

Crowdsourcing Maturity and Its Application in Public Organization Management

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INTRODUCTION

Crowdsourcing is an important variable in the research on public organizations. Crowdsourcing is important for generating information, improving communication between employees of a public organization and citizens (Brabham, 2015), engaging citizens in creating services (Noveck, 2009), solving public problems (Mergel and Desouza, 2013), shaping policy (Prpić et al., 2015), and improving public services (Nam, 2012). In addition, crowdsourcing increases the capacity of citizens' participation in public life, the sense of having a chance to make changes in their immediate environment (Seltzer and Mahmoudi, 2012). Crowdsourcing is part of contemporary public organization management trends (Lenart-Gansiniec, 2019; Nam, 2012). It is considered part of the New Governance, a new method of civic empowerment. It is also compared with e-government and Digital Era Government, open government, and instruments of social participation (Dutil, 2015). However, the implementation of crowdsourcing by public organizations alone does not contribute to achieving the assumed benefits, it is important to manage it (Blohm et al., 2018). The basis is improvement of specific skills and abilities by the organization in the context of crowdsourcing and its readiness to implement crowdsourcing, thus obtaining crowdsourcing maturity (Birch and Heffernan, 2014).

In the literature it is suggested that starting to implement and use crowdsourcing by the organizations should be preceded by significant organizational changes related to the processes, infrastructure, and organizational culture – it is only then when the organizations may include crowdsourcing in their strategies and consider its strategic application. The evaluation of crowdsourcing maturity may constitute a set of principal requirements and framework guidelines for a given process. The existing empirical achievements quite unequivocally prove the importance of crowdsourcing for the functionality, effectiveness, and efficiency of public organizations; however, it does not answer elementary questions, what crowdsourcing maturity of public organizations really is and what is the level of this maturity in public organizations, in particular in municipal offices. The search for answers to these questions seems to be justified for two reasons.

The aim of this article is to identify the level of crowdsourcing maturity of municipal offices in Poland.

BACKGROUND

Crowdsourcing

There is no agreement in the literature on the way crowdsourcing should be defined, although a significant number of researchers refer to the findings of Howe (2006). In this perspective, crowdsourcing means “the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and general large) network of people in the form of an open call. Postulates appear in the literature that in order to conduct research on crowdsourcing, those of its areas should be taken into account (Zhao and Zhu, 2014) which are related to crowdsourcing components. In the crowdsourcing approach adopted, three areas of crowdsourcing have been specified, i.e. organizational, individual, and technological (Table 1). The adequacy of such a specification of crowdsourcing areas is also confirmed by Rouse’s (2010) findings. This fits in with the researchers’ deliberations started in 2018 on the topic of effective crowdsourcing management, taking into account precisely the intra-organizational perspective (Blohm et al., 2018).

As part of the organizational scope of crowdsourcing, the activities undertaken by the organization-initiator are important. In particular, this area allows to answer the question whether the problem addressed to the virtual communities by the organization has been properly assigned to a specific task. In addition, within this area crowdsourcing processes, intellectual property protection aspects, crowdsourcing coordination mechanisms, methods of acquiring, motivating virtual communities and evaluation of ideas sent by this community are indicated (Schenk and Guittard, 2011). The individual area focuses on the importance of employees in crowdsourcing endeavors. It is emphasized here that an appropriate motivation of employees, perceiving the benefits of crowdsourcing by them can cause that new solutions and ideas obtained from virtual communities will be adopted, disseminated, assimilated, and used to propose improvements in their workplace or for the entire division/department and building own reputation. The next area, technological, concentrates on the technical aspects of crowdsourcing. It allows for indicating software components, technical functions, important for the success of a crowdsourcing initiative, including: interface, authentication of the users, tracking the history of their posts, payment mechanisms, quality and workflow control and adaptation to the organization’s contextual, relational, and situational needs (Erickson et al., 2012).

Crowdsourcing Maturity

On the basis of management sciences, maturity is perceived as: the degree of the organization preparation for the implementation of specific tasks in a comprehensive manner and the achievement of its set goals, achieving a state of full development including the possibility of achieving excellence, the resultant of the maturity of business processes resulting from the organization’s activity and the maturity of the teams implementing these processes, as well as the normative, postulated procedure. Such approach to maturity is a set of basic and specific requirements or framework guidelines - which allows for diagnosing the current state of maturity and determine the target one. Among the few scientific studies one can find the statement that crowdsourcing maturity determines the actions that the organization should perform to achieve the desired crowdsourcing state. According to Birch and Heffernan (2014), crowdsourcing maturity is a certain ability of organizations and processes to achieve the assumed benefits of crowdsourcing (Birch and Heffernan, 2014). On the other hand, Boughzala et al. (2014) state that crowdsourcing

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