

ETHICS AND INNOVATIONS IN MILITARY ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract: A success of domestic and international projects largely depends on human resources and its effective management, which is related to ethical behaviours of all actors. The article aims to identify specific aspects of ethics which are crucial for innovations development in Polish military institutions. In order to identify these aspects, the author analysed the content of interviews conducted among Polish military and civilian staff. The extracted from text descriptive codes are the transparency of policies and tools for creating innovation, the vision of organizational development, individual characteristics and moral intelligence, the approach to change. The research may be useful for development of communication strategies and building competencies of decision makers in civil-military institutions.

Keywords: ethics, innovations, military environments, communication, management.

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Streszczenie: Sukces krajowych i międzynarodowych projektów w dużej mierze zależy od zasobów ludzkich będących w dyspozycji organizacji, a także od skutecznego i etycznego sposobu zarządzania nimi. Artykuł ma na celu wskazanie konkretnych aspektów etyki istotnych dla rozwoju innowacji w polskich instytucjach wojskowych. W celu zidentyfikowania tych aspektów autorka dokonała analizy treści wywiadów przeprowadzonych wśród polskiej kadry wojskowej i cywilnej. Wyróżnione na podstawie analizy treści wywiadów kody to transparentność polityk, instrumenty umożliwiające rozwój innowacji, wizja rozwoju organizacyjnego, cechy indywidualne, inteligencja moralna, podejście do zmian. Wyniki badań mogą być przydatne w opracowywaniu strategii komunikacyjnych w instytucjach wojskowo-cywilnych, a także w rozwijaniu kompetencji decydentów.

Słowa kluczowe: etyka, innowacje, środowisko wojskowe, komunikacja, zarządzanie.

1. Introduction

Social and individual ethics is crucial in building a positive workplace climate. A workplace climate, understood as “perceptions which are psychologically meaningful molar descriptions that people can agree characterize a system’s practices and procedures” (Victor, Cullen, 1988), is highly important for team effectiveness and institution’s successful functioning (Shanker, et al., 2017). A workplace climate based on ethical foundations is crucial for innovations development. In military environment the working climate is strongly influenced by specific rules and hierarchy, which is on one hand are perceived as a factor providing a stable and predictable staff behaviours, and on the other hand, as a hindrance for brilliant, but unconventional ideas development. This second situation may happen even when the procedures exist, but there is lack of good will on the part of decision-makers in innovations development. Also, biases in justification or assessment of proposed solutions are against innovative and creative thinking. For this reason, the issue of ethics should be taken into account when an organization has a low position in innovations development and aims to improve its functioning. The article explores the issue of ethics and its perception by a civilian and military staff in context of innovations. The empirical part will focus on ethical behaviour descriptors deriving from of interviews analysis. The data presented in a form of codes (ethical behaviour descriptors) will be used for formulating conclusions and future implications concerning communication and workplace climate improvement in civil-military institutions.

2. Ethics and Innovations

Ethics can be defined as the critical, structured examination of how people and institutions should behave in the world of commerce (Ganapathy, 2017). It refers to the codes, norms and procedures that govern everyday life and interaction, civility and exchange in institutions, societies and cultures (Dewey, 2008). It applies both to decision-makers and subordinates.

Innovation is viewed as “an intentional, yet inherently contingent, process that involves the development and realization of new and creative ideas that challenge conventional wisdoms and break with established practices in a particular context” (der Voet, 2017). Innovation is also perceived as an interactive process involving relationships among different actors (Kline, and Rosenberg, 1986). The effective human management if relies on ethical behaviour, creates a conducive to innovations climate. Ethical climate represents the organizations policies, procedures and practices on ethical issues, and it influences employees attitudes and behaviour and serves as a reference for employee behaviour (Schluter, et al. 2008). It is the key to fostering talents and creativity for organizational purposes. A lack of such a climate destroys respects for

individual or group endeavours and discourage employees from being willing to engage in organization's actions. It can be reflected in human interactions, when people do afraid to communicate clearly and openly, especially in cases when their statements are used as misleading hints for the purpose of manipulation.

3. Specifics of Military Environments

Strict hierarchy, subordination to a unit's chain of command, a mixture of civil and military regulations make military environments specific and hermetic. Moreover, a formal division into civilians and military staff, enlisted soldiers and commissioned officers have also an impact on the shape of relations and ways of communication between people. The example is the situation when even civilian staff is obliged to abide rules which apply to soldiers only, e.g. timely reporting, using official channels of communication. These are cases when they are reprimanded for direct communication with decision-makers what is treated as a violating the chain of commands, which actually should not concern civilian staff. Those clear rules, which aim to bring order in the institution, may trigger undesirable behaviours related an abuse of power. Conversely, clear and predictable regulations may have also a positive influence on the development of innovations. They can create bases for ethical interactions between people and allow to build professionalism in human performance (Weissman, and Debow, 2003). Such a positive climate is possible to achieve in a situation when there is a goodwill of both decision makers and subordinates in creating common values and objectives. This circumstances are conducive to innovations. It is not for nothing that many key innovations derive from military institutions which cooperate with military industry, technical universities, companies or enterprises dealing with manufacturing of technologically advanced equipment for modern armies. There is also a connection between engineering and humanities, which results in new ideas with a commercial potential. The examples are innovative ideas for education and training forms, methods, and tools (Maciejewski, 2017). Undoubtedly, the role of innovations should be appreciated by decision makers because it trigger the development of society, economy as well as security and defence. As Goldman and Andres state that "the diffusion of military innovations is a key issue, whether or not we are in a period of revolutionary military transformation" (Goldman, and Anders, 1999). It means that new ideas is necessary and must be developed all the time. It must be emphasized that in a race of innovative solutions the global leading role is played by the US. Polish military and civilian cooperation also brings innovative ideas such as a digital aerial platform for conducting observation flights under the open skies treaty (Walczykowski, and Orych, 2013) or an integrated system of building crisis management plans based on modern IT technologies (Wróblewski, 2016). The examples shows that military culture, with its surface-level aspects, such as specific language, hierarchy with chain of

commands, sense of rules, when based on ethical rules and human values, is highly conducive to innovations.

4. Research Part

Ethics, an important factor for innovation development in civil-military institutions, is related to human behaviour, individual traits, norms and regulations within an institution. The research aimed to identify specific factors connected with ethics which have an impact on innovations development. The established research question was *What factors related to ethics have an impact on innovation development?* In categorized interviews, conducted from 1st December 2017 to 6th January 2018, participated twelve respondents (8 civilians and 4 military personnel; 3 females and 9 males). Each interview was over an 40 minutes long. All respondents were asked three questions:

How do you understand ethics and ethical behaviour in a workplace?

What factors connected with ethics are important for innovations development? (Consider organizational and human factors).

Have you had any problems with introducing any innovative solutions in your institution? If yes, would you explain what kind of problems you encountered?

Those questions aimed to explore the issue of ethics and innovations in various situational contexts. After the analysis of the interview content, six descriptive codes (in a form of short phrases) were distinguished:

- the transparency of policies,
- individual characteristics (traits),
- approach to change,
- availability of tools/instruments for innovations development,
- moral intelligence,
- the vision of organizational development.

These codes reflect the perceived by respondents aspects of ethics, which are important in innovations development. In order to explain the meaning of the codes, there are given their definitions.

Transparency of policy in the institution concerns clear rules, which are obeyed as well as procedures which are known to all personnel. Every person has the access to information which is granted according to competencies. Moreover, the transparent policy is understood as a reasonable policy and of practical relevance. The transparency is not an ethical principle in itself but a pro-ethical condition for enabling or impairing other ethical practices or principles (Turilli, Floridi, 2009).

Tools/Instruments for innovations development refer to institutional procedures, infrastructure, skills of personnel, financing. These are all instruments required for smooth development of new ideas, including their final commercialization.

Vision on organizational development – this code concerns a development strategy of an institution including knowledge on current management trends. A well-conceived vision consists of two major components: core ideology and envisioned future (Collins, and Porras, 1996). Some managers possess a vision and follow it, some of them do not act in this way (they are passive).

Individual characteristics is related to psychological traits, which are revealed during social interactions.

Moral intelligence includes four clusters of integrated skills which form it. These are integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness, and emotions (Lennick, and Kiel, 2008). Moral intelligence is the ability to differentiate right from wrong as defined by universal principles (Beheshtifar, et al., 2011).

Approach to change concerns both managers and subordinates. It is related to their preparation for accepting new solutions, open-mindedness, learning new ideas, giving chances to others. It is related to effective decision-making and decision-making processes knowledge.

All distinguished codes contribute to understanding of ethical standards and behaviour. Sample citations with the number of excerpts from interviews (in brackets) presents in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive codes and sample citations from interviews

Descriptive codes and number of excerpts found in text	Sample citations from interviews
Transparency of policies (12)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>If we had some problems with financial part of the project, we didn't know how to solve the problem.</i> 2) <i>At my university, when I start a project, I know the path I should follow. It's quite long, but clear.</i> 3) <i>I don't have a clear mind about regulations in my institution... Probably, we cannot change much.</i>
Individual characteristics (traits) (12)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>In my institutions my superior was helpful and he pushed my ideas towards a good directions. He knew many people, so we could discuss lots things...</i> 2) <i>People from the project staff was communicative and reliable, so we could implement our ideas at the university.</i> 3) <i>The personalities of a manager and the staff play an important role for a project success.</i>
Approach to change (12)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Fossilization in management style is not appropriate, because it hinders innovations.</i> 2) <i>I was told off that I should not break unwritten rules in the unit.</i> 3) <i>We were advised to improve our competences, they sent us to special courses which could prepare us to perform in new circumstances.</i>
Tools/Instruments for innovations development (10)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>We don't have enough staff to work on our ideas.</i> 2) <i>We don't have any state-of-art labs for making innovations.</i> 3) <i>No place to work in silence. We are encouraged to create innovative ideas and our superiors grants us additional funds for that.</i>

Cont. table 1.

Moral intelligence (9)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>It is not good when your superior says idle gossips about subordinates.</i> 2) <i>My colleagues from the project are really supportive and they do not reveal any information about our innovative ideas to other parties. They do not sell ideas.</i> 3) <i>Not only competences, but being a human is important.</i>
Vision of organizational development (6)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Our decision-makers should have a clear vision what they want to do.</i> 2) <i>The best thing is to know where we go.</i> 3) <i>All problems were overtaken easily because we knew what we wanted to do and what is important for the institution.</i>

Source: own elaboration.

The research results revealed that ethics is understood through the issues such as transparency of policies, individual characteristics (traits), and an approach to change. Furthermore, it is availability of tools/instruments for innovations development, moral intelligence, and the vision of organizational development.

5. Conclusions and Further implications

Ethics concerns aspects which are both of external and internal nature. Those aspects are reflected in descriptive codes such as transparency of policies, individual characteristics, approach to change, availability of tools for innovations development, and moral intelligence. It is noteworthy that they were all discussed by other scholars in context of ethics. Transparency, achieved through such practices as clear and consistent regulations, is perceived as a main trigger of ethical behaviours; it has been tied to trust, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and is crucial for maintaining a positive work climate (Rawlins., 2008), relations, keeping standards of the profession.

The second code, individual characteristics, has also been raised by many authors who described it within various professional contexts; for instance, the relationships between consumers' ethical beliefs and personality traits; the role of specified traits in gist extraction (cf. Rappali, et al. 1994; Carre, and Jones, 2017); chief executive officer (CEO) traits and their effects on firm outcomes (Zhang, et al. 2017). Those findings prove that individual characteristics play a vital role in shaping ethics in an organization.

Regarding an approach to change, recent research focus on the fact that ethical leadership matters in the context of organizational change due to the need for followers to trust the integrity of their leaders (Sharif, and Scandura, 2014).

The relation between the tools for innovations development and ethical behaviour is also noticeable in literature; ethics supports innovations and tools for their development (Payne, and Raiborn, 2001).

Regarding moral intelligence some authors prove a strong relationship between moral intelligence and organizational development and its components, namely integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness (Pahlavani, and Azizmalayeri, 2016).

According to respondents' views, the last aspects of ethics important for innovations is a vision of organizational development. This code is discussed in literature in context of development of organizational design (Waddock, 2002), but rarely in contexts of ethical behaviours or ethics management.

All in all, the distinguished codes contribute to understanding and perception of ethics by civilian and military personnel in context of innovations development. The research result indicate that the transparency of rules, personal values and traits, approach to change, availability of tools for innovations development, moral intelligence, and vision of organizational development contribute to understanding of ethical behaviour conducive to innovations. Regarding practical implications of the research, those aspects should be taken into consideration while establishing a communication strategy in civil-military institutions responsible for innovations development. Also, the issue of ethics perceived through those descriptive codes, should be incorporated into training of decision makers in order to make them aware of the risks related to the lack of transparency, or unmoral, harmful actions. It must be emphasised that the collected data resulted from a single qualitative research method which included a survey conducted in a small group. Therefore, the results should be treated as preliminary and can stand as starting point for further analyses.

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