

Looking for the conceptual basis of staff learning and knowledge creation at public institutions: questioning the Dewey's theory

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Abstract. *The paper seeks to answer the question if Dewey's theory could be applied as a conceptual basis for the staff learning and knowledge creation while performing the organizational tasks in public institutions in the same way as it is used in educational settings in order to enable learning of the future public servants. The method of literature analysis is used. The paper consists of three parts. The first part aims to reveal the main points of Dewey's theory of „learning by doing“ that could be questionable from the „knowledge professionals“ perspective. This part also shows that „learning by doing“ as student's activity at the educational institution is not the same as professional's activity at work (particularly – in public institution). The second part reveals what learning processes are hidden inside „doing by learning“ as a work process that is going on in the cotemporary organizations, particularly – in public institutions. The third part provides an insight from “learning by doing” to “doing by learning”: where does the conceptual shift lie? The paper is presented with conclusions and guideling for future research.*

Keywords: *learning by doing, doing by learning, organizational learning, public institutions.*

Raktažodžiai: *mokymasis veikloje, darbas mokantis, organizacinis mokymasis, viešosios institucijos.*

Introduction

In the age of the knowledge economy and, subsequently, knowledge societies, the Dewey's philosophy on the experimental learning and his educational theory of „learning by doing“ based on this philosophy [7] is incurring the real renaissance. The authors who are writing on the thematics of schools [14], higher education [16], as well as the researchers in management [1,9], particularly – in knowledge management [3], as well as public institutions [2,5,10], also refer to the „learning by doing“. The

attention on the Dewey's philosophy and his „learning by doing“ theory is caused by the needs of so called knowing organization.

As nowadays it is commonly understood, the idea of knowledge economy and knowledge societies is based on understanding of the knowledge as a key asset. This means that knowledge acquisition, creation and using for the production of the smart products or services is the main challenge for not only business organizations and their professionals, but also for the public institutions and their staff. In the majority of cases the knowledge that is created in organizations means not the scientific knowledge as a result of the scientific investigation, but the knowledge as innovation created directly in the work processes at public institutions and business enterprises. The need for innovation stimulates their employees for continuous improvement that leads to the knowledge creation, as well as their organizations to create actively the conditions for the knowledge acquisition from outside and inside the organization, to store, to share the knowledge between the employees, as well as to use it for the making of the products. Such kind of the organizations are known as knowing organizations [13].

It is natural that the „learning by doing“ has been discussed from both sides: from the educational perspective aiming to educate/train future professionals for contemporary world of work [14,16,18], as well as from the public administration and management (particularly – knowledge management) point of view [1,2,3,5,9,10]. The suitable illustration for this is Google Scholar website which suggests about 2,5 millions of the sources having key-word „learning by doing“. Despite the intensive efforts of the researchers and practitioners in education the employers of the contemporary organizations experience their needs for qualified so called „knowledge workers“ or „knowledge professionals“ [13]. The biggest problem still is the creation of individual and collective knowledge by the professionals and their teams that is necessary for an organization, particularly – for the innovation. What are the reasons of this problem? It seems, three reasons may cause the problem mentioned above: 1) practitioners in education (at school/higher education) are faced with difficulties to educate/train the „knowledge professionals“; 2) organizations are not able to create necessary conditions to empower the „knowledge professionals“ for the knowledge creation; 3) something is wrong on the conceptual, theoretical basis.

In this paper, I focus on the third hypothesis and raise the following research problem: can the essential principle of Dewey – „learning by doing“ - be realized *equally* at schools and universities as educational entities, from one side, and work organizations (particularly – public institutions, from the perspective of knowing organization), from the other side? To put it more precisely - what is exactly taking place during the process of the application of „learning by doing“ ideas in the educational and work environments (public institutions may be a good example)? The aim of the paper is to answer the question – could the Dewey's theory be applied as a conceptual basis for the staff learning and knowledge creation while completing the organizational tasks in public institutions in a same way as it is used in educational settings aiming to enable learning of the future public servants?

The research methodology is based on literature analysis from the perspective of three theories: 1) Dewey's „learning by doing“ theory [7]; 2) Uznadze's theory of Attitude [17] which is necessary to explain different dispositions of the person on his/her training activities in the educational institution and work activities in public organization, as well as to describe the roles of the learning in the course of these activities; 3) Nonaka's (with co-authors) Organizational learning theory [12, 13] which helps to reveal the differences between learning at educational establishment and work organization. The theoretical insights stemming from the analysis of scientific literature are confirmed by the empirical research carried out by the author of this papers (and her doctoral students). The paper consists of three parts. The first part aims to reveal the main points of the Dewey's theory of „learning by doing“ that may be questionable from the „knowledge professionals“ perspective. This part also displays that „learning by doing“ as an activity at the educational institution is not the same as it is at work (particularly – in public institution). In the second part I will try to reveal what learning processes are hidden in the „doing by learning“ as a work process that is going on in the cotemporary organizations, particularly – in public institutions. The third part provides an insight from “learning by doing” to “doing by learning”: where does the conceptual shift lie?

Some insights on the Dewey's theory of „learning by doing“

The starting point in Dewey's philosophy and his educational theory [7] is the world of everyday life. Dewey believed that it is only through experience that individual learns about the world and only by the use of his/her experience that a person can maintain and improve himself/herself in the world. Some experiences are merely passive affairs, not educative (Dewey used the term *mis-educative*). An educative experience is an experience in which an individual makes a connection between what he/she does to things and what happens to them or him/her as a consequence. The value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships and continuities among educative events. It means that before an individual is formally instructed, he/she learns much about the world, himself/herself, and others. It is this natural form of learning from experience, by doing and then *reflecting* on what happened.

At the same time, it is necessary to have in the mind that the reflective thinking and the perception of relationships arise only in problematical situations. As long as individual's interaction with his/her environment does not cause a problem he/she may think of nothing, but when this untroubled state of affairs is disrupted he/she has a problem which must be solved before the untroubled state can be restored. Dewey described the reflective thinking as a process: a real problem *arises out* of present experiences, suggestions for a solution come to mind, relevant data are observed, and a hypothesis is formed, acted upon, and finally tested. The “learning by doing” concept, according to Dewey, had to be central to schooling making it far different from the dominant school practice, when students passively received information that had been packaged to their heads.

Dewey's theory is one of the most frequently criticized theories, but at the same time it is the theory which is also most frequently used. It is Dewey's ideas which later impacted the theories of constructivism and progressivism, in which a person's experience plays a very significant role as well. Until today Dewey's "learning by doing" theory remains one of the most fundamental theories and in its analysis meet researchers in education and other disciplines in social sciences, particularly, management and public administration. "Learning by doing" is the theory which is still applied today in the educational (for the teaching/learning process) and public (or business) organizations when attempting to solve staff learning for the organizational knowledge creation problems. However, the question is whether the same is discussed when analyzing learning in education and in the work organizations and public institutions in particular?

To begin with – how different are the educational and work organizations? At first sight, the answer seems simple: the difference is in the type of individual performance. Education (learning enabled by teaching) takes place in the educational organizations. At work organizations employees fulfill the organizational work tasks. Thus, the main performance of an individual in the educational institution is learning. Meanwhile, an employee's main performance in an organization is work done to achieve the organizational goals. Certainly the environment of these organizations differs as well. Dewey emphasizes the environment's role for the individual to accumulate experience:

"<...> the particular medium in which an individual exists leads him to see and feel one thing rather than another; it leads him to have certain plans in order that he may act successfully with others; it strengthens some beliefs and weakens others as a condition of winning the approval of others. ...Thus it gradually produces in him a certain system of behavior, a certain disposition of action. The words "environment," "medium" denote something more than surroundings which encompass an individual. They denote the specific continuity of the surroundings with his own active tendencies. <...> In brief, the environment consists of those conditions that promote or hinder, stimulate or inhibit, the characteristic activities of a living being." [7, p.11]

"Learning-doing-learning" at educational institution: theoretical approach

It is natural that an individual as a student at school/university feels being in the educative/learning environment [14]. Thus, no matter how much an educator as an enabler of learning would be following Dewey's "learning by doing" ideas and would be at *first* trying to engage a student into "doing" and only *after* that would attempt to help learner to fix on the specific learning through reflection, a student would still accept this environment as educative/learning environment. He/she would be interested to know what learning goals are set, how the achieved results will be evaluated, etc. Therefore, a deeper view into this shows a certain difference from Dewey who claimed that at first "doing" takes place and only then "learning". Actually at first an *introductory* learning takes place: learning goals in the educative

environment are understood by students and the decision to strive to achieve them is made. Then “doing” takes place. Reflection takes place during this “doing” process and/or after it. The reflection means that “learning” takes place again. Thus, the essential “learning by doing” cycle in the educational institution’s environment is such: *learning-doing-learning*. From the perspective of the continuity, this cycle repeats, despite the nature of the problems being solved during such learning process. Actually, this observation does not conflict with Dewey’s essential idea of “learning by doing”, because in the educational institution learning certainly takes place (as the essential student’s performance) by doing.

“Learning-doing-learning” in educational practice

“Learning-doing-learning” theoretical insight has been confirmed by a number of instances from the work practice of the author of this paper as a university professor. It is even more convincingly confirmed by the research of organizational learning carried out in 2014 together with G.Valineviciene. This field study was carried out in one of Lithuania’s largest universities in Kaunas. More specifically – it two groups of Master students at the graduate study programmes “Education” (10 students) and “Educational technologies” (8 students). Even more specifically – during one of the key modules of both study programmes. This module was selected intentionally: it is meant to provide students not only with knowledge, but also with skills to apply knowledge by creating innovation that would be useful to the university and city community. It is based on such premises: since the students are prepared for work in highly important public sector – education, they have to innovative, capable of being not only good educators, but also active members of their organizations.

The purpose and value of educational itineraries and their creation are multidimensional. As a task of the module for university students it calls for application of theoretical knowledge in real life situations. The city receives benefits: the capacity of its citizens for life long learning is further strengthened. It is of a particular importance in case of Kaunas, which since 2001 is on the process of development towards the learning city and has achieved significant progress, acknowledged by UNESCO. The prepared educational itineraries strengthen the citizens’ understanding of life-long learning and the attractiveness of Old Town to inhabitants and tourists of the city. It also means increased business opportunities to the entrepreneurs located in the Old Town. Museums profit from an increased number of visitors, improved exhibitions, while the Old Town community benefits from greater cohesion.

During the first class in the module students got acquainted with the aim, objectives, expected learning outcome, study methods, process and evaluation methods. One of the elements of evaluation system – learning diary. Every student was supposed to fill such diary during the acquisition of theoretical knowledge or its practical application. The project task was also presented and requirements explained. Their essence: both groups have to join into one project organization for practical

work. Its aim was to create four educational itineraries around Kaunas Old Town. The quality of educational itineraries as well as competence portfolios prepared by the Master students have been evaluated. The later had to reveal what kind of competences each of the students acquired during the process of preparation of educational itineraries. The competence portfolios were important not only as an element of evaluation system. While preparing the portfolios, students were also learning by reflection.

During the first class, during the presentation of the aims of the module, a special emphasis was laid on development of practical skills, the essence and process of implementation of the educational itineraries project. One organization was created out of master students at the earlier possible stage, and it started functioning for the whole semester, i.e. 4 months. The organization for creating the educational itineraries was made up of three permanent units. Two of them created one educational itinerary each, while the third one has drafted two itineraries. One more work group performed as a matrix organization with one member delegated from each unit. The task of this work group – diffusion of educational itineraries as innovation to the communities of university, city and Old Town. The results of organizational activities of Master students were obvious. The usefulness of educational itineraries was confirmed by the Old Town community leaders and other representatives in municipality. The Master students themselves have admitted the effectiveness of their organizational activity while preparing the itineraries.

Empirical research was carried out in order to validate the model for the implementation of organizational learning in university study process. The course was enriched with this model. Next to the key data, valuable empirical findings were also achieved. The research will be presented in this light. Research was designed in such way as to determine how the organizational learning of the students was taking place, how they understood the process of their activity, in the study process working ‘in organization’ and achieving the aim of ‘project organization’. The following research methods were applied: observation of students activity and reactions, linked with discussion, and Focus group at the end of the research, after the students have drafted the educational itineraries. It was highlighted what chain of activities (as perceived by students) are reflected in the educational process, based on the concept “learning by doing”. The following data and circumstances of its acquisition were important:

1. Although during the first classes teachers tried to emphasise the practical – organizational – activity, all students put a primary emphasis on the aims and activity of *learning*. It was shown by the students’ verbal reactions during the discussions on envisaged learning and practical activities: a) during the presentation of aims of the module; b) during the discussions on project task; c) during the creation of organization and making the first steps of its activity. Thus, all master students first of all perceived their activity as *learning*.

2. In the process of creating the educational itineraries, when the students went deep into the activity of project organization, they started perceiving their activity as *doing*, not only learning. It is evident not only from the Focus group discussion, but

also from the learning diaries. Due to their involvement into organizational activities, students were even forgetting to fill their learning diaries. Teachers had to remind them of their duty.

3. However, in order to accomplish all tasks of the module and receive evaluation, students had not only to write diary, but also to prepare the portfolio of competences achieved during the preparation of educational itineraries. Thus, inevitably, at the end of the study process students had to concentrate once again on *learning*.

It is confirmed not only by their study works, but also the results of Focus group discussion.

So the empirical research has confirmed the theoretical insight that in the process based on “learning by doing” that is taking place in the educational institution (no matter how much we try to approximate this process to the work process), students tend to emphasise the chain of activities: *learning-doing-learning*.

Can the “learning by doing” be applied for learning at work in the organizations?

How does “learning by doing” take place in a non-governmental organizations, municipality or business organization? As already mentioned before, here, first of all, the employees fulfill their organizational work tasks, which are significant for the organization and for which the employees are being rewarded [3]. Thus, they are concentrated on “doing”. Such work organizations that perform as knowing organizations, are also interested in having their employees created knowledge while performing their own main work. This knowledge creation takes place in the organizational learning process. Therefore, in the work organization environment an individual concentrates first of all on “doing” and only later on “learning.” It is natural that such a succession be called “doing by learning”.

What learning processes are hidden behind “doing by learning”?

Since organizational learning processes are being analyzed in the knowing organization, it is rational to rely on the Organizational knowledge creation theory by Nonaka and Takeuchi [11]. It is explaining the *organizational learning* processes that typically take place in the knowing organization. Organizational learning is described as learning realised by employees (by single or in their groups or in the organization, as an entity) seeking for the organizational aims/work tasks. Organizational learning leads to creation of organizational knowledge. Nonaka and Takeuchi [ibid] distinguish between four stages of organizational knowledge creation as organizational learning. They are called: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (SECI). However, when presenting them, they firstly explain how the work in an organization takes place when striving for the continuous achievement of the goals of organization’s development and innovations.

Socialization – during this organizational learning stage, when a few employees work together, suddenly their mutual awareness of certain things occurs. This is tacit knowledge. Their essence is that individuals are not aware that such knowledge exists. This knowledge is not shared, is not written, is embedded in the individuals themselves, but they also impact their behavior of the individuals. A good example maybe acquired mutual skills to control a complex mechanism through group work or to perform in balance in a common culture.

The next stage of organizational knowledge creation is *externalisation*. It occurs when a group of employees must tackle a certain work problem. When solving the problem, first of all they need to share the knowledge that they possess and that are relevant to the problem. Certainly to begin with they need to try to make own tacit knowledge explicit, and this is usually a very complicated task to accomplish. After this has been partially or fully accomplished knowledge is shared in the group and discussions take place until everyone agrees that the suggested solution is the best. This solution is the outcome of the created explicit collective knowledge. In other words – it is the group solution of the problem. Specifically the stage of externalisation is similar by its essence to what is called collaborative learning. However, it differs from collaborative learning, approached as both method and system [6] that during the externalisation stage the group of employees is concentrated on solving the problem as the goal of an organization and not solving the problem in the group of *learners*. In these two instances the environments perceived by the individuals differ significantly. In the first instance it is the work organization's environment. In the second instance it is the educational organization's environment.

However, the work organization is comprised not only from one, but from several or even more groups of employees whose formal consistency depends on the organizational structure. If the goal is to solve the problem on an organizational level, the employee groups that belong to the organization or represent them, are the ones solving the problem. Thus, it is expected that each group will have already undergone the externalisation stage and each group (or their representative) will come to the mutual meeting with the specific proposal from own group on how to solve the problem. This proposal is the group's externalized collective knowledge.

The *combination* stage starts with this mutual meeting among the organization's groups of employees, at the scope of the entire organization when the common to the entire organization solution is being sought. This is how explicit collective knowledge is generated. Usually they take the form of the formal organizational decisions.

Then it is only necessary during the *internalisation* stage to achieve that the solutions which were agreed upon at the organizational level, would turn into the ownership of employees and their groups. During the stage the usual organizational goal is educational: through various teaching and learning methods (traditional teaching by providing information, as well as applying the learning by doing methods and so on) it is aimed at internalizing this organizational scope collective knowledge by turning them into tacit knowledge of groups or individuals.

This is how knowing based on experience is achieved on the levels of individual, group and entire organization. It is important to point out that only the internalisation stage in an organization has clear traits of learning goals. However, an essential difference also exists – the work organization’s environment (from the staff point of view) still remains different from the educational organization’s environment (how it is perceived by students): the accepted organizational decisions by staff are assimilated not because they have to be learned, but because they need to be known in order to achieve change in an organizational performance.

“Doing-learning” in municipal practice

These ideas are confirmed by the empirical research carried out by the author of this paper and her doctoral student V. Burkšienė [8]. During their research, they have provided theoretical justification to model of organizational learning for sustainable development (based on I. Nonaka and H. Takeuchi [12] as well as I. Nonaka, R. Toyama ir P. Byosiere [13]) and sought to validate the model empirically. The validation was carried out in the municipality of Neringa that was in the process of implementing strategic development plan for 2007-2013. In 2010 municipality had to draft the plan for 2011-2013 with a special focus on sustainable development. The working group for the preparation of this plan included the members of Strategic planning group of Neringa municipality. This group (9 members) was formed on the matrix basis from various representatives of municipality units. V. Burkšienė has presented the group with the model of organizational learning for sustainable development. The work group decided to rely on this model in preparation of the strategic development plan.

Under such circumstances, researchers have opted for field study research method. Research was carried out in 2010 -2011. It was based on the above mentioned SECI model [12]: organizational learning was analyzed based on socialization, externalization, combination and internalization. In fact, the process of internalization was not touched upon due to objective circumstances (municipal elections)

The research has shown that [6] all three stages of organizational learning took place by placing particular emphasis on the tasks of doing (when preparing the strategic plan) and not so much organizational learning. Thus, although participants relied on model of organizational learning for sustainable development, it stayed in the minds of group members only as context that would allow effectively achieve the organizational goal – to implement the work task. Only the researcher’s questions, posed after each stage of task accomplishment, allowed participants to reflect on the organizational knowledge that they achieved in the process. It enabled them to admit that organizational learning was also taking place. Obviously, *learning* followed *doing*. Thus, if in educational institutional learning is perceived as primary activity (even though it is achieved “by doing”), then in work organization the primary roled is played by “doing” even if it takes place “by learning”.

Therefore, organizational learning (learning that is primarily taking place in order to achieve work goals in organization) is in reality “doing by learning”, realized when striving to achieve organizational goals – the continuous innovation. This performance process is followed by the continuous succession possessed by the four organizational learning stages (socialisation, externalisation, combination, and internalisation). This is the essence of “doing by learning” in the knowing organization.

From “learning by doing” to “doing by learning”: where does the conceptual shift lie?

Thus, what essential factors separate *learning by doing* from *doing by learning*? Two main factors that have already been mentioned should be emphasized here: 1) environment of the performance: in the first case – educational, in the second case – work; 2) the meaning/goal of performance understood by the individual: in the first case – learning, in the second case – work. However, there is yet something even more important than the aforementioned factors. It is the individual’s dispositional attitude towards performance.

I will try explaining this based on Uznadze’s theory of Attitude [17], which further was developed by his followers, especially – Nadirashvili [11]. The theory of Attitude is one of the significant general-psychological theories. The word “attitude” means the psycho-physical readiness for action. There are three factors for the formation of the attitude: 1) the need / will; 2) the relevant situation for the need/will satisfaction; 3) the skills, instrumental means for the need/will satisfaction. Two types of the attitude are distinguished: the situational attitude and the dispositional attitude. Situational attitude lies in the basis of impulsive behavior. In everyday life, people frequently show impulsive behavior. At such times, an individual develops certain demands, perceives certain objects, prepares necessary operational possibilities; on their basis, a person develops a situational attitude and shows the necessary behavior. This behavior goes on at a lower, first level of a person’s activity. Dispositional (fixed) attitude is not developed prior to an individual’s behavior. When in similar situations situational attitudes repeat and condition the successful behavior of an individual, they are fixed, reinforced and transformed into dispositional attitudes of a human being. It means, after showing one and the same behavior many times, situational attitudes lying in the basis of it are generalized as dispositional attitudes, become unified as attitudes of one content, and are stored in a person’s psyche. The more successful it is, the more reinforced is its base attitude – it is formed as a dispositional attitude. For actualizing dispositional attitude again, it is *not* necessary for all three factors to be present. Often, for its actualization, the presence of one factor is enough.

Based on this theory, I will try to provide some reflections upon an individual’s significant part of his/her life journey, which is defined by his/her presence in two establishments: in position of a student - in the educational institutions

(school/university) and in position as an employee - in work organizations. As it has already been mentioned, Dewey emphasized the significance of environment on a human being: the environment conditions the human being's *certain system of behavior, a certain disposition of action*. Uznadze [ibid] underlined not only the significance of environment, but also the significance of a situation. When discussing the topic of a school, Uznadze connected the implementation of educational ideas closely with the creation of an edifying atmosphere in the school, emphasized the didactic principle of the *lasting* acquisition of knowledge and skills. Certainly the human being spends such a long time at school/university and his/her learning lasts for such a long time in the educational environment, which becomes natural, that dispositional attitude forms into his performance – learning – in the educational institution. This only proves my previous thought that a student, despite the theoretical or practical task that he/she receives in the educational process, will still be inclined towards the *learning* performance. Disposition for *doing* in this performance will at best be only the second component. At school in the „learning by doing“ instance it usually depends on the teacher to motivate a student for reflection, i.e. for learning [6]. This is how the third element is included into the chain: learning – doing - learning.

What exactly happens with the dispositional attitude that is formed at school/university when a graduate starts working in the work organization? The latter first of all emphasizes the organizational goals of product production and/or service provision. As a supplementary activity in the knowing organization, knowledge creation can also be named. Obviously a young employee concentrates on the new to him/her and yet unusual, but at this point primary „doing“ goals and only afterwards the „learning“ goals. It means that a young employee concentrates on the new situation. Dispositional attitude for „learning –doing – learning“, which operated perfectly in the educational environment, becomes irrelevant in the work environment. Moreover: every new work situation which is successfully solved, forms the situational attitude for such a „doing – learning“ work. Most probably, after a number of similar successfully solved situations the dispositional attitude for „doing-learning“ in the knowing organization will form. However, this will require some time.

Conclusions

1. The insight into the „learning by doing“ and „doing by learning“ claims that these performances differ by the sequence of the particular kinds of activities. It means the Dewey's conception „learning by doing“ implemented by educational establishments enabling student's to perform his/her main activity - *learning* by involving him/her into the practical work, *is not the same* as „doing by learning“ when an employee is involved into his/her main performance – practical work which is followed by employee's learning in knowing organization. Each of the performances conditions the formation of the individual's different dispositional attitudes. When the

attitudes are formed they themselves condition the individual's specific performance in the particular environment and situation.

2. Based on the sequential order of the individual's life span and performance as a student, the dispositional attitude for „learning by doing“ is formed first of all. Unfortunately, the individual is not able to continue it as an employee in the work organization (particularly – in public institution) because of the primary organizational goal stressed on working not learning. The new-comer employee (just from the school or university) has the dispositional attitude for „learning by doing“ . Therefore he/she must formulate a new dispositional attitude - „doing by learning“. The shift from „learning by doing“ to „doing by learning“ requires additional efforts from the organization as an entity.

3. Unfortunately, the Dewey's theory can not be applied as a conceptual basis for the staff learning and knowledge creation while completing the organizational tasks in public institutions in the same way as it is used in educational settings in order to enable learning of the future public servants. The essential questions that require further research are as follows: How to enable the shift from students' „learning by doing“ to the professionals' „doing by learning“ in a most efficient way? Is it only a single strategy for the enabling employees' to change their dispositions? Or is it possible to use a different strategy – to try to shift from „learning by doing“ to „doing by learning“ in the educational settings?

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Viešųjų institucijų darbuotojų mokymosi ir žinių kūrimo konceptualaus pagrindo paieška: Diujo teorija

Anotacija

Šio straipsnio tikslas – išsiaiškinti, ar Diujo teorija gali būti teorinis pagrindas aiškinti viešųjų institucijų (taip pat ir verslo organizacijų) darbuotojų mokymąsi ir žinių kūrimą, siekiant organizacinių tikslų. Tiksliau – ar ši teorija šiuo aspektu gali būti taikoma lygiai taip pat, kaip taikoma švietimo institucijose siekiant įgalinti besimokančių asmenų aktyvų, praktika grįstą mokymosi procesą. Siekiant šio tikslo, atliekamas teorinis tyrimas, taikant mokslinės literatūros analizę ir lauko studiją, paremtą stebėjimu, diskusija ir Focus grupės metodu. Straipsnį sudaro trys dalys. Pirmojoje dalyje išryškinama Diujo „mokymosi veikloje“ teorijos esmė: kodėl ji tinka aiškinti mokinių, studentų mokymosi proceso aktyvinimą ir kodėl

atsiranda neaiškumų šią teoriją bandant taikyti darbuotojų veiklai, dėl kurios darbuotojai tobulėja. Tokie klausimai ypač kyla kalbant apie vadinamąją žinių organizaciją (tokia gali būti ir viešoji institucija, ir verslo organizacija) ir jų darbuotojus – žinių profesionalus. Antrojoje dalyje, gilinantis į jau minėtus klausimus, atskleidžiami darbuotojų žinių organizacijoje (tarp jų ir viešosios vadybos specialistų) darbo ir tobulėjimo ypatumai. Jie padeda įrodyti, kad darbo organizacijose (joms priskiriamos ir viešosios institucijos) reikia kalbėti ne apie „mokymąsi veikloje“, bet apie „darbą mokantis“. Trečiajame skyriuje gilinamasi į „mokymosi veikloje“ ir „darbo mokantis“ skirtumų priežastis. Straipsnio pabaigoje pateikiamos išvados ir klausimai, reikalaujantys tolesnių tyrimų.

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