil (Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) has ranked Brazil at 120th position among 189 countries. The eight areas of case studies were analyzed : the growing efficiency of company registries in starting a business; zoning and urban planning in dealing with construction permits; measuring quality of land administration in registering property; importance of registries in getting credit; going beyond related-party transactions in protecting minority investors; trends before and after the financial crisis in paying taxes; judicial efficiency supporting freedom of contract in enforcing contracts; and measuring strength of insolvency laws in resolving insolvency.

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[2] The complete research can be found at http://www.doingbusiness.org/reports/global-reports/doing-business-2015

The IMD's The World Competitive Yearbook[3], composed by investors opinion of how the bureaucracy obstructs business, ranked Brazil in 2014 at the 54th position (among 60 economies), a worst position now compared to the 2008-2010 research, in which Brazil was 51th. Thus, Brazil, under the investors' point of view is less attractive to receive new investments, a factor that directly influences the country economy growth.

Beyond the economic impact of the obstructed bureaucracy in Brazil mentioned above, there are also ethical and social effects, as the decision-maker power centering, lack of transparency by the government agencies, and decrease of liability on the public institutions. For these reasons the public management in Brazil has to look forward to a new paradigm, where constant learning process keeps up with the contextual changes through the Organizational Learning system, which uses acquired knowledge, competitive experience and process of reflections intended to improve the performance of the public organizations (Olejniczak, K., 2014).

Many facts influence the bureaucratic obstructions, such as the political, corruption, and the ineffective legislative. The necessity to innovate the daily process of working, which if improved, can achieve a higher quality of public services. The traditional bureaucratic controls mechanisms based on authority and coercion, directly related with the politic culture can prevent innovative ideas from forming (SOUZA, 2012)

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[3] *"The IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook, (…), measures how well countries manage all their resources and competencies to increase their prosperity. The overall ranking released today reflects more than 300 criteria, two-thirds of which are based on statistical indicators and one-third on an exclusive IMD survey of 4,300 international executives.*" (IMD website, 2015)

The focus of this paper is the improvement of the public service management, through learning in Brazil. First, Organizational Learning is briefly described, followed by an approach at the OL in the government organizations, showing the results of recent research conducted in ministries at Poland along with good practices implemented in some countries of The Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The research addresses how developing learning mechanisms in the public sector can be combined with the constant need for learning with a higher demand for performance and accountability (Olejniczak et al, 2014).

Second, due to the contrast between the government's need to be accountable for performance (in a scenario where the data are available to the citizens) and the experimentation space at public management (that allows innovating through error and reflections-the Organizational Learning), leads to rethinking the definition of "*errors and failures at public administration*" (Olejniczak et al, 2014, p. 91), moving to holding public management accountable for learning, changing the traditional performance that punish errors towards rewarding those who choose to be innovative. This controversy is also discussed at this paper, showing the tension between innovative processes of Organizational Learning and the accountability for management, and how establishing a clear distinction of excusable and non-excusable failure can leads to a new assessment criteria where the public managers will be hold accountable for learning.

The third sectoring presents a broad view of the difficult of implementing Organizational Learning in Brazil and also provides some examples of good practices of this system that are taking place in the Brazilian government to improve itself.

Finally, it is important to point out some issues that should be explored in the Brazilian public organizations in adapting the Organizational Learning system in the government management.

I- The New Thinking on Learning Organization

The Organizational Learning (OL) system strongly emerged from the private sector in the 1980's due to globalization. Companies needed to make fast decisions, designing this process as a survival mechanism by gaining a competitive advantage through faster learning from their own successes and failures as well as being capable to transfer knowledge inside their own arena. In order to be competitive, companies must develop strategies, accelerating the decision process based on market changes, learning from their competitors and within their own companies, maximizing the use of employer skills, acquiring positive knowledge of mistakes and stimulating improvements in all areas of the company (Marquard, 1996). From an economic perspective, an organization is a static bundle of resources, but an organism has to be in constant progress, by a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach of analysis into individual, group and corporate levels (Dogson, 1993).

The organizations have to develop systems, "*which are more adaptable and responsive to change (…) in uncertain technological and market circumstances." (*Dogson, 1993, p 375, 378) Institutionalizing learning mechanisms is related with the improvement of new technologies and increasing industrial productivity and strategic management in an era where knowledge is capital and has to be matched with the company's strategic plans in order to be useful. Otherwise, knowledge that is underused is useless to the organization.

Thus far, this paper examines simply the reasons and outcomes of OL. This is usually the management approach of OL, which relates this subject to a sustainable increase of efficiency and innovation in companies. A psychological approach of OL goes into the process itself and discusses the steps the organization has to take to improve workforce skills to be useful in new

routines and strengthen the company's culture. At last, as an economic point of view, the OL is a way to heighten improvement in activities, related with positive outcomes (Dogson, 1993).

1.1 Organizational Learning

There are many ways to define Organizational Learning. Michael J. Marquard describes it as "a *process by which individual gain new knowledge and insights that results in a change of behavior and actions. It comprises the cognitive (intellectual), affective (emotional), and psychomotor (physical) domains"* (1996, p 30).

Lipshitz et al. (1996) defines organizational learning as "*the process through which organization members develop shared values and knowledge[4] based on past experience of themselves and of others.*"

This definition assumes that even when the outcomes of learning are negative, the action itself can produce positive consequences because mistakes are analyzed and prompt new paths of development. Moreover, individual learning leads the organization to cultural and directional changes besides retaining information, and can happen in internal activities of the companies or external influences, in different speeds and levels among the workforce (Dogson, 1993). But, in order to OL be effective is fundamental an encouraging environment of interactions and leaning processes.

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[4] Traditionally the Organization Learning divides knowledge as tacit and explicit. The tacit knowledge is formed by personal convictions, mental models, immeasurable subjective perspectives, created over the time and experiences. The explicit knowledge is the part of the tacit knowledge that could be externalized, in the format of rules and codes. Accordingly to Marcia Relva de Souza (2012, p. 29), the tacit knowledge cannot be transferred but can be absorb the explicit one.

Next, it must be mentioned that a literature [5] was developed about "learning organizations," or institutions that develop structures and strategies to enhance and maximize OL, facilitating learning for all its members, and continually transforming itself.

Also, the so called "inter-organizational learning" occurs by *"using the knowledge through the experience of other organization to advance learning and shape the behavior of the recipient organization" (*Halachmi and Woron, p. 145), thereby preventing the similar situation from happening in the company. The institution, which is the source of learning, can, after influencing another organization, create a formal network that will allow positive multilateral learning. The inter-organizational learning can be planned, with the actions intended. When it occurs unintentionally and caused by fortuity events prior to any learning plan, it is called "spontaneous inter-organizational learning."

It is important to highlight that OL is built with a productivity learning which is a "*conscious process of reflection intended to produce new perception, goal and/or behavior strategies"* (Lipshitz et al, 2007, p. 16)*.* But what measure learning productivity? Lipshitz et al, 2007, point out two measures: rigorous and practical. The rigorous take place when the OL expectations are reached (outcomes as expected). The practical measure of productivity OL shows the results of organizational learning actions based on valid knowledge. The rigorous measure has two obstacles: It is almost impossible to fully determine the impact of a new OL and the stakeholders have different perceptions of what is a satisfactory outcome.

On the other hand, the practical measure of OL productivity based on a critical evaluation focuses on the end as well as the means of the new knowledge. More than that, acquiring new

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[5] As Peter Senge, David A. Gavin and Mike Pedler.

knowledge is not enough, as the behavior of the actor must be reported and analyzed by the institution.

OL has mechanisms such as group review, communities' practices, benchmark teams, and so forth that intends to produce better mental models,[6] formal procedures and informal norms (as result of a social process of interaction).

OL mechanisms are also important to differentiate for the individual and the organization: the nature of how the information is processed. While individuals learn through cognitive mental processes, the organizations' process the information collectively, by groups of people interacting within the OL mechanisms.

Individual learning is essential to the OL, but is not a sufficient condition. Besides, the individual commitment and ability to learn is different for each person, as the interest of learning with a co-worker, the environment (i.e., infra-structure such as IT and research material), personal development plan, opportunities for professional development and also the existence of a team learning, which enables the generation *"of knowledge through analysis of complex issues, innovating action and collective problem solving"*(Marquardt, 1996, p. 32-35).

Marquardt *apud* Ray Stata remarks that an OL can also be delineated as "*the sum of individual and/or group learning, build on past knowledge and experience*," (1996, p. 53) after shared insights, knowledge, and mental models of members of the organization, called the organizational memory. This memory is directly related with the mechanisms used to retain

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[6] Mental model "is our image or perspective of an event, situation, activity or concept (…) that influences how we understand the world and how we take action" (Marquardt, 1996, p. 45).

knowledge using institutional mechanisms such as policies, strategies and explicit models. This whole process involves beliefs, assumptions, social and political influences.

Organizational Learning, according to Olejniczack et al (2014, p. 22) has four basic elements: "*knowledge, feedback, reflection and adaptation*." While knowledge can be defined as "*information in action*" and categorized[7] as strategic ("knowing why we do this"), operational ("knowing how"), and contextual ("knowing what/about"), feedback is "*an impulse that informs us about an organization's performance"* (Olejniczack et al 2014, p. 23). The feedback in turn allows the organization to analyze whether an activity or process should be kept, excluded or redefined. But feedback does not only arise inside the organizations. Rather, it is important to use diversified sources, from external entities, as well as be collected regularly, and contain structure.

Next, well-structured feedback leads to a process of reflection through discussions, inquiries, deliberations, and analysis. A reflection can "l*ead to eventual change in knowledge structure and volume*" (Olejniczack et al, 2014, p. 23).

When feedback induces a reflection that has a change in mental models shared by the organization's members, producing outputs in their own environment, followed by inputs to the system organizations, this leads to the "feedback-loops" or types of learning (Olejniczack et al, 2014).

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[7] Here the conceit of knowledge was distinguished from the traditional tacit/explicit form. At a different perspective, content, the authors divides the knowledge in three dimensions: strategic (objectives, missions and effects), operational (tools and procedures according to regulations) and contextual learning (knowing the environment).

The path for an improvement of the organization through learning is described by Argyris and Schon (1978) as three types[8] of learning, or the feedback-loops: single-loop, double-loop and deutero-learning. These collective learning types are similar to the approaches to individual learning, as described:

> "Organizational learning involves the detection and correction of error. When the error detected and corrected permits the organization to carry on its present policies or achieve its present objectives, then that error-detection-and-correction process is single-loop learning. Double-loop learning occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying norms, policies and objectives." (Argyris & Schon, 1978, p. 3)

More specifically, single-loop learning means the knowledge that is added is a simple adjustment of the firm's actions, procedures and routines that changes operationally within a given framework, without altering the fundamental nature of their activities. Double-loop learning substantially and deeply changes the concepts, assumptions, values and key premises of the organization's knowledge bases (Olejniczak et al, 2014).

The main challenge is to turn the single-loop into a double-loop learning,[9] which will be accomplished by developing new strategies after a reflection on previous contexts and inquiries regarding their previous OL, discovering what *facilitated or inhibited* learning (Argyris and
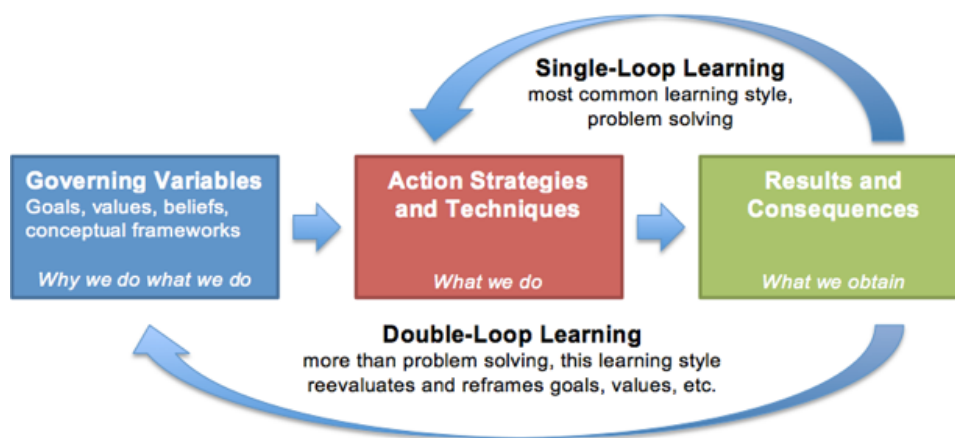
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[8] OLEJNACZANCK et al (2014) also describe a fourth feedback-loop (the "strategic loop learning") related with the organization's mission " *that leads to the adjustment of the main goals and the redefinition of the department tasks"* (p. 23).

[9] Malakouti et al (2014) explain that Argyris and Schon's (1978) studies found that most organizations do quite well in a single-loop learning but have great difficulties in the double-loop learning. They could not find example of organizations which learned in a deutero fashion. Their general contention is that organizations ordinarily fail to learn on a higher level. One reason for this is they describe as "inhibitory loops". Primary inhibitory learning loops are a self-reinforcing cycle in which errors in action provoke individuals to behavior which reinforce those errors. Secondary inhibitory loops are group and inter-group dynamics which enforce conditions for error (ambiguity, vagueness, etc.). They contend that organizations tend to create learning systems that inhibit double-loop learning, calling into question their norms, objectives, and basic policies. Morgan (1986) also analyzes learning inhibitors. He describes how departmental structures focus the attention of their members on parochial rather than organization-wide problems, how systems of accountability frequently foster defensiveness in attitudes, and how, as Argyris and Schon argue, there is a gap between actors' rationalized statements of what they do and what actually occurs. Although the problems of learning in organizations, such as the obstacles to unlearning, are considerable, learning, of course, can and do occur. Argyris and Schon do not rule out the possibility of higher level double-loop and deutero learning.

Schon, 1978, p. 4), and what effectively worked or failed at OL. This is called the deutero-learning, which is also described as the "learning about learning," reflected in adjustments in sources and structures used for information collection and analysis.

Graphically these relations are described in Figure 1:

Figure 1: The single-loop and double-loop learning processes

Source: Patrick O'Neil/Extraordinary Conversations

It is important to mention that during the process of OL, routines (rules and procedures), values and beliefs will be discarded if they are inadequate, obsolete, or outdated in order to make new ones, called the Organizational Unlearning. This unlearning can be "*intentional discard of routine or no intentional loss of routine*" (Tsang & Zara, 2008, p. 1144).

About Organizational Unlearning routines, Sang & Zara (2008) highlight some important facts:

- The new routines established at an Organization Learning are not necessarily will be better than those discarded;

- When a routine substitutes others there might have a short-term negative effect;

- An unlearning process can occur without being followed by a new routine;

- Organizational Unlearning requires an individual level of unlearning, but the opposite is not necessary;[10]

- The new routines may gradually delete the old routines from the organizational memory, which is the storage of information about the organization history, human or non-human (regulations, operation procedures, reports, software, etc.);

- Unlearning can leads to a "relearning," when the new routine is not effective and the organization decides to reintroduce the discarded routine. However, during the period of non-use of the old routine some of the memory could be lost and members will have to learn again.

An important factor in translating individual knowledge into OL is the organizational culture, which can be produced by group experiences; where there is space to share beliefs and assumptions that unconsciously work to create collectively norms and values, leading to cognitive systems and memories. Preexisting knowledge, environmental stimulation and behavior oriented toward learning within the organization, as technological development,

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[10] As example a member finds outs that use a routine divergent of the organization and voluntary discard the wrong procedure.

establishes routines, structures beliefs, codes cultures, and develops departments specifically created to develop learning strategies. (Dogson, 1993; Malakouti et al, 2014).

Lipshitz's et al (2007) describe Organizational Learning Structures [11] (OLMs) as fundamental not only to sustain instruments for support OL occurrence, but also to differentiate individual and organizational learning levels. The authors describe four types of OLMs structures, where it takes place (online/off-line [12]), and who is the agent of learning (internal/external[13]). See Table 1:

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[11] The OLM's cannot be confused with OL's methodologies (hiring key personnel, training, etc.) and technologies (intranet). Organizational Learning methodologies and technology are elements of OL mechanisms (Lipshitz's et al ,2007).

[12] Online means that learning takes place very close to the task performance itself. Off-line takes place in a distinct time and place than the work itself. (Lipshitz et al, 2007, p. 28).

[13] Internal agents are people who engage learning performed by themselves while external agents disseminate learning form tasks performed by others.

Table 1: Organizational Learning Structures (OLM's)

Organizational Learning Mechanisms	When/where take place Who is the changing agent	Assumptions
After-actions/ post project reviews, and communities of practice	Off-line Internal agent	The organization's amount of accumulated knowledge is directly relevant for success in a new project, benefiting from critical past reviews of their individual members, especially if they participated in the project and were responsible for the eventual outcomes.
Experimentations and debriefing	Online Internal	Working and learning are combined by the same agents, when executing tasks are accompanied by certain practices that produce changes into routines, norms and behaviors (reflection-in-action). Experimentation (tests) takes place at the same place and time as the production/services process. Debriefing differs from experimentation for not having formal or informal tests.
Post project assessment unit and scenario planning units	Off-line External agent	Learning is best performed by experts, who are assigned to this task on a full time basis, in centralized units (disseminations centers). Post- project they observe activities and identify lessons learned for developing new trainings, and the scenario-planning units learn by planning and plausibly construct red future events.
Coaching networks and peer assistance	Online External	The online-external structure relates organizational members with experts, influencing the application of new knowledge online. Coaching networks presumes concentrated knowledge among a limited group of experts, in a one-on-one relationship. In the peer assistance there are not hierarchical relationships, every member of the organization can be a value resource of knowledge.

Source: The author based on Lipshitz et al, 2007, p. 28-42.

Choosing the best mechanism that should be adopted by an organization will rely upon their characteristic (formal or informal entities), what best suit the needs or circumstances, the capability to listen to their own members and engagement with learning. As previously stated, a process of organizational learning itself is not enough to produce efficient results. A key to productive learning is developing the cultural facet of the entity and instill in members the norms that will produce genuine knowledge. Lipshitz's et al (2007, p. 47-48) suggest five norms that promote learning: inquiry, issue orientation, transparency, integrity and accountability.

The authors define inquiry "*a determination to persist in investigation and suspending judgment until full understanding is achieved*" (…) "*clearly necessary when organizational members do not fully understand as situation*" (2007, p. 47-50) or think they understand too well. Next, issue orientation is focused on learning a specific question or problem, keeping the inquiry's target on the real demand for learning, keeping away others' questions that may drive the process of learning down an innocuous path. Meanwhile, transparency is "*the willingness to expose one's actions and thoughts to the scrutiny of others"* (Lipshitz et al, 2007, p. 53), or, in simpler words, to be able express your feelings truthfully, or openly sharing your relevant opinion about the issue at hand. The environment that enables transparency of information is built gradually, with the encouragement of the manager and the reduction of self-interest of the organization's members, all of whom deal with the social judgment that can rise after the opinion is shared.

During a disagreement in a learning process, the integrity norm is usually evident, and is defined as a self-critical effort that make people "*not only remain open to changing their minds but actually seek information and feedback that might lead them to see thing differently*"

(Lipshitz, 2007, p. 57). The organizational members in conflict have to be open to find new dimensions for their beliefs, understanding that this behavior is positive for the learning process of the entity.

The last norm of a learning culture is accountability, in the words of Lipshitz "*is the willingness to assume responsibility for learning and for the implementation of lessons learned"* (2007, p. 60). The results of the learning process should be spread among the departments, being part of the institution culture.

Other aspects that influence the Organization Learning process have to be referred in this paper: the psychological, contextual, managerial and the dissemination of knowledge. At the psychological level, the sense of safety directly affects the OL process. An insecure member avoids risks, as he is worried about his image and afraid to be seen as ignorant, negative, incompetent or disruptive. The fear of losing control over situations is also related to insecurity. In addition, defensiveness toward threatening feelings is a huge obstacle to Organizational Learning, especially when individuals or groups see each other as danger. Also related to the psychological aspect of OL is the influence of the high level commitment to the organization on productivity results. Despite diverse impulses of commitment, it will be accomplished when the organization's success is seen as the member individual success as well (Lipshitz et al, 2007). At the managerial level, to avoid those behaviors and increase the sense of safety, trust [14] is a characteristic that should be cultivated by the organization, considering trust influences innovative behavior and decreases defensiveness.

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[14] Lapidot-Raz concluded that four behaviors express trust: willingness to be open, cooperate, learn, and take risks (Lipshitz, 2007).

Understanding the context (characteristics and environment of the organization) that can occur during OL is also an important element. Lipshitz et al (2007) described six contextual factors that can influence the learning process: environmental uncertainty, task uncertainty, task structure, proximity with the organization core mission (the original purpose of the institution), and organization' structure.

The managerial aspect is also a key influence in successful implementation of OL, as the leadership inspires their members by teaching the essentiality of learning to improve both individual and collective performances. Leaders do not just enact policies, but are also really supporting, make themselves available (including taking part in some learning activities) and are more tolerant to failures that may happen during the process (distinguishing excusable and non-excusable mistakes[15]). Taken together, these leadership qualities increase one's psychological safety.

It is important to acknowledge that visionary leadership is not a requirement for OL success, but it is nonetheless crucial in organizations that deal with an unfavorable context (Liphistz et al, 2007). A heroic leader figure is not a necessary asset for an institution to improve OL, considering that it can be promoted at any level, even before the overall organization transformation is completed (Lipshitz et al, 2007).

Lastly, the dissemination of knowledge is the next step after the learning process, and serves as a central point in successful Organizational Learning. According to Lipshitz et al (2007, p. 110) "*knowledge dissemination involves the transfer of knowledge form one person or unit to*

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[15] Non-excusable mistakes that results from negligence or carelless preparation.

other persons or units." Those who share the knowledge (source) must be willing to do it, because time and energy are spent during this action. As commitment to the organization grows, the source will be more motivated to share. On the other hand, the recipients of knowledge are those who absorb the source's information, and must be motivated to learn, be able to express their need for it, and be open to new technologies and innovative approaches. The relationship between the source and recipient can be direct (face-to-face) or indirect by using technology (e-mail, videoconference, forums, chat, database). The most important asset of the dissemination of knowledge is to keep a communication line between the organizational learning mechanisms and the cultural norms listed above (Lipshitz, 2007).

Now that the main characteristics of Organization Learning have been presented from a general perspective, it must be more narrowly discussed in the context of public administration. We will examine how to improve public management through the collection of information, as well as collective analyses and reflections, consequently producing new knowledge that leads to changes in the routine and policies.

1.2 Organizational Learning in the public sector- examples of good practices

Public organizations confront daily fights in attempting to address citizen's needs, budget constraints, and change in socio-economic systems (Olejniczak et al, 2014). On the surface it seems very close to challenges faced by private companies, however, public organizations are under several laws and rule requirements, deal with the scarcity of financial resources and, above all, have to be accountable for their decisions and results.

Even so, using management mechanisms birthed in the private sector is already an usual practice by governments who intend to modernize their agencies, and is a reason why Organizational Learning is suited to ensure better public policies in highly complex public programs or even in the daily routines of the civil servants. Even more, a multi-sector, flexible approach is fundamental to solving modern and complicated issues, such as the high capacity of data collection, which makes learning and responding so important for public organizations (Olejniczak et al, 2014).

Although there is expanded literature about Organizational Learning, Learning Organizational and Knowledge Management[16], it is mostly developed through private sector perspectives, lacking empirical studies that can portray the specific characteristics of public management, such as political influences, mechanisms of power, and the influence of bureaucratic models. This lack of attention to public organizations prompted the four year research study[17] by the Centre for European Regional and Local Studies-University of Warsaw and the Malopolska School of Public Administration-Cracow. This research was co-financed by the Europe Union and Polish Executive Branch, which was a new member of the EU. It deals with the duality of administrative management as part of the government units that are modern and adopted the "*new philosophy of public management and other parts still work at the line of the traditional bureaucratic paradigm*"(Olejniczak et al, 2014, p. 21). In order to know which methods might advance learning in public organizations, twelve countries of the OECD had

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[16] Related in the relation between economics and management as a resource of competitive advantage (Olejniczack et al,2014)
[17] Organizational Learning- A framework for public administration. Editors: Karol Olejniczak and Stanislaw Mazuz, Scholar Publishing House, Warsaw, 2014.

their OL practices studied to find an inspirational advance of learning in public organizations and by extension, in different models of public administrations.

An approach based on the most potentially interesting institutions involved interviews with public administration researchers of the countries as well as experienced workers, and study visits. As a result the *Searching for Inspiration-Practices in Twelve Countries* research showed what is actually being implemented by Australia, France, Spain, The Netherlands, Japan, Canada, Norway, New Zealand, The United States of America, Switzerland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. As mentioned above, these countries do not have the same public management model, but all of them are figured between the 2nd (New Zealand) and 33th (Spain) positions in T*he Doing Business 2015* report, and it can be understood that these countries are promoting programs to improve their governmental performance.

Some of these countries use the Weberian classical model of public administration (France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland). In the Neo-liberian model (Norway and Sweden) public administrations combine Weber model with participatory approach, while The New Public Administration School is the base of Australia, New Zealand and The United Kingdom. Finally, Canada, The Netherlands and The United States of America follow the Governance model, were the administrative system is mixed with a market-based approach (Olejniczak et al, 2014).

Table 2 describes six of the fourteen practices implemented by those countries and listed at the Polish research as innovative solutions to improve public management, each one

representing one of the six principles[18] determinants of learning, which also derived from the analysis.

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[18] Newcomer, K. E. (2013, p. 12-27) describes the six determinant principles for learning:

1. Environmental scanning- prior to implement an activity, a big picture of good and bad scenarios is set with the available information and knowledge taken by all parties involved, through the use of mental models, knowledge brokers, argument maps, or mapping strategies policy areas;
2. Processing feedback- explicit requirement of external sources (as stakeholders), enable a own review of practices;
3. Collecting new ideas (broadening the search to solicit new ideas)- networking information among those who deal with similar issues, getting new ideas and revising own procedures. As consequence, problems can be solved and errors are not replicated. As example, were found employee's suggestion programs and best practice contests;
4. Collaboratively generating new ideas (interactive deliberations to generate new ideas)- a network with different skilled members, with broader perspectives, in a two-way communication;
5. Experimenting in guilt-free innovation space- where a safe environment for experimentation is created, such as decision-making game or contest to reward innovative ideas, were the failure treat is taken away in order to an innovate empowerment of the managers;
6. Forums for single & double loop reflection- where there is a collectively reflection of individual results, in a non-blame environment, enables to understand the complex system the member collaborates, replicating success, avoiding failures, in a single-loop reflection. Holding accountable for the factors of the undesirable performance, it can be implemented new strategies, solutions and learning over time, in a double-loop reflection.

Table 2: Innovative practices of OECD members

Country	Public Administration Model	Practice	Results	Principle
Australia	New Public Management	Mental Models created at the Ministry of Health, mapping the objectives, intentions, inspiration and attitudes from the "customer" perspective, using research methods, especially surveys, interviews and focus groups.	Helps to identify the objectives and motivations of the recipients of the Ministry actions, facilitating consultations and negotiations with the ministerial partners. Also helps to improve the communication between employees at the same ministry and external stakeholders	Environmental scanning
Sweden	Neo-liberian model	Research Committees- Are create to research a concrete problem and develop a legislative solution. Their terms of reference are set by government and are always clearly focused on a certain problem. The committees are composed of political appointees, civil servants, scientists and well-recognized experts from the field in question.	Improve quality of regulations, combining different points of view, giving the government representatives knowledge from experts, being a start point for legislative change	Processing feedback
Spain	Weberian	Knowledge Management 1.0- is an IT system that enables sharing information, questions, and knowledge, in a discussion group that is born with a employer report to obtain information. The discussion only takes place after a database check for similar cases and is usually a multi-level analysis among those who have knowledge about the issue. The result is recorded on the system database.	Encourage officials to share knowledge in different levels of the organization, increasing their self-esteem. Also, it creates data of solved problems that can be easily accessed	Collecting new ideas

Canada	Governance	GCPEDIA (Government of Canada Encyclopedia)- a web portal (with easy create/modify content), design by and for the public administration employees, who have exclusive access. There is space for thematic discussion and share documents, reports and projects, between all areas of administration.	Provides spontaneous activity, establishing a knowledge sharing culture, through technology.	Collaboratively generating new ideas
Netherlands	Governance	Laboratory of innovation - a specific department used by the National Audit Office and the Netherlands Statistics Office to test, through a small interdepartmental team with expertise in research and management, employees ideas about new management techniques	Create a safe space to take risks and test potentially useful solutions, increasing creativity and knowledge among the participants. It also motivates new ideas by employees	Experimenting in guilt-free innovation space
United States Of America	Governance	Data driven performance reviews- regular and structured meeting that discuss the progress of an organization by reviewing key data (more quantitative than qualitative), emphasizing products and results, trends, explanations that may rise during the analysis of the data and discuss solutions.	As an element of the performance measurement, it is essential to the implementation of public policies based on evidence. The data is taken as a start point to discussions that results in management commitments related to the content of the review.	Forums for single and double loop reflection

Source: The author based on Olejniczack et al, 2014, p. 50-67 and Newcomer, K., 2013, p. 12-27.

The research has concluded that Organizational Learning is becoming increasingly important in public administration, changing its nature to a more comprehensiveness of public affairs and *a "need to seek more effective ways to manage them" (*Olejniczack et al, 2014, p. 67).

As well, among factors that induce the practices of OL at public administration are the need to rationalize public expenditures, overloading of the state, dynamic economics changes (that demand fast adjustments), the popularity of public policies based on evidence, and the "*erosion of the omnipotent hierarchical power, forcing the need to interact with different social and economic actors*" (Olejniczack et al, 2014, p. 68). Thus, the proposition that the knowledge acquirement drives improvement in decision- making processes and, as a consequence, public administration improvement is the reason that Organizational Learning has been studied and applied in those economies.

A primary factor to enable a successful OF in central administrations, according to Olejniczack et al (2014, p. 77) is:

> *Is developed strategic planning, understood as setting objectives, identifying ways of achieving them an indicators to access the degree of their implementation. This approach to the organization of public administrations 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 individuals officials.*

In addition, leadership that stimulates the process of learning is an effective factor, especially if it permits certain limited risks to support members' experimentation, and during this

process treats failures not only with punishment, but, instead an opportunity to develop (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., 2014).

Because of improvement of OL at public organizations has in its nature a "*trial and error processes that lead to improved organizational performance on the basis of knowledge , experience and new insights"* (Newcomer, 2013, p. 01), tensions among the promotion of learning and the accountability for performance rise. This tension increases with the trade-off between time and resources that public agents have to either report performance or dedicate to the Organizational Learning (Newcomer, 2013) Additionally they fear failure that can cause punishments.

For the reasons above, public managers has to face tension between being accountable for management and promoting learning. A new path can be adopted: moving from accountability for management towards be "*held accountable for understanding, learning and for implementing lessons learned*" (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., p. 93).

2 Accountability for Performance X Accountability for Learning

The bureaucratic system introduced a new way of control including hierarchical authority and formalized standards assignments and operation procedures, resulting in efficiency, transparency and accountability management (Styhire, A. 2008, p. 638). The accountability concept is related with "*the responsibility to answer, to explain, and to justify specify action (or inactions), in part by keeping records of important activities*" (Barbara, 1998, p. 6). In fact it means controlling something, from a small sector to a presidential level. Those who analyze the information, are usually called "holders" and those who provide the information are called "holdees". If something is wrong, there will be consequences for the holdees, thus accountability includes punishment (Benh, Robert D., 1992, p. 3).

There are at least three [19] types of accountability: accountability for finances, accountability for fairness, and accountability for performance. Accountability for finance is the most usual and can be described as informing the tax payers if their public officials have handled public finances according to the law and regulations (Benh, Robert D., 1992, p. 7). Accountability for fairness means the holdee has to account for using equality and ethical standards, pre-defined by values that the government wants to uphold.

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[19] Beyond the fiscal and performance accountability, Shelley H. Metzenbaum (2006) defines two others categories: ethical and democratic. While ethical accountability is an honest, no-fraud or non-abuse of power in the government operations, democratic accountability is the capacity of engaging citizens and their representatives to exchange information clearly, giving what they need and treating them with respect and courtesy.

For Robert D. Benh (1992, p. 8-9) the proper use of public funds and prevent of abusive power by the politics and public officials are included in the accountability for finance and fairness regulations.

Meanwhile, **accountability for performance** is related to achieving the purposes of the institutional actions. While the accountability for finances and accountability for fairness are related of "*how the organism does what it does*"(Benh, Robert D., 1992, p. 9), the accountability for performance matters with accomplishment of goals.

These models rose in the business field and have started to be applied in public sector as a way to inform the citizens about the government expenditures and operations.

As the democratic institutions get stronger, citizens' wishes to fulfill their expectations and gauge whether public agencies are managing the budget effectively grow. Rise, hence, the expectations of the entire society can access the data, as the government makes it available rise.

But while finances and fairness types of accountability are expressed by rules and clear objectives, performance accountability cannot be measured in the same way if we consider the questions that should be examined, namely what is a failure or what is a success. For these reasons, a clear benchmark of performance is needed to be established.

Consequently, governments are requiring their agencies to achieve goals and measure performance with the purpose of improving societal outcomes and strengthening their accountability. In short, performance measurements helps organizations visualize progress made in relation to their goals, adjust the direction of public programs accordingly, and ensuring the strategies or the level of the effort exerted match with the goal's requirements, and communicate

"*what works and what does not, speeding both uptake of effective practices and the discard of ineffective one*s" (Metzenbaum, 2006, p. 08).

Shelley H. Metzenbaum (2006, p. 52) asserts that:

> *"less attention should be paid to incentives and far more to ensuring the active and effective use of outcome-focused goals and measures. What it also suggests is a need for public organizations to clarify accountability expectations both with those being held accountable and with those holding them to account, including supervisors, legislators, budget offices, grant-giving organizations, delivery partners, and the public."*

Metzembaum (2006) considers six essential practices that should hold government organizations accountable, described in Table 3.

Table 3: Accountability- six essential practices

Emphasizing outcomes, using specific targets	Focus on specific outcome-focused goals or targets, a few of which are challenging; set targets when they have not been externally set and use targets to communicate relative priorities in all areas.
Measurement	Measure progress and other factors affecting progress and accountability, communicate it broadly, and discover what the measurements reveal. This is accomplished by organizing and studying the data to look for patterns, anomalies, changes, and relationships to find out what works and what doesn't work. The causal connections and where more understanding is needed is also obtained with measurement.

Delivering feedback	Provide feedback to those trying to reach targets so they stay focused on them, believe in their own abilities to meet them, and think about specific ideas and practices that will help them reach their targets.
Assuring an ongoing venue for interactive inquiry	Encourage interactive inquiry to engage others with expertise and resources in delivering feedback, action planning, and implementation; stimulate synergistic thinking and facilitate coordination and collaboration, usually through regularly scheduled meetings.
Cogent strategies	Develop cogent long-term strategies and shorter-term action plans (not necessarily written plans) based on the best available evidence and ideas.
Implementation	Implement the strategy and action plans, with ongoing revision based on frequent and timely review of experience.

Source: The author based on Metzenbaum, 2006, p. 52.

Traditional performance for management model intends to demonstrate that procedures were followed, according to the measurement used as assessment. Bureaucratic organizations use mainly the legality, transparency and adherence as assessment criteria, while the new public management organization uses "*effectiveness, financial efficiency and utility*" criteria (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., 2014, p. 83). It is important to mention that the sustainability of a public intervention is also a common criteria for assessing accountability in the public sector.

In the public eye, managers tend to be risk-averse, avoiding new strategies, flexibility and experimentation, being far away from Organizational Learning guidance. If we look closely, while performance accountability relies on following procedures, fulfilling plans without errors, focusing on the process itself, collecting information at indicators and structured data, and repeating what works well ("exploitation"), Organizational Learning follows a different path.

OL attempts to predict outcomes through an experimental processes, verifying the long-run performance results, becoming informed by opinions , taking feedback from different sources, and searching for new solutions ("exploration") (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., 2014).

The tension between performance accountability and the OL system is summarized in Table 4.:

Table 4. Contrasting Expectations and Behaviors Associated with Performance Accountability and Learning

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

Source: Newcomer, K., 2013, p. 10.

According to Newcomer and Olejniczack (2014), to balance these contrasting behaviors, new strategies for learning, such as using innovative practices (as Table 2) and changing the way public interventions are understood, can reinforce the space for experimentation (as redefine failure) and promotion learning (accountability for learning).

Since the traditional approach of analysis of public policies decision-making is based on rational choice theory,[20] this theory has being questioned by new researchers. Newcomer and Olejniczack (2014) suggest that public interventions such as projects, programs, policies, and regulations should be viewed in a non-traditional and logical way ("theory in use"):

> *"(…) an assumption about the casual relationship between implemented activities (IF…), the behavioral response they trigger in a target group (THEN…) and the final, expected effect- a socioeconomic change (AND THEN…). Implementation of a public program involves testing the "theory" in a certain context and time."* *(Newcomer and Olejniczack, 2014, p. 86)*

Under the theory in use, the promotion of public policy must create space for experimentation, that leads to a tolerance for mistakes to determine whose that are more praiseworthy-excusable mistakes, and the ones that are more blameworthy-non excusable mistakes (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., 2014).

Distinguishing the praise from blame is extremely important in the public sector where major interventions take place and public expenditures have to be efficient. In addition, errors will always be seen as result of poor management and incompetence, regardless of whether they result in an innovative public intervention or not.

The reasons for failure should be analyzed in two different ways. Blameworthy failures are the result of conscious deviance from rules and regulations, so inadequate procedures should be investigated. Others failures are caused by the limited predictability of socio-economic processes that can influence the public sector, or situations accumulated over time. The errors

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[20] Olejniczack (2014) *apud* Amadae (2007) claims that these decisions are carefully made based on statics preferences and usefulness.

also are possible outcomes of innovative experimentation, if they produce knowledge. However, to prevent the incompetent behavior excuse, it is prudential to explore new procedures and projects in small scale first (and for consequence small investments) as a prior condition to implementation on a big scale (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., 2014).

Figure 2 shows the two directions that can be classified errors/failures, on a continuum of being acceptable to warranting punishment.

Figure 2: A spectrum of reasons for error in implementing public sector interventions

EXPLORATORY TESTING
A pilot study conducted to extend knowledge about adopting "proven" intervention does not show desired results

PRAISE WORTHY

UNCERTAINTY
A lack of clarity about future events and/or ongoing change in the problem leads to incomplete or inappropriate implementation design

HYPOTHESIS TESTING
A pilot study implemented to test a proposed intervention does not show desired results

PROBLEM COMPLEXITY
The problem to be addressed by the intervention is more complex than anticipated

FAILED REPLICATION
An intervention should to be effective elsewhere does not produce desired results when replicated

PROCEDURE INADEQUACY
Inadequate or incomplete guidance results in faulty or incomplete implementation

PROCESS COMPLEXITY
Inter-organizational and/or intergovernmental coordination is not adequate to implement an intervention effectively

INATTENTION
An individual or team inadvertently deviates from implementation guidance

LACK OF ABILITY
An individual or team does not have the needed skills or resources to design or implement an effective intervention

BLAME WORTHY

DEVIANCE
An individual or team chooses to violate procedures when implementing an intervention

Source: Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., 2014, p. 92, based on Edmodson, A., 2011.

Clarifying what is a non-blameworthy negative outcome leads to an expansion of creative initiatives of the public agents, and to encourage that behavior, a new accountability assessment criteria have to implemented, as the public intervention is valued by their consequences, considering that some interventions outcomes are not easily measured. A public intervention that is considered successful only by its economic efficiency was likely built on the cheapest options, and in the long run have a "*lower quality services of infrastructure costs*" (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., p. 93).

Newcomer and Olejniczack (2014, p. 93) proposes

"*that public leaders and managers be held accountable for understanding, learning and of implementing lessons learned*" (…) "*focus more systematically on assessing all of an intervention's effects-not simply initial cost of effects.*"

The public perception of what leads the interventions' actions can also be changed, increasing the citizens' trust in government and in the public agents, from bureaucrats to the citizen's partners.

The criterion of assessment, holding public managers accountable for learning, has to be set in some bases: through comparison of problems and solutions from other organizations, "*exploring the context during implementation of a intervention*", analyzing the root of the problems (instead of only the symptoms), avoiding making the same mistakes (discontinuous ineffective policies) and implementing lessons learned (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., 2014, p. 94).

Being accountable for learning will permit experiments to not be evaluated for failures but also for learning and for implementing new knowledge, changing the perspectives about public intervention' efficacy, and public policies as well (Newcomer, K. and Olejniczack, K., 2014)

According to Kathryn Newcomer (2013), the analysis of blameworthy and praiseworthy behavior can lead the transition from traditional practices of performance accountability to accountability for learning, through support and encouraging incentives, as listed in Table 5:

Table 5. Transition from (Traditional) Performance Accountability to Accountability for Learning

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

Source: Newcomer, K., 2013, p. 30.

In a trust environment, where there are incentives to innovate with clear and realistic goals, leaders can create a learning culture as the members are comfortable to be creative and are proud to be a part of the development of their institution.

3 Brazil's Public Administrative that Constrains Learning

In the middle of 1990's, new public managerial techniques were introduced in the Public Sector in Brazil with the purpose of modernizing the complex bureaucratic system, influenced by many cycles of central planned governments. However, nowadays the country still suffers from technocratic issues, especially caused by concentration of power, hierarchical and fragmented decision making that does not respect pluralism, and the lesser number of actors who participate in the formulation of the public policies. The state-citizen relationship is still fragile despite major development in democratic institutions, wich is why the government has to improve acquisition of new knowledge in order to be effective and updated (Souza, 2012).

As stated above, Organizational Learning emerged inside the private sector, but has already been applied in public management, to answer the needs of the citizens in a faster and efficient way.

Space for innovation is fundamental for Organizational Learning to raise in the public sector, so that for how experimental and integration will lead to new learning and improvement of good practices. As a result, bad practices will be discarded.

However, many aspects of Brazil's public management can inhibit the development of Organizational Learning. According to Carmo et al *apud* Carbone (2008), the public sector in Brazil generally faces constrains to innovation: the excess of rules and procedures (the red tape), authoritarianism, paternalism that causes a high control over the public jobs, carelessness with public goods in response to a complex of oppression, conformism, disregard for the progress of institutions, and corporatism. Some of these problems are related to cultural aspects and politics.

Others can be related to the mechanism of the employment bond of the public agents. Also, the structure of the agencies can push back against the innovation.

Regarding the cultural aspects, it is important to note that Brazilian public administration has peculiar characteristics that were born during the transition from an autocratic to bureaucratic system, with the intermediate path that consisted of patronage, public agents considering the institution as a "big family," and the excessive kindness among peers (the so-called the "Brazilian way").

While the excessive friendly environment pushes the informal exchange of information between networks (that hinders the dissemination of knowledge), patronage puts personnel and political interests in front of organizational knowledge. Furthermore, it makes way for breaking the organizational rules, particularly when exceptions are made by trespassing or softening a traditional procedure (Carmo et al, 2008).

What is clear is the tension between the space for learning and the bureaucracy's traditional management with the concentration of power at the head of agencies. In addition to this, disregard of the autonomy of smaller departments and scarcity of pluralism in the elaboration of public interventions are other bad characteristics of Brazilian public institutions (Souza, 2012).

Bureaucratic administrative management imposes several rules and procedures, which, if not respected, can cause punishment to the agents. This leads to fear and non-autonomy for the public servants, who work to not make mistakes through rituals and introspective attitudes. This is a classic malfunction of the bureaucratic method: the allocation of work force and intellectual labor into control, which deviate from intended results.

Within this scenario, it is hard to find space for collaborative actions among colleagues, departments or even agencies of the same branch. It is even harder to raise the encouragement by the leader to the staff. This leads to non-initiative behavior by the public servants, and a waste of potential that could be allocated to projects with more concrete results.

The organizational culture and knowledge is constructed over many years, as well as the way it is managed. Regarding to the public servants[21] in Brazil, some specific issues can be seen as negative for the improvement of Organization Learning.

First, the distance between the high level hierarchical managers and agents constrain learning, and may lead to an inefficient public intervention, as the distance between who have the expertise and those who are involved in the decision-making is too large.

No to mention mention that the management of Brazilian public institutions are affected by political influences and the parties that support the executive chief during the election process. In return for this support, some executive offices are occupied by political appointees, that should not be a negative practice if the appointed person hires are experts. Nevertheless, many unskilled political appointees work in the organizations. As a result, changes in departments can discontinue projects, create a threatening environment, and decrease the motivation of those who feel underestimated (since an "unknown" is now occupying a superior chair with no meritocracy).

Regarding the influence of different hiring process in the public sector and Organizational Learning, a case study in the municipality in the state of Minas Gerais[22] reported,

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[21] At this paper we define as "public agent" or "civil servant" all the workers at the public administration in Brazil, dividing them as "career agents" those who have an stability position (approved at public contest) and "non-career agents" those who do not have a estable work bond with the institution, hired because their knowledge or by political appointment.

after the same number of career agents and non-career agents, that transitory members (no career agents) recognized themselves with lower or non-existent impulses for sharing or acquiring knowledge. This can be related to their lack of solid engagement with the institution as well as blindness subordination to leadership as result of the political influence in the hiring process. Carmo et al (2006) noted that under these circumstances, passive and individualist behaviors tend to emerge toward power and status at the agency. This case does not necessarily mean that a non-career public agent cannot be dedicated to Organizational Learning. A career public agent may not be dedicated to learning or sharing knowledge at a public institution, too.

On the contrary, a traditional bureaucratic career public agent can oppose innovation and experimentation at a public institution. In other words, the public manager bond with the organization cannot guarantee a positive outcome for learning process. Indeed, when an institution has already established a commitment to OL and lined up their strategies of management information, there are no constraints on learning behavior, regardless of the hiring process of the member.

Still related to career public agents, one item that must be highlighted is what differentiates the career public officer from the private one, considering that once he is satisfied with his payroll with his position in the public institution, or while he waits to be selected in another public career, it could decrease his motivation for being a part of an OL process.

The increase in quantity and quality (with higher educational background) of the public agents over the last decade must be celebrated, yet we must be aware that new agents do not

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[22] The survey was held at a unique department(Superintendent Human Resources office), during a four months period, to measure the perception of career and non-career public agents about the assumption that an organization learns with information if, through the learning processes, changes its behaviors (Frois et al, 2008).

ensure new thinking in the public service, as the inheritance of paternalism and the influences of the non-participative agents can create a vicious cycle, building a fence that thwarts innovative thinking.

Public managers must know how to deal with their agents in order to set a strategic plan to improve the Organizational Learning process, with real positive outcomes such as critically rethinking their interventions, policies, and individually and collectively rebuild their practices. But first they have to know what challenges they are facing. This can be done with assumptions and data, and more by effectively investigating the organization within a deep research.

The author has found a few studies [23] linking the Organizational Learning process to Brazil's public administration and now will briefly list the related issues that can constrain learning:

1. Training (internal and external courses, congress and workshops) is the most common management alternative to solve problems.

2. Besides the existence of good quality training programs,[24] it was reported (Souza, 2012) that members have individualistic motivations to attend to (additional income and/or requirement to be promoted) or are certified in courses unrelated to their tasks (over-evaluation of capacities);

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[23] Interviewing public managers at the judiciary system about what practices can facilitates the OL (Souza, 2012). The same way the top rated municipal executive secretariats (population between 30 and 100 thousands of habitants) of Minas Gerais State were questioned about the cultural aspects that may influence the process of change and OL (Carmo et al, 2008). The public agents were part of surveys that took place at Rio de Janeiro public hospitals (Vaitsman, 2001) about their expectations and beliefs in their public employer and at a Minas Gerais municipal human resource executive department, already described at number 21 (Frois, 2006).

[24] For Lipshitz et al (2007, p. 162) training is distinct of Organizational Learning. While training the members learn *in* the organization (*"improving their individual performance"*), OL they learn *by* organization (a *"change in practices, procedures, norms and routines"*). The training, if properly managed, can lead to an Organizational Learning. Otherwise, without a leader commitment, a sharing information environment or an excess of training, it could causes a negative impact to individual, who can be frustrated with skills that will not be used.

3. Formal meetings and external events with restricted participants (head of departments), which affects the dissemintation of information;

4. Extremely high hierarchical distance between the botton and the head members, results in less autonomy of small departments, discourages the sharing of new ideas by the bottom members who are not motivated (and as a consequence, less innovative projects take place) and have passive behaviour (members expect to be asked to do something). In this environment, public agents tend to be "task attached" and do not connect themselves with the institution or with their peers;

5. The dissemination of information is affected by centralized knowledge, commonly used as power by those who should be spreading it. In addition to this, the individualistic behavior, distrust, fear of judgment or rejection for having opposite opinions, cleaveges, dismotivation and non-existence of collective identity constrain OL;

6. A punishment environment, where members who are not successful implementing new ideas or even not working on time due to the amount of tasks, are reprimanded and nothing positive is taken from the mistakes;

7. There is no effective collaboration and interaction, both internally (inside the agency) and externally (among agencies of the same branch), as one more product of concentration of power and hierarchical distance between members, and expect leadership to promote communication with other departments/agencies;

8. Political influences on the hiring process, with permanent members (institutional bond) and non-permanent members (political apointees, with external and more broad

objectives) influencing a distrustful environment, with a decrease in cooperation between these two categories, when political criteria are more important than technical criteria.

9. The constant discontinuation of management, that affects the renewal of the non-carreer staff, and brings an insecure environment, but also prioraitizes short-term projects (associated with the term in office) and replication of projects in order to gain political support (Pires, C. S. and Macedo, K. B., 2006).

10. The more technical and complex the organization's members and missions get, the higher the meritocracy and the individual engagement with the institution are (Vaitsman, 2001). Consequently, a favorable space for Organizational Learning is set.

11. A resistance to change and learning new processes by members who are used to the traditional bureaucratic negative culture, such as absenteeism, slight involvement and the belief that public service does not matter (Carmo et al, 2008);

12. Informality is the most common form of disseminating knowledge, and the information is organized and registered mostly in individual records and lacks official registration of routines and procedures. For that reason the oldest career agents retain the majority of information, and is the best reference for organizational knowledge (Frois, 2006).

13. There are innequalities of information spread among peers when information is not registered properly. This situation can lead to decisions based on intuition and rumors.

It should be emphasized that these constraints to Organizational Learning in the Brazilian public sector are not necessarily applied to all the public institutions, considering that this paper has not the pretension to do that. Furthermore, Brazil's public organizations have many

distinguishing management lines, different levels of infrastructures, and a multi-faceted work force. The aim is to try to tie together some of the negative characteristics that can occur in a public organization that results in the failure for learning.

3.1 Good practices

Public servants are the key to improving public policies and the quality of decision-making, and, if guided into a creative environment, they will be high as the level of Organizational Learning (Olejnicka et al, 2014). Some Brazilian public institutions are improving mechanisms related to Organizational Learning, especially where there is space inside the rigid bureaucratic system to improve ideas, experiment, reflect and evolve.

At the State executive level, the Management and Planning Secretariat of Rio de Janeiro (SEPLAG) has implemented systems that furthers the sharing of information between public agents to discuss daily issues (collecting new ideas).

First, the REDESIGA[25] was launched in 2013 with the mission to establish guidelines, standardize procedures, promote training and enhance communications between the users of The Management and Acquisitions Integrated System-(SIGA). This system was designed by the SEPLAG to unify and register all the purchases and service contracts of the executive State agencies. The "REDESIGA" is composed of agencies members that act as a bridge between the users and IT support, and promote meetings, training as well as frequent feedback from users. The second version of the system (SIGA2) is being developed by a large contribution of the

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[25] Established by the Decree n°44.176 of April's, 25th, 2013.

network members, through several meetings with the SEPLAG where complaints are made, suggestions exposed and taken seriously, and doubts clarified.

Another net called the "REDE DE PREGOEIROS[26]", composed by bidding auctioneers certified by the General Attorney Office of the Rio de Janeiro State recently, created an IT forum that provides a dialogue between the public agents, in a space where they can clarify doubts among themselves, discuss problems and share knowledge. In order to have more involvement of the agents, the net provides a monthly gift (as a dinner voucher) to the most active participant. This practice have also some characteristics of the communities of practices, one of the most related public management practices reported in the Olejnizak et al (2014) research.

These nets also provide social meetings (lectures and courses), where the users are encouraged to make social interactions. While in the IT forum the information shared is formally registered. With social interactions public agents from different agencies can informally exchange information and doubts, that can generate improvement ideas to be proposed in the next formal meeting.

Another example of good practices takes place at The Treasure School of Rio de Janeiro's Finance Secretariat (EFAZ), which is responsible for training the public agents of the institution and promotes the fiscal education at the State, through partnerships with other government agencies. Over the last five years EFAZ implemented many practices related with OL, such as collecting evaluations from the students at each class that took place on the program's content, the infrastructure of the school and the efficiency of the teacher. This feedback is not only

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[26] Established by the Decree n° 43.692 of July's, 30th, 2012.

registered but also analyzed, being part of an annual activities report.[27]The school also has a direct cooperative member in each department of the Finance Secretariat, that composes a board called "Grupo Permanente de Apoio a Capacitacao e Treinamento-GPACT", which is responsible for the assessment need of training and take applications of new programs.

These members officially meet twice a year, when the EFAZ informs what was effectively fulfilled by the school, what was the percentage of attendance in training, the profile of the students, and the budget constraints, among many other data (being accountable for management and finance). This is an opportunity to the members of GPACT and the school to share information, doubts and common interests.

These practices keep the school focused on the long term learning but also improve their performance as the data are reviewed to rethink better strategies. The recognition of the school members can be exemplified in two years round (2013/2014) award "Quality Rio Program"[28] (PQP-Bronze) given to EFAZ for their efforts in improving their management.

At the federal level, following a recommendation of the OECD to improve regulatory quality, since 2010 The National Electricity Regulatory Agency-ANEEL, has been using the Regulatory Impact Analysis-RIA, which consists of a methodical approach to measure the potential costs, benefits and risks of a proposal or an existing regulation and non-regulatory alternatives, to ensure that regulation will be welfare-enhancing from the societal perspective.

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[27] Available at http://www.efaz.fazenda.rj.gov.br/efaz/faces/efaz-navigation/Institucional/Planos-Relatorios?_adf.ctrl-state=6lbusveqe_4&_afrLoop=93115249056000
[28] This program is coordinated by the Economic, Energy, Industry and Services Developing Secretariat of Rio the Janeiro State and has the goal of rise the competitiveness and quality and all socio-economics sectors.

During the initial process of implementating RIA, the agency had a pilot project and established an informal workgroup to discuss the RIA's methodology (Feil, A. S., 2015). Not only is the RIA itself an enviromental scanning process, but the implementation of its methods was done in an experimental guilty free space.

It is important to notice that federal regulatory agencies in Brazil enjoy political independence and have a high qualified staff, who execute tasks directly related with the agencies' core missions. These are usually the most successful organizational learning environments.

Unfortunately, this favorable scenario found at ANEEL is not common in the public agencies in Brazil, which still face bureaucratic constraints, low quality in infra-structure and a lack of leaders committed to change the organizational culture, inhibiting the Organizational Learning practices from taking place.

3.2- Recommendations to improve Organizational Learning Practices in Brazil

The increasing demand for government responsiveness to societal demands and the instruments of controls of finance, ethics and results (accountability) indicate the necessity for higher efficiency in public service and the generation of knowledge inside the public agencies, which are complex environments that need to keep up with social and economic advances.

The organizations learn through individuals, who collectively generate new knowledge, share information and readapt, but mainly analyze the mistakes and malfunctions. Learning can

be placed in an environment where there is space for creativity and motivation for improvement not hindered by egocentric interests.

Analyzing the reasons that may constraint Organizational Learning from being fully implemented in Brazil under the management aspects, can be summed that the government faces strong bureaucratic obstructions, such as a threat environment, no promotion of innovating and sharing information cultures, and the distance between the top and the bottom public agents is extremely large.

To improve the OL many actions can be implemented by the agencies, in different levels of management. Some actions are suggested here, however, the author does not presume these are the unique set of solutions that must be applied.

1. Knowledge management has to be set inside the organizations, prioritizing the dissemination of knowledge and culture to accept innovation and progress towards better practices;

2. However, to be aware of what must be made, organizations have to know their members, what they believe, their level of motivation to being part of the organization, as well as the how they obtain knowledge (contextual, operational and strategic), if they have regular feedback from their superiors, and if there are communication channels between the members and different departments inside an agency;

3. Design projects to increase the connection of the members with the organization's missions and beliefs in a scenario where three different groups interact with each other: new public agents who are quantitative growing, older members who have the most part of information, and the non-career agents that are hired by technical or political criteria;

4. Promote regular management training in every level of the institution assuring that a trust environment is fundamental for the team to produce better outcomes, where the members can openly share ideas and receive non-judgmental feedback;

5. Map the members talents, reallocating them to places they are most needed and can be more productive;

6. Engage career members to rise inside the organization as a consequence of dedication to their jobs, reducing the space for political appointments unrelated with expertise in task requirements;

7. Create a sharing information positive environment, through internal events, general courses, etc., where members can make social interactions with other departments; and promote regular meetings among those who have the same tasks in different agencies, not only at the high level position, engaging them to create social and work bonds, and also to have contact with different procedures. This will improve the information flows;

8. Develop learning strategies that involve collective facets, in order to improve sharing and collaborative attitudes against the individualistic natural tendency of human being;

9. Make regular the OLM's, as the management games and post review actions, mechanisms that allow deep analysis prior and after public interventions;

10. Enlarge the space for errors and mistakes in a non-blame environment at experimentation level of public interventions respecting the public expenditures and efficacy of public policies.

11. Deeply analyze the positive and negative outcomes of public interventions, enabling the members to reflect on their actions, collectively share new ideas and change the future outcomes.

12. Make sure that prior to a public intervention the maximum amount of information is collected, scenarios and projections of results, implementing trial-errors processes and consulting as many sources as possible;

13. Use IT as a tool to bring not just more data, but also to disseminate knowledge, bringing together members that deals with similar tasks or have common interests;

14. Create contests that rewards innovative ideas by public agents and awarding them with public recognition;

15. The political leadership has to be willing to support public managers, by elaborating clearly goals to be measured-specifying the criteria of success and what is blameworthy (Newcomer, K., 2013).

There is no immediate solution for the non-commitment of leaders and public agents with the learning organization, without improving the knowledge dissemination, the interrelationship with peers, and the initiative by public agents to learn.

The Brazilian's public administration has to persist on the dissemination of Organization Learning, creating projects that raise the empathy of the members with this process.

Organizational Learning should be led by the head of the organization, but as said before, does not implicates that it cannot take place in an hierarchical field, and be spread out across

various others departments, changing the culture and diminishing the interference of political influences in the new process and routines established.

Six international practices this system were shown in this paper as a sign the OL is one of the most important asset of public managers. Also were shown some initiatives that expose the improvement of this process in Brazil. However, the country has its owns culture, which is why it is extremely important to analyze the application of external ideas to the Brazilian public sector reality.

Instead as considering learning processes costly the public sector has to improve Organizational Learning, which will provide positive benefits in a long-run as the knowledge transference gets better, mechanisms as reviewing policies and prior complex interventions, can result in less error replication and more confidence of the public agents in developing their tasks, to diminish the red tape and budget misspent.

Finally, the perspective of reevaluating the mistakes, providing a culture of improvement, instead of punishment, fear and demotivation, can be adopted, as result of an evolution from the accountability management toward accountability for learning, If the space for creative innovation is open as the public administration will be more effective with their procedures, and thus lead to an efficient public management.

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