Learning Management as a Requirement to Brazilian State Public Sector

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KEY WORDS

Learning Management - Public Sector - Responsibility Ethics - Conviction Ethics

ABSTRACT

This study presents a method called Learning Heterogeneous Circle (CHA) which aims to start a learning management in Brazilian public organization. It is a strategic possibility to the organizational improvement and survival, through which it will be possible to face daily problems which may come out from members interaction. The required learning management searches for directing programs to their results, reducing bureaucratic intensity and intensifying human interaction based on functional and substantial reason. It requires a disciplinary and congruent dynamism to obtain organization with qualitative and quantitative income.

1. Introduction

During the last decades, efforts and changing proposals aiming the modernization of the Brazilian State Public Sector have been intensively discussed, showing a continuous perception process about the existing theoretical and practical reality.

Nevertheless, any changing attempt can be unsuccessful if the principal change is not reached, that is, the way people think the organization, transcending from a simple functional thinking in which collaborative personal prescription and convictions, mutually shared, can coexist at the same organizational space.

Such a context implies in a central objective: state organization survival searching and development, as well as, personal accomplishments of its members, among the confront that is established depending on the complexity, instability and uncertainty that are present in the segment.

This triad is under great influence of practices which are reproduced in the daily life of these organizations, imposing to the managers a "lion's" agility to take the organization to the equilibrium, that is sometime impossible, as what is left to them is only the speed of a "snail", created by the imposed intense bureaucracy, due to authority excess, hierarchy, formalism and impersonality.

Thus, the goal of this study is to build a method to start the practice of learning management in Brazilian State Public Organizations, focusing the exercise of full rationality, based on the principles of Learning Organization, described in the specialized literature and on the professional practice experiences of the authors of this study.

The study intends to focus on the role of public managers, the congruency among responsibility, and absolute value ethics, as well as, the subjects that guide the learning management. Having this approach as the starting point, elements for reflection will be proposed, aiming principally the bureaucracy intensity reduction, turning the management process to the result reach in Brazilian public organizations, through large participation of their members.

2. The role of the Public Manager

According to (Maslow, 2000) the development of people will be closely related to the reduction of authoritarian management. People will gradually realize the inefficacy of this kind of management and they will look for other types of management politics to help the organization to survive. The multidimensional concept of the human being is a powerful tool to be used in such a process.

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The traditional concept of management emphasizes the work of people and groups to reach organizational goals, using leadership as the main tool. Leadership is a phenomenon that "*happens every time someone influences the behavior of a person or group of people no matter what the objective is."* (Hersey, Blanchard, 1986).

The practice of management implies in the development of process, which basic functions according to many authors are: planning, organize, motivate and control. This can be used in any kind of organization, including the public ones, and people are directly involved in the process. According to (Koontz and O´Donnel apud Hersey, Blanchard, 1986), *"When they use a management function, presidents, department managers, supervisors, principals, priests or government organization chiefs do the same thing: all of them are trying to realize things with and through the participation of people".*

The traditional management model requires from the public manager a correct action, where resources will be well used, avoiding waste, pre-determined goals will be reached - a compromise with efficiency.

He is supposed to command and control his subordinates so that the goals the organization are reached - compromise with control.

His main worry is to assure that people, compared to machines, improve their performance when working on their tasks - priority to the productive system.

According to (Carvalho 1995) such a management approach is closely related to the theoretical model of management which is called " (...) *model-machine, in which men are seen as a production resource, as a passive being that is programmed by specialists to act in the organization. The function of the manager is therefore to increase the production and the worker's output, who is rewarded depending on measurable physical product".*

The transition between the mechanistic management model to the humanist management model occurred between the thirties and forties. It was strongly influenced by the development of social sciences and was responsible for a revolution in the administrative thinking. To (Carvalho, 1995) "*According to this new approach the view of a man seen as a social being with aspirations, interests, and necessities that need to be considered in the comprehension of his behavior, starts to be incorporated to the management theory".*

In the new context the emphasis in the human relations at work emerge, supported in the multidimensionality that involve people - criticism, creativity, initiative, perception, reflection, conviviality, survival necessity and auto-realization - providing the adoption of more democratic management styles, where leadership assumes a meaningful position. To the manager it is not only asked correct actions but also allow the right things to be done. Emphasis is also given to negotiation and communication skills.
At the same time he/she is allowed do develop abilities to be able to identify the human technical and conceptual skills of the human elements of the organization.

Supported by (Hersey, Blanchard, 1986) it is necessary to the manager the development of the technical skills, as the ability to apply knowledge, techniques, methods and necessary equipment to the execution of specific tasks, ability that is received through education and training experience. It is necessary to develop the human ability through capacity and discernment to work with people, including the knowledge of motivation process and the efficacious application; as well as the development of conceptual ability through the capacity to understand the organization complexity as a whole and where each specific area is accommodated in the context. This way, it is possible to act in accordance to the global objectives of the organization and not focusing the immediate goals and necessities of the own group. It is through the conceptual ability that the manager manages to think in a systemic form, visualizing

interdependent relations among people, processes, products (goods and services), technology and environment.

Another consequence of management in public sector is the conflict situation that is presented when the model of the humanist management is face to face to the concepts of the intense bureaucracy, that has dominated the public organizations. It becomes concrete because of authority excess, where it is

more important to be a boss than a leader; by the impersonality that gives more representative value to the position than to the person that performs it; by the normative essentiality, that turns the actions almost totally prescriptive; by the formalism excess that reduces the characteristics of some associated human life principles, and one of its principal dimensions, the collaborative conviviality.

Under such an approach, how could the realignment of the public sector happen, dealing with factors as innovation, flexibility, compromise with the individual, team work competence solidity and satisfaction with the diversity of the person's work power?

3. Congruency between Responsibility Ethics and Absolute Value Ethics

Both the responsibility ethics and the absolute value or conviction ethics, are linked to the practice of rationally substantial and functional acts. According to (Ramos, 1983) the adjectives "functional" and "substantial", in this situation, were created by Karl Mannhein in 1942 as to refine the senses of human rationality and irrationality. Acts or elements are dominated by the functional rationality when, articulated or related with other acts or elements, they contribute to the achievement of a predetermined goal. It is, then, because of the predetermined goal that one acts rationally. On the other hand, the acts or elements dominated by the substantial rationality are those that are intrinsically intelligent, that are based in a lucid and independent knowledge of fact relations. They are acts that certify the transcendence of the human being, as beings that have good sense in terms of intellectual accuracy that comes from inside them.

The public organizations, due to their bureaucratic intensity, are essentially guided by the ethics of responsibility, where there is no left space for the exercise of the ethics of absolute value or conviction.

Coming back to the public sector realignment question, it would be necessary to try to make a balance between the ethics, aiming to "(...) *do the politic, civic, ecological and psychological responsibilities to become more and more assured, not because the dynamism of the organization asks for them, but because it is impossible to anyone to ignore them, because one would. run the risk of giving the opportunity to the perverse cynicism to win*". (Enriquez,1997).

To (Ramos,1983) "*The ethics of responsibility is related to the rational action. Its essential criterion is the functional or pragmatic rationality. The ethics of absolute value or conviction is implicit in all action referred to values. The two actions are not necessarily opposite to each other. In relation to the organization, theoretically and concretely, it is possible to admit congruency between the two types of ethics, since the qualifications and the nature of the work coadunate with the individual values. Consequently, except in extraordinary cases, no individual organizes his/her behavior under an exclusive kind of none of the two ethics*."

The absolute value or conviction ethics recognizes the human being as an individual of beliefs, values and principles. Therefore, he/she is able to develop the process of skilful discussion with his/her pairs, being able to come to a result of a mutual shared decision. The ethics of responsibility recognizes the man as a being that owes obedience almost exclusively to the established legal and normative prescriptions. Thus, he/she does not perform his/her critic conscience fully, becoming distant of his/her own convictions and therefore an organizational

alienated. To have a practical balanced exercise between the two ethics it is necessary to make the structural qualifications of the organization flexible in such a perspective.

The absolutism of the exclusive rationalizations given both by the ethics of responsibilities and the ethics of convictions are limiting cases, that is, there will always be a minimum of influence of one upon the other. *Only in extraordinary cases, no one organizes his/her behavior under the exclusive kind of none of the two ethics.* (Ramos, 1983).

According to same author, *the exercise of any position, function or career requires the auto-rationalization of the behavior of the professional. The person is conducted in his behavior, by values, that is, estimations and evaluations, from which his/her world conceptions and his/her own social realization ideal are created, and that reaffirm his/her conviction ethics. The minimal observation of this ethics, primordial to the individual's inner safety and integrity, occasionally makes him/her controversial, involved in conflicting situations. It would be utopia to admit - as pointed out by Whyte - the possibility of having the settlement of a perfect harmony among the values of the individual and those of the organization. In administrative or organizational situations, the individual is ordinarily under tension. However, the levels and content of such a tension can be more or less poisoning, under a human view, depending on the structural qualifications of the organization.*

The associated exercise of the responsibility and absolute value ethics in public organizational places requires the practice of actions orientated by the understanding as a result of skilful discussions. This exercise intends to diminish the intensity of tensions that are naturally related with the ethics of responsibility. According to (Serva,1997) *"The remarkable presence of emancipator values and the perseverance in practicing orientated actions to the understanding, have been revealed as fundamental to create a substantive character in the organization."*

The negotiation done by the rational agreement - understanding - may represent a determinant factor, directed to the reduction of bureaucratic intensity, establishing the perspective of equilibrium between the functional rationality created by the ethics of responsibility and the substantive rationality, created by the ethics of conviction or absolute value, in the productive and constructive spaces of public sectors. (Serva,1997), showed in his study that "*the understanding actions have proved to be primordial to give the mode of substantive knowledge in the "hard processes" of administrative practice: those directly linked to power questions.*"

It is pointed out that the congruency of public sector organizations, facing the rationality that are subjacent to them, does not start in the produced services or in the image that is transmitted to the public. It starts in their internal management processes, keeping the interactive conception

among people, processes, products (goods and services), technologies and environment. Such a subjacent rationality requires congruent rational exercise under substantive and functional rationality.

4. Disciplines that Guide the Management in Learning

The process of Management in Learning, required in this study, has support in the theoretical principles of the "Learning Organization", conceived by (Peter Senge et al,1999). The exercise of management focusing learning, means to build knowledge and practice it continually, searching for personal and organizational self-improvement. "*Learning in organizations means testing continually our experience, and transform this experience into knowledge - accessible to all the organization and pertinent to its central proposal.*" (Senge et al, 1999)

The process of Learning Management for public organizations means changing the current rules upon which managers support their actions, that is, reduce the bureaucratic intensity through the

practice of a complete rationality, in which the congruency between the functional and substantial rationality is evidenced. This kind of process can be well developed based on the five disciplines conceived by Peter Senge et al, Systemic Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision and Team Learning.

To think in a systemic form means to learn to understand the relations of interdependency established by the several interconnections that coexist in the organization, including the environment in which it is inserted. The comprehension about the organizational complexity is the essence of the systemic thinking, since it allows the visualization of the parts as a whole, with efficiency capacity on the decisions about the necessity of the whole in each of the parts, as well as what each of the parts represents to the whole.

The personal mastery is associated to personal aspirations and the existing reality. This discipline allows the cultivation of tension between vision and reality, aiming to reach wished equilibrium state, where the capacity to choose and the result reach are closer to the expected ones.

The mental models call to the exercise of abilities that rest on the reflection and inquiry, essential components of productive discussion, that make several individual forms of how the organization is thought to emerge, seeking for shared solutions, supported by the understanding and by a conciliatory to think the organization.

The shared vision aims to reach the best possible alignment between personal and organizational objective that is, establish a focus in the common proposal, with everybody searching it constantly and with coherence through the construction of a sense of engagement with the goals to be reached and the practice to reach them.

The team learning requires the group interaction trough dialogue and skilful discussion, where it is not enough for people to be together, it is necessary to walk learn and grow together. This subject teaches that the summing up of the whole will always be bigger than the summing up of the individual talents. The collective thinking focus energy and action mobilization learning to reach common goals.

5. Method Proposition to Start the Process of Learning Management.

The method to be proposed requires the congruency between "behavior" - essentially functional - and "action" - essentially substantial - in a way to make the practice of management learning possible, in Brazilian public organizations, turned to result reach, in accordance with the human element valorization. It brings as a central question the reduction of the bureaucratic intensity. To (Ramos, 1989) "*The behavior is a form of conduction that is based upon the functional rationality or on the estimation of the consequences, a capacity - as has been said by Hobbes - that the human being has in common with other animals. His most important category is the convenience. Consequently, his behavior is not provided by a ethical content of general validity. It is a kind of mechanomorphical behavior, dictated by exterior imperatives. It can be evaluated as functional or effective and is completely included in a determined world only because of efficient causes.*

On the other hand, the action is a characteristic of an agent that decides about things because he is conscious of his intrinsic finalities. Through these finalities, the action constitutes an ethical form of conduct. The social and organizational efficiency is an incidental dimension and not fundamental to the human action. The human beings are taken to act, to decide and make choices, because final causes - and not only efficient causes - influence the world in general. So, the action is based in the calculation of the consequences, at least, only by accident."

The learning management in public sector, through result orientated programs, gives the opportunity to people, in the organizations, to have a functional behavior, based in established

prescriptions. It also allows people to apply, after conscious discussions, what has been prescribed, taking into consideration their beliefs, values and individual knowledge, so that the process that emerges from the competent discussion, can produce innovating actions directed to mutual shared changes in short and long run.

The method that is being proposed (Table 1), based on the theoretical principles of the Learning Organization, stimulates result orientated programs and has as a priority the professional action, against behaviors that are just mechanomorphic. So, it proposes the Learning Heterogeneous Circle (CHA), that aims to exploit the personal self-management, relating it to the organization management process. It sees the organization in all its complexity, in such a way that the learn how to learn procedure, that happens personally and organizationally, becomes an incorporated action by all the people in the organization, that will work on the expected quantitative and qualitative efficiency.

The method, when used, requires from the human elements in the organization, all those working in any level - strategic, tactic or operational - the realization of Learning Heterogeneous Circles (CHA), when dealing with threatening situations that emerge from the organization daily activities. They have to be done systematically in an interactive form, lasting at least two hours for each of the five disciplines. This method has as its objective, the achievement, through productive discussions, of constructed solutions, on consensual basis, taking people, processes, products (goods and services), technologies and environment into consideration. Its dynamics happens through learning steps, aiming to exploit the threatening situation in the context of each discipline, to reach dense, consistent, collaborative and shared consensual solutions to be used either in construction, execution, monitoring or evaluation of the matter.

When facing a threatening situation, the first step to be taken is the **Situational Diagnosis (SD)**. It is done through a critic conscience exercise, with dialogue and productive discussion (inquiry + reflection + reasoning) so that understanding and shared solutions are reached. The Situational Diagnosis identifies weak and strong points that emerge inside the organization, as well as, threats and opportunities that are from an environment out of the organization. This allows the identification of starting effects and unwanted impacts on processes, products and people. The second step sends the Learning Heterogeneous Circles (CHA) to the identification of the **Potential Necessities (PN)**, turned to find a solution to the threatening situation. This includes analysis about the established necessities to solutions that have already been applied, as well as, the creation through the understanding of new necessities, to the encouragement of shared solutions, all of them focusing personal and organizational development. The third step consists on the definition, by understanding, of **Solution Strategic Decisions (SSD)** aiming identify and construct on a consistent basis of confident data and information, shared solutions highly efficacious, that is, decisions that will be fundamental to solve the threatening situation, and that will impel the development and survival of the organization. To close the process, it is established, in a shared form, the fourth step, which consists on the elaboration of the **Action Plan (AP)**, involving action, activities costs, deadlines and responsible person, implanting the idea harmony, constancy and coherency of proposal, focusing the necessary interconnections to the visualization of links among action, solution and results.

Each support discipline will be exploited on specific dimensions, that is, Personal Mastery exploits ability, handiness, proficiency, personal vision and organizational reality; Mental Models exploits the ways the organization is seen, thought and perceived by its members; Shared Vision exploits the individual objectives, organizational objectives and shared objectives, intending to have coherency among them, aiming the shared vision construction; Team

Learning exploits dialogue, understanding, consensus, collective guidance and interactivity; finally Systemic Thinking exploits the holographic vision, interconnections, power and interdependency relations seen as a whole, and the whole seen in each of the parts of the organization. The exploitation of these dimensions shall be able to generate development factors to identify and define Situational Diagnosis, Potential Necessities, Solution Strategic Decisions and Action Plan. These questions, on their turn, are going to allow the human elements of the organization to start, in an interactive form, the process of self-management, getting prepared to simultaneously deal with the threatening situations that are presented as obstacles to the development and survival of the organization.

Through this understanding, the twenty questions related to the five disciplines are presented according to the following structure:

Personal Mastery
- Am I skillful and proficient enough in what I do, to face the threatening situation that is presented?
- Is what I want to my personal life when I face a threatening situation, in consonance with the reality presented by the organization?
- Do I have the option of personal choice to face the threatening situation?
- Are my personal objectives in harmony with my current reality in the organization? What kind of influence can this bring to the confront of the threatening situation?

Mental Models
- What do I think about the threatening situation in the context of the organization where I work?
- How would I like to see it?
- Do I understand clearly how it happens, what effects it produces, and what their fundamental causes are?
- What do I think about my social-organizational responsibility (ethics) in relation to the threatening situation?

Shared Vision
- The organization is here to do what in relation to the threatening situation?
- How do I see and understand the goals of the organization I belong to and what is the relation of the objectives with the threatening situation?
- Are my personal goals identified with the organization goals?
- What can be done so that my personal goals get more and more close to the organization goals and this way be efficacious in the management of the threatening situation?

Team Learning
- Are the actions, before being developed, widely discussed, based on enough necessary facts, data and information?
- Does the process of decision happen based on productive dialogue and exhaustive discussion about the specificity of the threatening situation?
- Am I a completely open person to dialogue and productive discussion, where the processes of reflection, inquiry and reasoning emerge in a natural way?
- Am I able to discuss and think on collective advantages and at the same time respect my co-workers' individualities?

Systemic Thinking
- Am I able to visualize the threatening situation in all its organizational complexity, its reflexes and position in each sector of the organization ?
- Do I establish the possible interconnections and interdependency relations in the internal and external context of the organization, every time develop an action?
- Does the way I think the organization allow me to see it in all its complexity?

-       In what way do I associate the threatening situation to the political, economical, social and ethical power game?

6. Conclusion

The contribution of this theoretical study, that has emerged mainly because of the seminal exercise of   entire rationality, is to show that the human elements of any public organization need a clear conception of what they want; they also need to be confident to know that they can reach the goal that is everybody's goal;   as well as, strong concentration and dedication focused on what is done; obstinate consistence seeking what is wanted by everybody; emotional engagement to what is being done; good character to guide and keep everybody on the way; a skill to enjoy the process.

This study intends to construct theoretically a starting method to management learning in Brazilian public sector, where at a first moment the understanding of some authors were presented, in consonance with the professional experiences of the authors, about the role of the public manager and his/her importance to the organizational development process.

Next, it was revealed the necessary congruence between "responsibility ethics" functionally dynamic and the "conviction or absolute value ethics", practiced observing beliefs, values an individual principles. The approach done in a sequence was responsible to explain briefly, according to Peter Senge et at (1999) how the five disciplines - Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision Team Learning and Systemic Thinking - can lead to the practice of learning management.

Based on these theoretically principles, this study reaches its seminal goal, through the construction of a method that intends to make the learning management process more dynamic, where threatening situations may be identified, managed and solved in a coherent way, with result consistency, critic conscience and interactive action.

To be thought: in the world of public organizations, if the mutual development among its members and the survival of the organization is important, there will always be enough time to put people together to make a Learning Heterogeneous Circle (CHA), seen as an approximation tool, with the potential possibility, to have the collective wishes expressed in the world of Brazilian public organizations.

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Table 1 - Summary scheme to the exercise of Learning Management

Threatening Situation: (...) unfold the threatening situation in SD, PN, SSD, AP based on the CHA's			
Discipline	Learning Determinants	Operational Execution	Time
1. Personal Mastery	Ability, Proficiency, Personal Vision, Organizational Vision	CHA	2 hours
2. Mental Models	Forms of think, see and perceive the organization and the threatening situation	CHA	2 hours
3. Team Learning	Dialogue, understanding, consensus, collective direction, interactivity	CHA	2 hours
4.Shared Vision	Individual Objectives, Organizational Objectives, Shared Objectives	CHA	2 hours
5. Systemic Thinking	Holographic Vision, Interconnection, Interdependency, Power Relation	CHA	2 hours