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Analysis of changes in the organizational structure of municipal offices

1. Introduction

Transformation of the public sector towards proactive and innovative action in consequence necessitates a search for effective organisational solutions. However, note that „bureaucracy” is commonly considered an inherent attribute of a civil servant. In consideration of their criteria which differentiate typologies of organisational structures, the organisational structure of a municipal office, because of flexibility in the structure of the organization, is a part of a set of engineering structures and is a staff-line structure due to the type of organizational bonds which prevail. It is a fairly common type of organisational structure but equated with bureaucracy when it comes to municipality. Each organisational structure may be characterised by four features: centralisation, specialisation, configuration and formalisation. Depending on their intensity, central, formalised, flat, lean and other structures can be identified. In addition, note that an organisational structure is closely related to work organisation which is not satisfactory in a municipal office. On many occasions, clients mention „going from door to door” and filling out “heaps of paper”

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which cause them considerable nuisance when presenting a matter in offices. On this basis, it can be assumed that centralisation and configuration have lower impact on bureaucratisation processes than specialisation and formalisation. For this reason, this article has been written to prove that specialisation and formalisation are the key determinants shaping the organisational structure in municipal offices.

This thesis will be supported by results of own research in organisational structures of municipal offices. The research focused on diagnosing changes which occurred during 20 years of history of a municipal self-government. The author applied a 30-question questionnaire as the research technique. All information was obtained during desk research. To ensure comparability of structural solutions, the most frequently used measurements of *centralization, formalization, specialization and configuration* were used. To each measurement, a specific score was assigned. The following measurements were used to measure centralisation: the number of staff employees reporting directly to the head of a village (voyt), including, the head of the village's salary to average salary paid in the municipal office ratio. The degree of formalisation was measured on the basis of a desk analysis of documents containing internal procedures and rules. It was measured by the number of pages of each document. To determine the depth of the specialisation, work division-related measurements were used, such as: the number of jobs, the number of organisational units. Configuration was analysed by applying measurements such as: the number of medium level managers, the number of management levels in the most extended division, the number of senior experts. The research process was divided in two stages. Stage one covered the period from 1990 to 2002 and stage two the period from 2004 to 2010. Representativeness of results was guaranteed by a random choice of municipalities from all regions. The research sample included boroughs, including cities enjoying the rights of a county, rural and rural-urban municipalities. The research aimed at generating a wide spectrum sufficient for comparisons so that the research material could be useful for evaluating structural solutions in municipal Office.

2. Organisational Structures of Municipal Offices - General Features, Research

In essence, a municipal organisational structure is the sum of functional and hierarchic dependencies among its elements (units, sections, etc.) which make it possible for a municipality to operate in a desired direction and take

managerial actions. Although regulations do not impose any patterns of the municipal organisational structure. But the commonly used rule is to define the most appropriate division of the organizational structure in the statute or organisational rules.

While there are no major grounds for top-down imposition of universal patterns of the organizational structure in a municipality, some standards supporting this structure should be strongly suggested. In particular, it applied to tasks and competences of municipal units (sections), independent positions or organisational entities (Szczerbowski 2010). Local government is a part of the public administration and, as such, operates in hierarchy-based systems. F.Kuźnik (2005, p. 77) mentions three types of structures: hierarchic structures, supervision structures and partner structures. Two first types correspond to classical hierarchic systems. However, supervision structures, including law enforcement, are justified in the local government system concept and protect the autonomy of local government communities. But these are partner structures which are crucial for introduction of modern management concepts.

In consideration of some general guidelines for setting up organizational structures and specific needs resulting from tasks of municipalities, more adjusted solutions should be implemented. If this diagnosis demonstrated some irregularities, the next step is to indicate a method for solving the problem and eliminate it. At present, both academics and practitioners in the area of local government have noticed the importance of the role played by the organisational structure of a municipal office. The extent to which the role influences both its operation and the image. In spite of numerous demands to introduce some radical changes in organisational structure, one can still see that just one type of an organisational structure, i.e. a line – staff structure prevails. However, note that this transformation of the existing structure is not easy.

3. Changes Occurring in Organisational Structures of Municipal Offices in Poland in the Light of Empirical Research

It is generally believed that the organisational structure in local government entities is a product of a highly formalised and centralised work organisation, based on specialised positions and organisational units showing trends toward a continuous growth. The research aimed at proving the thesis and, if and when proven, establishing the direction of changes in the organisational structures of municipal offices. Determination of the scale of the phenomenon was the secondary effect of the phenomenon.

As the material collected during the research is rather abundant, this article presents only some research results.

An analysis of the collected research data led to establishing that decision-making functions were concentrated at the top management level. It is indicated by the power centralisation indicator – the relation between the salary of the head of the office (the voyt, mayor, president, etc.) and the average salary of a municipal office employee. In the literature, it is assumed that the higher the salary of the head of the entity is, the more centralised his power is (Przybyła, Wudarzewski, Koziński 1995, p. 68). Salary of the head of the municipality is dependent on three factors. These are: legal constraints, decisions of the municipal council on the amount of the salary and the financial standing of the municipality. In spite of that, the indicator has been growing from 2.51 to 4.38. Table 1 shows changes in the average salary paid to the head of municipality against general salaries in the office.

Table 1. Changes in the average salary of the head of municipality to the average salary in the municipal office 1990 -2010 ratio

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
The head of the village's salary to average salary paid in the municipal office ratio.	2.51	2.78	2.95	3.44	3.91	4.38

Source: based on own research

The next indicator confirming a growing centralisation are changes in the number of managers i.e. the average number of persons directly reporting to the head of municipality, including the average number of staff personnel i.e. secretary of the municipality and legal counsels. In 20 years, the average number of employees reporting directly to the head of municipality in both analysed groups went up – i.e. in “general” and “staff” categories, respectively, by 78.5% and 81.7%. Such a growth in the „total” group came as a result of creating various jobs e.g. for deputy head of the municipality, independent jobs resulting from amended regulations and heads of newly created organizational units. In the „staff” group, growth in the average number of employees depends on the number of legal counsels on the staff. In this group of employees, in the analysed period, the growth reached 166.0%. Results of the research are presented in the table 2.

Table 2. The average number of total and staff employees reporting directly to the head of municipality 1990-2010

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
The average number of employees reporting directly to the head of municipality in total	8.70	9.01	9.78	10.11	10.49	10.53
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	103.6	112.4	116.2	120.6	121.0
The average number of staff employees reporting directly to the head of municipality	1.97	2.09	2.27	2.62	3.08	3.58
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	106.1	115.2	133.0	156.3	181.7
<i>Including legal counsel (in full-time jobs)</i>	0.97	1.11	1.30	1.62	2.08	2.58
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	114.4	134.0	167.0	214.4	266.0
<i>Including the secretary</i>	1.00	0.98	0.97	1.00	1.00	1.00
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	98.0	97.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: based on own research

When editing the research material, the extent to which freedom of behaviour in action was limited was determined by analysing the degree to which the organisational structure and objectives are preserved by organisational rules. The documents governing operations of municipal offices can be divided into two groups. The first group, which remains largely beyond the control of the office, is the legislature (acts of law and secondary regulations). They decide about administrative procedures to which clients of the office are exposed. The next group includes organisational documents which create an internal system for creating organisational behaviours, which is only dependent on management decisions. Table 3 shows a list of results of research on changes occurring in organisational documents.

Table 3. Changes in the average number of pages of documents – 1990–2010

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
The statute of the municipality	23.57	25.81	29.72	34.51	36.27	37.26
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	109.5	126.1	146.4	153.9	158.1
Organisational Rules	21.71	21.85	23.84	26.07	27.17	28.21

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	100.6	109.8	120.1	125.1	129.9
Job descriptions (employees)	2.57	2.44	2.74	3.08	3.39	3.68
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	95.0	106.6	119.8	131.9	143.2
Work Rules	11.35	11.90	14.65	15.63	18.07	18.77
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	104.8	129.1	137.7	159.2	165.4
Internal control plan	4.05	3.96	4.56	5.15	5.62	5.98
Growth 1990=100.0	100.	97.8	112.6	127.2	138.8	147.7
Instruction for Circulation of Financial Document	15.89	17.31	20.82	23.41	25.24	26.49
Growth 1990=100.0	100.	108.9	131.0	147.3	158.8	166.7
Stock-Taking Instruction	9.89	10.43	12.99	14.41	17.03	17.31
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	105.5	131.3	145.7	172.2	175.0

Source: based on own research

Documents of the organisation, when analysed, indicate clearly a steady growth in its specification, specialisation and a progressing process of a formalised organisational structure. As regards the average number of pages of a document, the growth ranged from 29.9% for the *Organisational Rules* to 75.0% for *The Stock-Taking Instruction*. In addition, there is a trend to make key organisational/statutory documents more specific i.e. *the statute of the municipality* - a growth of 58.1%, *the Rules for Work* - by 65.4% and *The Instruction for Circulation of Financial Documents* by 66.7%. Apparently, development of own internal by-laws setting the basis of operations of a municipal office was going in two directions. There is one clear trend towards increasing the average number of analysed documents. While the growth fluctuated over periods, it remained stable throughout the whole period of the research. Another direction is creation of new documents or new documents "branching out" the existing documents. In 1990, each municipality operated only on the basis of its statute and job descriptions. However, in 2008, each municipality operated on the basis of all the above-mentioned documents, as shown in the table 4.

Table 4. Municipalities that have developed the analysed organisational documents between 1990 and 2010 (%)

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
The statute of the municipality	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Organisational Rules	98.4	99.0	99.5	100.0	100.0	100.0
Job descriptions	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Rules for Work	93.2	93.8	98.5	99.5	100.0	100.0
Internal Control Plan	90.6	90.3	95.9	97.8	100.0	100.0
Instruction for Circulation of Financial Documents	96.9	97.4	99.0	99.5	100.0	100.0
Stock-Taking Instruction	97.9	97.9	99.5	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: based on own research

The process of increasing the degree of formalisation is not limited to the above-mentioned documents. It is also reflected in the steady growth of the average number of decisions issued by the head of municipality (the research covers also other formal decisions, such as regulations, recommendations, etc.). The decisions are based on ad hoc or current needs and refer to all operational aspect of the office, apply to its employees and organisational units. The research did not determine any clear growing trend in municipalities as the number of such decisions varied in time. Still the results came as a surprise as it turned out that their average number in a year was going up. In 20 years, it reported a nearly 5-fold growth from 34.46 in 1990 to 163.96 in 2010, i.e. by 375.8%. The trend is presented in the table 5.

Table 5. Changes in the average number of decisions issued by the administrative head of the municipality – 1990–2010

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
The average number of decisions issued in a year by the head of the municipality	34.46	45.17	55.92	94.41	133.59	163.96
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	131.1	162.3	273.97	387.67	475.80

Source: based on own research

The number of positions/jobs in a municipal office reflects its specialisation. From 1900 to 2010, the average number of jobs in the analysed municipal offices went up from 41.22 to 81.17 i.e. by 96.9%. The number of jobs translates directly into the number of employees. It was reported that the average employment went up by 40 persons i.e. by 95.5%. Typically, the values are identical; however, in large municipal offices, in particular in cities, there are multi-person positions and, for this reason, the average number of employees in the analysed municipalities is higher. Table 6 presents fluctuations in the average number of jobs and the employed.

Table 6. The average number of jobs and employed fluctuations – 1990–2010

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
The average number of jobs.	41.22	49.24	54.81	74.05	76.31	81.17
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	119.5	133.0	179.6	185.1	196.9
The average number of persons employed.	41.88	49.15	55.79	74.29	75.07	81.88
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	117.4	133.2	177.4	17.3	195.5

Source: based on own research

The results confirmed a growth in the number of organisational units by 61.1%, including a growth by 82.8% in the units directly reporting to the head of municipality. The growth was running in two directions. In 1990, 12.5% municipal offices reported structures with independent jobs playing the role of organizational units and all employees reporting directly to the administrative head of the office. Such flat organisational structures were characteristic for small municipal offices with 15 to 25 employees. Note that they represented 10% of all municipal offices as long as by 2002 (this point in time has not been shown in the table). Only from 2004, in the organisational structure of each analysed municipal office, at least one organisational unit has been set up. Table 7 presents data on the specialisation measurements.

Table 7. Changes in the average number of organisational units and organisational units reporting directly to the head of municipality – 1990–2010

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
The average number of organisational units	5.21	5.79	6.43	7.30	7.79	8.39

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	111.1	123.4	140.1	149.5	161.0
The average number of organisational units reporting to the head of municipality	3.09	3.12	3.39	4.75	4.86	5.65
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	101.0	109.7	153.7	157.3	182.8
% of municipalities with at least one organisational unit in their structure	87.5	87.7	90.3	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: based on own research

The continuous growth of organisational structures is closely related to an increase in employment. Because of a growing number of employees, the number of employees in organisational units was also growing. The spread of functions and employees reporting to managers was growing, which could result in a decreased efficiency of managers' work. In consequence, it was necessary to split the existing organisational units at the same and lower level of management. In consequence, the average number of medium level management positions went up by as much as 73.7% in the analysed municipal offices. This phenomenon was coupled with an increase in the average number of management levels. Most municipal offices have more than one level of management, and, typically, the number ranges from two to three. Most municipalities have more than three levels of management. In 1990, 2.1% reported one level of management while each analysed municipality reported at least two levels of management in 2010. The process causes vertical shift of the organisational structure. Parallel to the changing number of organisational units, the average number of managers at different hierarchy levels changed, as presented in the table 8.

Table 8. Changes in the average number of medium level managers and management levels in the most developed department at selected points in time between 1990 and 2010

Specification	1990	1994	2000	2004	2008	2010
The average number of managers	8.01	8.32	9.04	12.97	13.46	13.91
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	103.9	112.9	161.9	168.0	173.7
Management spread	5.23	5.91	6.17	5.73	5.62	5.88

The average number of levels in the most developed department	2.13	2.17	2.27	2.63	2.74	2.79
Growth 1990=100.0	100.0	101.88	106.58	123.48	128.64	130.99

Source: based on own research

The research process confirmed that organisational structures in municipal offices are expanding, both vertically and horizontally. The horizontal dimension is reflected in the formation of new organisational units at the same level of management while the vertical dimension is reflected in the growing number of management levels. The results of the empirical research presented in this paper indicate a continuous growth in the average number and degree of detail of organizational documents and internal rules (by-laws) which is a proof of progressing complexity of organizational structures in municipal offices. In addition, division of work in local government entities is based on performance of Simple tasks. To sum up – in spite of the risk of an error, the diagnostic analyses of organisational structures in municipal offices disclosed some growth trends in the values characterising all measurements applied.

4. Impact of the degree of specialisation and formalisation onto development of organisational structures in municipal offices

From the perspective of more than 20 years of experience in administrative work and having read documents which set the organisational foundations of Polish local government offices, it is concluded that the existing structural solutions do not result from a diagnosis or collaboration with experts in the field of organization and management but more from ad-hoc needs resulting from various reasons or other poorly recognized factors. Typically, changes in municipal offices take place after elections when both their new management and counsellors take a very critical approach to the office and its operation.

If we assume that organisational structure is changed or transformed by adjusting to its external and internal environment, changes should be predominantly prompted by the urge to transform an ineffective solution into a more innovative one. But, going back to the research results, there are two major factors which are decisive for development and shape of organizational structures - Specialisation and formalisation. An increasing degree of specialisation results in expansion of the organisational structure while the increase in the degree

of formalization results from the strive to have a centralised and incessant control over the office.

The growing specialisation is often argued by tasks taken over by local governments from the state administration or other institutions. In addition, a certain degree of expansion of the organizational structures may be justified by development of IT. Such changes are justified and may be considered the outcome of evolutionary changes in the entire local government. In order to determine the reasons behind the continuous growth of organisational structures, a case-by-case analysis may be useful, based on available resolutions of the municipal council or regulations of heads of municipalities.

Changes which take place in effective organisational (statutory) documents provide information on multitude and degree of detail of internal regulations which govern the work of a municipal office. It is yet another area in which efficiencies are oriented towards development of internal rules and regulations which contain solutions of problems existing in various cases. One may think that procedures would facilitate internal communication, enhance its efficiency and show information transfer channels between organizational units and levels of the organization.

It is a fact that municipal offices process lots of data and information on their clients and their various cases. The process should be safe and smooth, based on well-prepared rules for preparing and circulating document, having access and using confidential information, personal data or public information. Act of law indicate specific procedures which must be taken into account when organising work of a municipal office. Pieces of legislature such as: Confidential Information Act, Personal Data Protection Act, Access to Public Information Act and the office instruction must come as the work basis for each office. Efficiency of a municipal office is also measured by the speed of handling clients' issues. Nevertheless, steps towards an increased formalization of the office are considered improvement in its operation. In consequence, local administration offices fitness escalation of bureaucratic behaviour which is irritating to clients and constantly criticized.

The research confirmed the process of organisational structure development which is expressed by a quantitative growth of an organization in each analysed area as well as by the degree of complicity of the organizational structure. It is a consequence of a continuously broadening range of tasks that municipalities must fulfil and decision-making problems related to the tasks. However, it is not an expression of pathology per Se. Organisations with a long life cycle with their organisational structures evolving towards their adjustment to their current

needs, it is a natural phenomenon. Pathology enters when too many regulations governing operations of an organisation, excessive number of instructions, centralised decision-making system, alienation of operational units and development of parallel legal relations result in a dysfunction of the system and prevent it from adjustment to transformed internal and external environment. In other words, then bureaucracy is born – a centralised system dividing the personnel function and activity based on standard producers, which burdens everyone with responsibility for their implementation. Also note that a growing inaptness of a public servant, which results from these developments, is compensated by a growing pressure on meticulous performance of responsibilities, which closes the vicious circle of organisational pathology (Hausner 2003, pp. 152-153). However, it is the first duty and obligation of the municipal office to serve citizens and the core criterion taken into account when assessing work of the administration is its openness. The person who enters a municipal office should be confident that they will face competent and polite civil servants who will endeavour to handle their cases or, in some instances, solving their problems (Polak 2011). Organisational structures in local government administration offices were set up on the basis of legislature on local governments. Their organisational rules divide them into organisational units such as departments, branches, offices, inspectorates, sections, etc. Organisational structures of local government administration offices are quite similar in composition. They would typically have a department of organisation or organisational and legal department, a financial department, a department of transport and road traffic, a welfare department, real property department, a department of architecture, etc. - at least in larger municipal offices. A. Szczerboski emphasises that small rural municipalities would limit themselves to three basic departments (organisation, finance and citizens' affairs) which share responsibilities related to real property management. Still he emphasises that operations of the departments or sections of organization, finance, citizens' affairs, architecture and real property should ensure efficient operation of an average-sized municipality. Depending on the size of a municipality and its complexity, departments/sections can be split into smaller, more manageable units. (Szczerbowski 2010).

However, in the context of improving the existing solutions, it should be clearly stated that local government authorities are aware of imperfection of these solutions and, for this reason, strive to change them. At the same time, they cannot overcome limitations arising from the existing division of work and responsibilities. They do not consider any other possibilities when developing a new structure during a reorganization. One may think that it results from uniformisation of organisational structure in the whole administration

and from a conviction that, because of their long history, they *must* be good and in need of very small changes.

Summary

Organisational Structure of Municipal Offices – Key Determinants

The multitude of tasks and problem issued faced by local governments necessitates their evolution towards improvement of the existing organisational structures. Comparison of the existing organisational structures of various municipal offices could create a misleading that their organizational structures do not undergo any transformations. In reality, the type of an organisational structure remains unchanged while its elements change very frequently. These changes are activated when, according to the office management, they do not ensure proper performance of tasks faced by local government administration and appropriate customer service. Also note that, in the applied solutions, there is a strive for perfection which can be noticed, in a sense. It expresses the concept that this is not a structure which can effectively play its role today and is prepared for challenges of tomorrow. However, the process of transformations has not developed any new solutions.

To this end, the local government must develop organisational structures appropriate for identifying and reaching its objectives. For this reason, it's worthwhile to consider solutions which combine elements of the existing and modern solutions or address new opportunities created by process-oriented structures. However, these transformations must, first and foremost, cause a transformation of bureaucratic-style municipal offices into modern organisations which apply modern methods of management. These are organisations which introduce deep-reaching organisational changes, i.e. transform their hierarchic interorganisational relations into more partner relations and transform their structural solutions into more flexible solutions as well as change their employees' way of thinking. Without such transformations in local government, municipal offices will be still referred to as bureaucracy and civil servants as bureaucrats.

Keywords: *the organizational structure, specialization, formalization, red tape, the study of organizational structures*

Streszczenie

Główne determinanty struktury organizacyjnej urzędów gmin

Mnogość zadań i problemów jakie stoją przed władzami lokalnymi powoduje konieczność ewoluowania w kierunku doskonalenia istniejących struktur organizacyjnych. Porównując ze sobą schematy organizacyjne różnych urzędów gmin można sądzić, że ich struktury organizacyjne nie podlegają żadnym zmianom. Nic bardziej mylnego. Rzeczywiście niezmienny pozostaje typ struktury organizacyjnej, ale jej elementy zmieniają się bardzo często. Zmiany aktywowane są w momencie kiedy w opinii kierownictwa urzędu nie zapewniają prawidłowego wykonywania zadań jakie stoją przed administracją samorządową oraz należytej obsługi interesanta. Należy również podkreślić, że w ramach stosowanych rozwiązań zauważa się, w pewnym sensie, dążenie do doskonałości. Jest to wyraz przekonania, że nie jest to struktura spełniająca skutecznie swoją funkcję na dziś i gotowa do podjęcia wyzwań przyszłości. Pomimo to w procesie zmian nie wykształciły się nowe rozwiązania.

Dlatego należy rozważyć wdrażanie rozwiązań łączących elementy dotychczasowych i nowoczesnych rozwiązań lub zwrócić uwagę na zupełnie nowe możliwości jakie dają struktury procesowe. Jednak zmiany muszą, przede wszystkim, spowodować przekształcenie urzędów gmin organizacji biurokratycznych w nowoczesne organizacje stosujące nowoczesne metody zarządzania. Organizacje, które dokonują gruntownych zmian organizacyjnych tj. zmieniają hierarchiczne stosunki wewnątrzorganizacyjne na bardziej partnerskie oraz przekształcają rozwiązania strukturalne na bardziej elastyczne, ale także sposób myślenia wszystkich pracowników. Bez tych zmian w samorządzie urzędy gmin w dalszym ciągu będą nazywane biurokracją, a urzędnicy biurokratami.

Słowa

kluczowe: *struktura organizacyjna, specjalizacja, formalizacja, biurokracja, badania struktur organizacyjnych.*

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