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From hierarchical to pro-effectivity culture – the direction of changes in local government units

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Направления совершенствования работы в органах местного самоуправления: от иерархии к эффективности

Аннотация. Рассматриваются направления совершенствования организационной культуры в подразделениях местной администрации в контексте стремления работников играть роль активных "артистов", а не "статистов" административных работ. Использованы методы диагностического опроса и съемки. В опросе задействованы 380 работников местного самоуправления, занятых в 72 подразделениях Поморского и Варминско-Мазурского воеводств. Проведенные исследования показывают готовность сотрудников брать на себя новые задачи и нести за это ответственность. Результаты исследований могут служить улучшению работы административных подразделений различного уровня иерархии.

Abstract. The paper shows the direction of desirable changes in organisational culture of local government units in the context of local government employees' expectations, who more and more often are interested in the role of an "actor" in the unit than a "statesman" obediently following the supervisor's orders. The methods of diagnostic poll and surveying have been used. The study questionnaire was filled in by 380 local government units workers employed in 72 local government units located in Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Provinces (purposive sampling, conditioned by availability of respondents). On the grounds of pilot study it can be stated that employees of local government units expect changes in organisational culture favouring professionalising, independence and innovativeness of their actions, notice the necessity of these changes, are ready to undertake new challenges and bear responsibility for the quality of tasks executed.

Ключевые слова: организационная культура, местное самоуправление, местные государственные служащие
Key words: organisational culture, local government, local government employees

1. Introduction

Organisational culture is becoming an important tool of human resources management in local government, allowing to shape the desirable attitudes and behaviour of local government employees. They are created by the attitude towards tasks performed as well as clients. It may be conducive to cementing fixed inefficiency, bureaucratic, soulless actions or create the proper atmosphere for professional actions, independent thinking, creativity and democratic relations.

According to E.H. Schein, organisational culture is (…) "a pattern of shared basic assumptions, which the group developed in the process of resolving problems connected with its adaptation to the environment and internal integration, which if works, is acknowledged as binding and this is the reason why new members acquire it as the proper way of perception, thinking and feeling with reference to these problems" (*Frąckiewicz-Wronka*, 2009). "It is a set of rules, which help its members to understand, what the organisation opts for, how it works and what it considers important" (*Kożuch*, 2001).

Culture is included and hidden in the minds and hearts of people creating organisation. It means common sharing ideas, co-feeling, reacting in a certain way, it stabilizes, co-ordinates, unites and emphasizes what is common. It is a kind of "social glue". It makes up the whole of human ways of life in groups, attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, way of exploring the world, reacting and satisfying needs (*Lewicka, Kandefer*, 2005).

E. Schein defined three levels of organisational culture: symbols (artefacts), norms and values, and values (*Szaban*, 2003). Artefacts are material, visible, identifiable manifestations of organisational culture. They are expressed in the linguistic, behavioural and material layers. Norms in force in a given unit result from the accepted system of values. These are collective preferences imposed in a group, ordering the behaviour of employees. The assumptions are of philosophical and worldview-related character. To a certain extent they define the way of perceiving a human being and social life (*Seredocha*, 2011a).

The major factors shaping the organisational culture of local government units first and foremost include:
- changes in the manner of management resulting from the mounting social expectations;
- specificity of public services and public organisation;

- type of tasks performed by the local government units;
- mission and goals of the office;
- expectations to the local government employee subject to a.o. the moral values binding in the society;
- quality changes in local government human resources (*Seredocha*, 2011b).

In this study only selected elements, such as quality changes in human resources expressed by the employees' expectations, are the subject of analysing organisational culture of local government units and considered in the context of tasks realised by local government units. Organisational culture is also analysed from the point of view of new public management concept, taking into consideration the rule of economic effectiveness of actions and the superior value of public interest.

2. Methodology

The purpose of the conducted pilot study was to diagnose organisational culture in chosen local government units as well as analysing and assessing expectations and preferences of local government employees in this range but also indicating the most important and desirable changes in organisational culture of local government subjects.

The pilot study conducted in 2011 used the method of diagnostic poll and surveying. In total the study questionnaire included 11 closed questions was filled in by 380 local government workers employed in 72 local administration units located in the Pomorskie and Warmińsko-mazurskie Provinces (purposive sampling, conditioned by availability of respondents). In the group it was women who dominated – 78,2 % which reflects the employment structure in the local administration units. They were relatively young (up to the age of 30 – 30,8 %, between 30 and 40 years old – 27,6 %) with higher education – 62,6 %. They were workers employed in city halls, commune offices, town and community councils, county administrator's offices and organisation units managed by the local government. The study group included 59 persons who performed management functions – 15,5 % and there were 94 persons employed at independent posts – 24,7 %. The study group characteristic is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The study group characteristic

Category: gender, workplace, age		Number of people (%)	Category: education job seniority, kind of post		Number of people (%)
Gender	Female	297 (78,2 %)	Education	Secondary	108 (28,4 %)
	Male	83 (21,8 %)		Post-secondary	34 (9,0 %)
Work-place	City hall	116 (30,6 %)		Higher	238 (62,6 %)
	Town and community council	48 (12,6 %)	Job seniority	Under 3 years	93 (24,5 %)
	Community council	60 (15,8 %)		Between 3 and 10 years	124 (32,6 %)
	County administrator's office	86 (22,6 %)		Over 10 and under 20 years	79 (20,8 %)
	Other units managed by local government	70 (18,4 %)		Over 20 years	84 (22,1 %)
Age	Under 30	117 (30,8 %)	Position	Executive position	59 (15,5 %)
	Between 31 and 40	105 (27,6 %)		Non-executive	227 (59,8 %)
	Between 41 and 50	74 (19,5 %)		Independent position	94 (24,7 %)
	Over 50	84 (22,1 %)			

Source: prepared on the basis of own studies.

3. Clerks' attitude

The dynamics of civilisation, social, political, cultural, economic changes, and the growth of expectations in the area of public services quality generate the demand for new quality of personnel in local administration and standards of organisational behaviour.

The surveyed are aware that their behaviour and attitudes considerably influence the perception of quality of public services. 359 persons surveyed are of this opinion, which constitutes 94,5 % of the group. Only 7 persons (1,8 %) were of the opposite opinion. 14 respondents (3,7 %) did not have any opinion in this matter. This data is presented in Fig. 1.

Organisational culture provides important tools such as norms, rules, patterns of thinking and philosophical assumptions, which may and should shape behaviours in accordance with the expectations of the organisation.
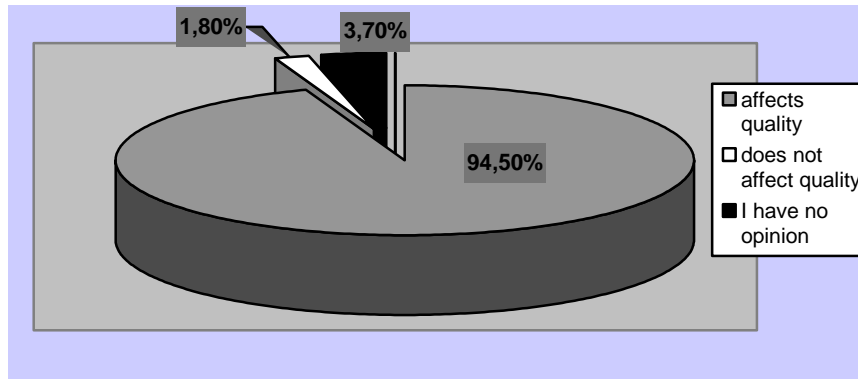

Figure 1. Behaviour and attitudes of clerks and perception of public services quality.
Source: prepared on the basis of own studies

As A. Pawłowska points out, local administration units need employees with broad specialization, who successfully defend themselves against "fixed inefficiency" through constant improvement and deepening knowledge. Thus, they are able to use the acquired knowledge in various conditions, not only in routine organisational situations. Dynamically changing social and legal conditions, as well as new directions in social policy require from offices a lot of flexibility and ability to adapt actions to changing needs (*Pawłowska*, 1999). And this means the need for intellectually mobile and able to think creatively employees. In the event of public interest colliding with the individual interest, a local government employee must decide which interest should prevail. The legislator did not specify the definition of these concepts. Thus, these expressions send us to assessments beyond legal (*Płażek et al.*, 2009).
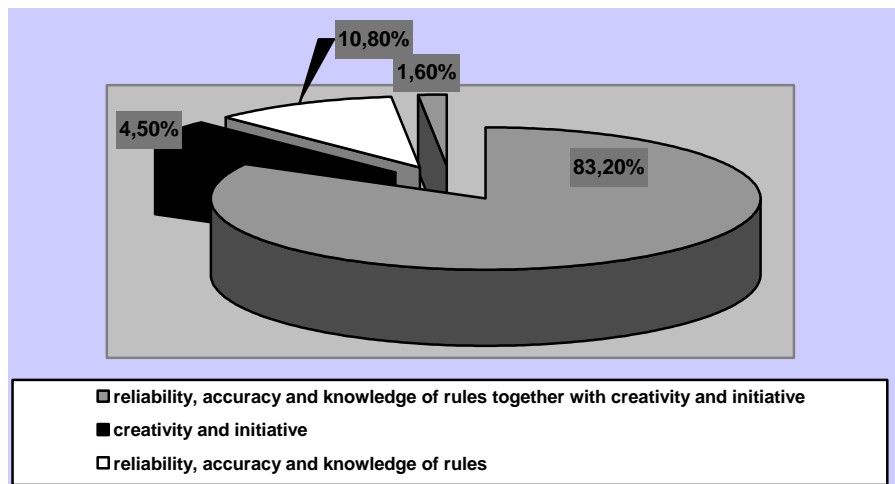

Figure 2. Features characterising the clerks' attitude towards tasks performed.
Source: prepared on the basis of own studies

Clerks' attitudes should be characterised by reliability, accuracy and knowledge of rules connected, however, with creativity and initiative. 316 persons surveyed, that is 83,2 %, are of this opinion. Only 17 (4,5 %) decided that creativity and initiative are the most important in these attitudes and 41 (10,8 %) were first of all for reliability, accuracy and knowledge of rules. 6 persons (1,6 %) did not present any opinion. This is shown by Fig. 2. The study confirms that local government employees must face new challenges, so the characteristics traditionally associated with a clerk, such as reliability and knowledge of rules are crucial but not sufficient now. A clerk must show their ability to act against routine.

As B. Kudrycka correctly mentions, a clerk must also be sensitive to social criticism of their actions as doubts and creative research lead to quality development complying with organisational values such as efficiency, effectiveness, economy, efficiency and rationality of actions (*Kudrycka*, 1995).

Organisational behaviours and clerks' attitudes are to a large extent by the level of independence. It defines the range of responsibility and initiative as well as attitude to changes and ability to act innovatively and

creatively. This provides the basis for classifying behaviours as offensive – responsible, resourceful, creative and defensive behaviours – inhibited and conservative. The characteristics of offensive model of employee are covered by Table 2.

Table 2. Defensive and offensive model of employee

Defensive model of employee	Offensive model of employee
The employee is conservative, inhibited and afraid of changes	The employee is resourceful and not afraid of responsibility
Works on a certain post and wants to keep it at all cost	Prefers posts with a lot of independence and challenges themselves
Does not undertake actions of innovative and creative character	Undertakes actions of innovative and creative character
Works following old, verified rules of procedure	Shows initiative not only in the range of functions realised but also in the jobs done on other posts
Shows little independence, needs extensive system of supervision and control	Work is on top of their hierarchy of values
Is not motivated to improve professionally, does not search chances for improvement	Searches chances to raise qualifications and improve
Values power but aims to gain it through e.g. social relations	Identifies strongly with imperative aims of the organisation

Source: *B.R. Кис, J.M. Moczydłowska* (2009).

In the study group 261 surveyed persons, which is 68,7 %, described themselves as offensive employees but 119 persons (31,3 %) classified themselves as defensive, that is performing their tasks according to clearly defined instructions and procedures and not showing initiative (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Employee categories.
Source: prepared on the basis of own studies

Among the 261 surveyed, who defined themselves as defensive employees, this area of independence and way of doing tasks suits 244 persons, which is 93,5 % of the group. Only 17 persons, that is 6,5 %, would rather work in a defensive way.

However, among 119 defensive employees this way of organising work is accepted by 58 persons, which is 48,7 % of the group. 61 persons (51,3 %) would feel better in the role of offensive employee. This data is presented by Fig. 4.

This indicates quality changes in human resources of local administration, and new employees' expectations oscillate around increasing the level of independence and responsibility. Local government employees more and more often are interested in the role of "actor" in the unit than "statesman", obediently and passively following the supervisor's orders.

It results from the fact that, clerks often act in situations which are not so legally formalised in detail and are not of executive character in relation to acts. These actions are of more creative character and are most often started under general rules of law and the clerks are entitled to more independence of action than with administrative executive acts (*Kudrycka*, 1995).

Quality changes in human resources foster building a learning organisation, which a city or commune council should be. Such an organisation "knows, understands, thinks and learns", uses experience to create new knowledge, is open to changes and experiments, eliminates barriers between the superior and subordinate, values

the employees' ability to think comprehensively, creativity and effectiveness of learning. Intelligent organisation of public sector builds partner contacts with service recipients and improves itself modifying basic assumptions and procedures (*Jeżowski*, 2002). It creates the atmosphere of enterprise fostering the development of individual creativity. This means, among others, supporting new ideas, readiness to make attempts and mistakes, permission to the risk of failure, supporting multidisciplinary teams and accepting the rule that every employee may be the creator of a new *enterprise* (*Bednarczyk*, 2001). A learning organisation requires a culture of new type as well as offensive workers.
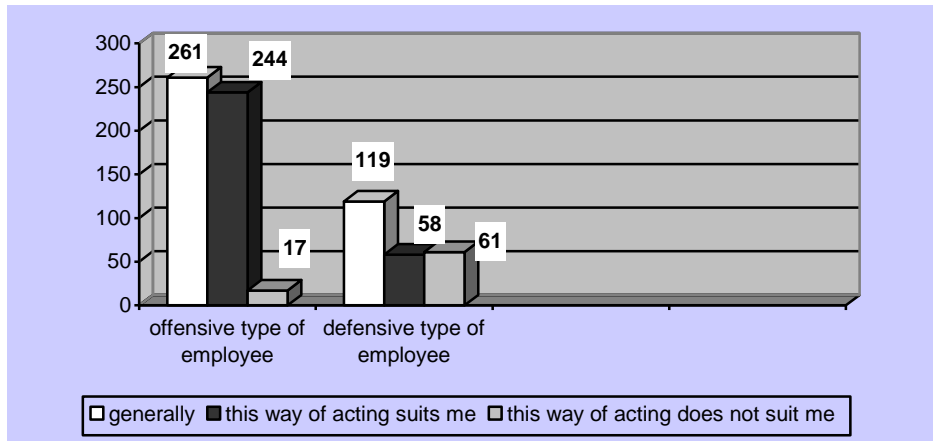

Figure 4. Attitude towards the way of working.
Source: prepared on the basis of own studies

4. Current and preferred category of culture

Respondents also diagnosed organisational culture in their present workplace. They could indicate one description out of a six-element collection of characteristics: clan culture, hierarchical culture, adhocracy culture, market culture, process culture and trust culture.

Most often they indicated hierarchical culture, characteristic for formalised organisation, with strict hierarchy, in which the procedures, rules and regulations in force provide stability and work with no disruption. In such culture 184 surveyed think, they work, which is 48,4 % of the study group. Clan culture, identifying organisation as a friendly place, in which people willingly co-operate and supervisors play the part of advisors, employees are loyal and attached to organisational traditions and their development is highly valued, was identified by 57 of the surveyed (15 %). Process culture was the third. It is characterised by the sense of security, bureaucratic procedures, reaching for perfection expressed by lack of mistakes, certain torpor, lack of initiative, copying patterns of actions – 55 indications (14,5 %). Trust culture, which orders organisational reality in such a way that every team member knows the precise aim of activities and ways to reach it as well as rules applying to assessing and rewarding individual and team achievements got the same number of indications. Every team member has the right to express their opinions and the employees are treated fairly.

Adhocracy culture also appeared in the question characterising highly dynamic organisation, promoting resourcefulness and creativity setting the role of innovators and visionaries for their leaders. In adhocracy culture employees are not afraid of daring ideas and risk and the organisation is devoid of fixed organisational schemes. This type of culture was indicated only by 10 persons, that is 2,6 % of the group.

Market culture, characteristic for organisation, in which first of all results and ambitious employees oriented for reaching goals count, and the leader is a demanding supervisor who promotes competition, was pointed out by 19 persons (5 %). The effect of identifying culture which orders norms and rules in the respondents' current workplace is shown in Fig. 5.

Hierarchical culture, most often indicated by the surveyed, fosters forming routinist attitudes. This culture is characterised by hierarchization, bureaucratic procedures, preferring formal relations between members of organisation resulting from post occupied, excessive attachment to old habits and unwillingness to change. Rules and norms binding in it may to a large extent slow down the process of forming organisational culture of a new type.

In the next question the surveyed were to indicate organisational culture which would satisfy their expectations in their workplace. In the question typology by C. Handy was used. The choice of this typology resulted from assumption that each of cultures indicated may constitute a set of rules ordering behaviours and interpersonal relations in local administration units.

C. Handy distinguishes four types of cultures using the metaphor of mythological gods and taking into consideration the way of wielding power. This classification is presented in Table 3.
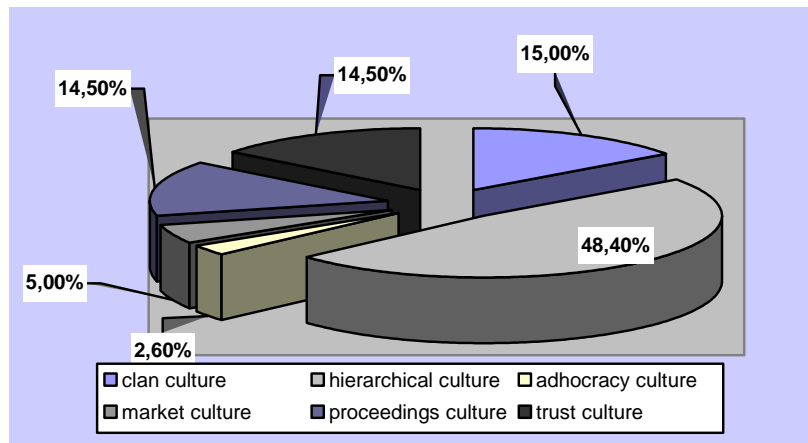
Figure 5. Identified kind of culture in the respondents' workplace.
Source: prepared on the basis of own studies

Table 3. Organisational cultures according to C. Handy

Name of culture	Characteristics	Application in public administration units
Power culture Zeus	Strong leader, subordinate employees, centralisation, obedience, loyalty and profit valued	This type of organisational culture can still be met in many offices where commune head, town or commune mayor is a person with strong, domineering personality, subordinating employees. This kind of culture does not welcome employees' creativity, assuming that they should "do their job and not stick their heads out"
Role culture Apollo	It is assumed that people are rational, the role of every employee is defined, structures and procedures are known, organisation is of stable character, professionalism is aimed at, rather impersonal relations at work	May to a considerable extent improve the effectiveness of functioning an office, as it prefers ordering and clearness of roles, but its weakness is certainly impersonality of interpersonal relations influencing atmosphere at work, which is important from the point of view of the internal and external client. It may be difficult to introduce changes
Task culture Athena	Management must solve many problems, the structure is of network character, all the resources of an organisation are used to solve the problem, task teams are created ad hoc, people competent in a certain field make decisions	This type of culture is characterised by pro-effective, universal values. Because of specific tasks of communes or district and the need to stimulate the development of a given area it is necessary to build a network of contacts, partners and using the resources in a given city, commune or district may be applicable in local administration and create a certain compilation with the role culture
Personal culture Dionysus	Organisations with this type of culture serve individuals, professionals, who do not need formal management but at most co-ordinating their actions, work here. In the organisation the idea of realising one's own needs with doing tasks is present but also good interpersonal relations and pleasant atmosphere are important	C. Handy optimistically assumed that this type of culture because of constantly growing employees' competence, will be the dominating type. In local administration units adapting this culture must take into account specific "being" of offices, which is serving others and generally understood social interest as well as the fact that, tasks performed are connected with strictly defined responsibility and undergo various supervision procedures

Source: drawn on the basis of *J. Szaban* (2007)

The surveyed rejected power culture characterised by strong leader and centralised management. In this culture submission, loyalty and obedience of employees are valued. This type of culture was chosen by only 4 persons, which is 1,1 %. These persons work in town and commune councils, have independent or managerial posts, have high education (one person secondary) and job seniority over 3 years.

However, the other cultures are perceived by respondents as fostering realisation of tasks. Results of survey are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Preferred category of culture

Name of culture	Number of indications	%
Power culture – Zeus	4	1,1 %
Role culture – Apollo	121	31,8 %
Task culture – Athena	129	33,9 %
Personal culture – Dionysus	126	33,2 %

Source: prepared on the basis of own studies.

Task culture got the most, as almost 34 % indications. It equals network structure fostering co-operation with numerous organisations. Task culture supports effective use of all office resources and creating task teams ad hoc in order to solve problems, but it also sets an important role in searching constructive solutions to the management. It fosters professionals, competent people, gives them the right to make decisions and express opinions in a given area.

Personal culture prefers professionals, considering their organisational needs. Highly qualified people show the need for independence, often do not need formal management but at most co-ordinating their actions. In the organisation the idea of realising personal needs with doing tasks is present but also good interpersonal relations and pleasant atmosphere are important. This kind of culture was chosen by 33,2 % of the surveyed.

Role culture was indicated by 31,8 % of the surveyed. This culture prefers rationalism and organisational order expressed in clearly defined role of every employee. It fosters organisational stability, structures and procedures are known. In it professionalism is aimed at, but relations at work are rather impersonal.

The above choices prove that the surveyed employees show the sense of responsibility for the quality of tasks performed joined with the need for organisational independence and broadening the scope of competence. They also value organisational order and clear rules.

"Each organisation has organisational culture characteristic for itself, but not every culture is valuable for the organisation" (*Wojtowicz*, 2005). Taking into account social-legal conditions, it can be assumed that task culture or role culture, because of pro-effective character fostering realisation of strategic aims of offices often identified with the growth of level of lifestyle, dynamics of development and quality of services provided, turn out to be useful in local administration units.

5. Pro-effectivity culture

Pro-effective culture prefers high level of involvement in realising the aims of organisation, is identified with workplace, creates favourable conditions for continuous learning, promotes solving problems together and making processes more efficient. In this culture managers treat their subordinates as rightful co-workers, and employees see leaders in their superiors, who they trust and respect. Features of pro-effectivity and anti-effectivity culture are presented in Table 5.

Pro-effectivity culture brings people together, makes co-operation easier for them, involves them in realising aims adopted as common. Managers treat their subordinates first of all as co-workers who realise the aims of the organisation together. The condition is effective realisation of personal function and adapting it to the aims of the organisation (*Kostera*, 2010).

Pro-effectivity culture fosters using non-material resources of an organisation, making the efficiency of actions higher. It joins the participants of organisation into a coherent whole, considerably raising its efficiency. This type of culture prefers the offensive type of employee, who makes decisions independently in the range of their competence and is more of an "actor" than "statesman" in the office.

Respondents asked about possibilities of adapting this type of culture in their workplace expressed their acceptance. 358 persons were for this type of culture, which is 94,2 % of the study group. 220 local government employees, that is 57,9 % said that this type of culture fosters realising tasks, for 92 persons (24,2 %) the fact that this culture takes into account employees' expectations. 46 (12,1 %) clerks assessed pro-effectivity culture as attractive and desirable indicating at the same time serious barriers in adapting it resulting from the supervisors' attitudes. Pro-effectivity culture is not perceived as fostering task performance by 4 persons (1,0 %). 18 persons (4,7 %) do not see this culture as adaptable because in their workplace "people have different expectations". This data is shown in Fig. 6.

Table 5. Features of pro-effectivity and anti-effectivity culture

Pro-effectivity culture	Anti-effectivity culture
Employees identify with organisation, refer to it as "we"	Within organisation there is division of its members into different groups, often opposite
Employees are involved in realising the aims of the organisation, they accept them as mutual	Organisation management and its representatives express negative opinions about their subordinates
Management treat their subordinates as co-workers who they realise the aims of organisation together	Management are not interested in inspirations, opinions and attitudes of subordinates, know very little about them
Employees see leaders in their supervisors and they consider them to be representative for the whole organisation	Conflicts between management and subordinates are rare
In the organisation there are conditions for development and perfecting employees' and their superiors' skills are created	Superiors and subordinates' attitudes towards each other are reluctant, their mutual contacts run in the atmosphere of confrontation
The organisation is open for the environment, it is a "learning" organisation	Management idea of subordinates' motives is based on lack of trust and various prejudices
Employees, independent of function entrusted to them, may and are not afraid to submit ways of solving problems occurring in the scope of tasks done by them	Lack of positive trend is visible in the scope of productiveness and effectiveness of work. There is a clear division of employees of different levels, departments and services

Source: drawn on the basis of *B.R. Кис*, *J.M. Moczydłowska* (2009).

In the group of people questioning legitimacy of adapting pro-effectivity culture persons employed on non-management posts, working in city halls, with higher education and job seniority between 3 and 10 years.
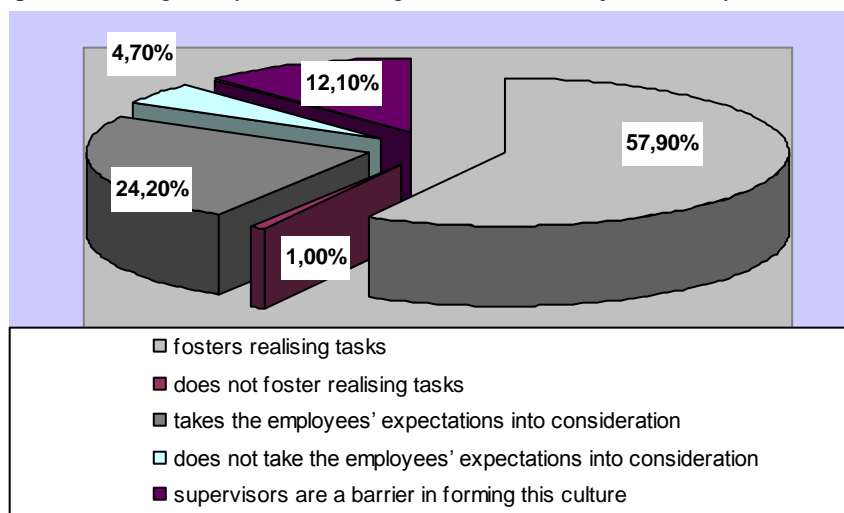

Figure 6. Possibilities of adapting pro-effectivity culture in the respondents' workplace.
Source: prepared on the basis of own studies

High, since over 94 % approval of pro-effectivity culture is a confirmation of employees' readiness or quality changes in the office, which may ultimately improve its functioning. Pro-efficiency culture, as H. Steinmann and H. Schreyőgg claim, brings profits as follows:

- higher awareness of tasks and missions as well as more involvement in realising them;
- inner integration of employees around approved aims;
- more efficient and faster transfer of information and making decisions;
- lower expenses for employees' supervision;
- improving employees' loyalty and motivation and personnel turnover;
- efficient accumulating and using organisational knowledge;
- better customer service resulting from higher involvement of employees (*Głuszek*, 2004).

6. Postulated changes in culture

The surveyed, asked about the necessary changes in organisational culture of local administration units (there were eight options to choose from), pointed out the need to higher flexibility of offices in reaction to changes as first – 115 indications, which entails the necessity to de-bureaucratise procedures for the good of individualising solutions – 109 indications. 103 persons stated that office should first of all value professionals. This data is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Desirable changes in organisational culture of local administration units

No.	Category	Number of indications	% of the surveyed group
1	Flexibility of offices should go up in the reaction to changes	115	30,3 %
2	Procedures should be de-bureaucratised for the good of individualising solutions	109	28,7 %
3	Offices should first and foremost value professionals	103	27,1 %
4	More orientation on employees' and organisation development	62	16,3 %
5	Rigidity and hierarchisation of authority	62	16,3 %
6	More orientation on diversity (also of ideas and new solutions)	60	15,8 %
7	Growth of expectations in the range of employees' ethical behaviours	33	8,7 %
8	I don't see changes as necessary	15	3,9 %

Source: prepared on the basis of own studies, respondents could mark several answers.

Other indications referred to intensifying actions connected with employees' and organisation development and gradual elimination of "rigidity" in wielding power as well as its hierarchisation – 62 indications.

7. Conclusions

Organisational culture has impact on efficiency of local administration and the quality of results achieved, it is an element of human resources management and an important tool of shaping organisational attitudes and behaviours.

Hierarchical culture, still existing in numerous offices, may pose a barrier in efficient realising tasks. It fosters forming uncritical obedience, uncompromising loyalty and routine copying schemes. It gives permission to soulless bureaucratic procedures, as long as they are in accordance with the law, and puts responsibility to sleep. This culture forms rutinists who value standardisation, formalisation and organisational stability as well.
Yet, local administration units must create the culture of a new type. This culture should include such values and attitudes as: activity, conscious involvement in organisation activity, professionalism, gaining new qualifications and skills connected among others with the use of new technologies, innovativeness, creativity expressed in searching new solutions, preferring quality and co-operation (*Wojtowicz*, 2005).

As A. Frąckiewicz-Wronka rightly notices, culture of public organisations focused on internal processes, hierarchised, often centralised and not susceptible to prompt changes having long cycles, unwillingly taking risks and functioning according to the rules should evolve towards achievements, raising efficiency and customer satisfaction, and flat structure. It should be culture concentrated on the environment, adapting, aiming at innovativeness and resourcefulness. In a public organisation of new type everyone can solve problems because this organisation values the ability to think, plan, command and act creatively (*Frąckiewicz-Wronka*, 2009).

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