

Innovation in public services

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The relevance of the public sector

- Public entities are extremely important both in directly offering services and in setting the right conditions for others to intervene
- There is room to make interesting research

Our objectives today & tomorrow

- Understanding what innovation is ...
- ... the process of initiating, consolidating and diffusing innovations ...
- ... the conditions required to innovate
- All this will help actually innovating

How shall we work

- Case studies will be referred to
- We will also use videos
- Please note: we have to understand “how” to innovate, so the examples are meant only to that, they do not necessarily represent current innovations

A first point

- Innovation requires attention, openness, capacity to look to things differently
- Can we agree on this?
- One example: the Formula 1 pit stop

The concept - 1

- Albury D. (2005): Successful innovation is the creation and implementation of new processes, products, services and methods of delivery which result in significant improvements in outcomes, efficiency, effectiveness or quality

The concept - 2

- Altshuler and Zegans: ~ is novelty in action
- Golden: the implicit definition of an ~ is an innovative operating program, not an innovative idea
- Moore et al.: An ~ is any reasonably significant change in the way an organisation operates, is administered, or defines its basic mission

The concept - 3

- Behn (1997), whatever the definition: «do not count a change as an innovation unless it is somehow significant» – but this implies a judgement, a perception
- Behn (1997: 32; 2008: 140), it is difficult to define an innovation: what exactly is the innovation? What should be disseminated? Definitional dilemma

The concept - 4

- Hartley (2014): ~ is not about gradually increasing efficiency and making things better – rather, it is about doing things differently

Reforms vs. micro-innovations

- I am interested to innovations promoted and implemented by single public entities, autonomously
- These are different from the (national) reforms
- One additional requirement: the citizen gets some actual benefit, improvement. An innovation is worth being considered only if citizen's needs are better satisfied

The demand of innovation

- Factors behind a request for a change: crisis, financial pressure, need of accountability, low satisfaction of citizens
- Clip: Gifted hands
- <https://archive.org/details/GiftedHandsTheBenCarsonStory>
- Some crisis are intentionally caused, so to promote a radical change

The ability to respond - 1

- What explains the capacity of creating an innovation? (a crisis alone does not ensure things will change)
- Some external conditions are conducive to an effective response: a central government favourable to change, high level of education, a sense of community, a culture of accountability

The ability to respond - 2

Some other conditions are internal :

- commitment of politicians
- quality of managers
- relations between politicians and managers
- personnel
- stakeholders

Advocates of innovation - characters

- Clear vision, awareness of problems and solutions, capacity of putting in context
- Raising a consensus towards projects
- Leadership
- Involving personnel
- Establishing links with private companies, public entities, individuals
- Capacity to learn from one's own experience

Other conditions

- Human capital quality, investment on HR
- True openness to change
- Organisational culture result-oriented, not based on a strict hierarchy [video-clip 54'58 + 3']
- Knowledge management
- Risk acceptance: “The dirty little secret is that innovation requires failure”. An organisation must tolerate failure (Behn)

Conditions to consolidate

- quick wins
- to celebrate innovation
- the innovation becomes the new routine (the new normal)
- availability of financial and human resources to sustain the innovation
- satisfied citizens will surely be supportive

Diffusion of innovations

- The external diffusion is very relevant
- It can be enhanced by governments' policies
- Tools for the diffusion : communities of practice, learning platforms, marketplaces, Quality Conferences, awards
- Media can play a role (so we should target them)
- A difficulty: tacit knowledge

Evaluation of innovations

- To evaluate the significance of what has been done
- To decide whether it makes sense to reward an innovation, or to invest on its diffusion
- Beware rhetoric or fashion

Internal evaluation - ex ante

- Can a project be implemented? How much would it cost? How many success chances?
- A decision has to be taken, and resources need to be found
- Setting the objectives

Internal evaluation - ex post

- Look to the results , outcome
- Measurement can be an issue
- Have the targets been met? How can we say it?
- Measures of effectiveness and efficiency
- Time needed

Why the internal evaluation

- Those who don't evaluate, don't learn from experience
- Juries always check whether a reliable internal evaluation system is in place

What about failures?

- Failures can teach a lot
- A consequence : failures need to be studied, investigated, but not punished (unless they're intentional!)
- Apollo 13 taught much more than Apollo 12!
- [EPSA template: # 5]
- [CPRL Annual Conference 2019]

External evaluation - who

- Citizens
- Stakeholders
- Upper government levels
- Universities
- Media
- Award jurors

External evaluation – what

- Quality of the relevant innovation
- Usefulness for citizens and businesses
- Acceptability of the costs implied
- Sustainability
- Replicability
- But also: level of innovativeness of the institution as a whole

Evaluation and awards

- Since 30+ years various award schemes have been established
- An award can stimulate (further) innovation, and makes it easier to diffuse best practices
- Well organised award schemes as win-win games, where everybody learns and gets some benefits

The most important award schemes

- Innovations in American Government Award (since 2011: “Bright Ideas” is added)
- IPAC Award for Innovative Management, Canada
- EPSA, European Public Sector Award
- Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerb, GER, AUT, CH (merged into EPSA)
- Local Innovation Awards Scheme (previously Beacon Scheme), UK
- Cities of tomorrow (Bertelsmann Stiftung)
- Other countries, linked to the American award

Innovations in American Government Award

- Organised by the Harvard Kennedy School and Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation
- In 2009 700 candidates

Innovations in American Government Award - WEB

- <http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/>
- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-8Snz2s15zJG_S7vv6Esqg
- <http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/find-innovative-solutions/all-topics/health-human-services>
- <https://youtu.be/tjxvwgQOnq4>

Innovations in American Government Award - criteria

- The National Selection Committee determines winners based on:
- Novelty, the program demonstrates a leap of creativity
- Significance, the program successfully addresses an important problem of public concern
- Effectiveness, the program has achieved tangible results
- Transferability, the program, or aspects of it, shows promise of inspiring successful replication by other governmental entities

Innovations in American Government Award – the winner

- The winner gets 100.000 US \$, to be used to reinforce innovation in the relevant administration
- Gala dinner with shortlisted administrations in Washington, DC
- Ash Institute supports dissemination

Innovations in American Government Award - reference

- Altshuler A. A., Behn R.D. (eds.) (1997), *Innovations In American Government. Challenges, Opportunities, and Dilemmas*, Brookings, Washington D.C.
- Borins S. (1998), *Innovating with Integrity. How Local Heroes are Transforming American Government*, Georgetown Univ. Press, Washington D.C.
- _____ (2008) (ed.), *Innovations in government. Research, Recognition, and Replication*, Brookings, Washington D.C.
- _____ (2014), *The Persistence of Innovation in Government*, Brookings, Washington, D.C.

Beacon Scheme

- Organised by IDEA, Improvement and Development Agency
- WEB <http://www.localinnovation.idea.gov.uk>
- Selection similar to US scheme
- Award ceremony in London
- Variable amount of money
- Winners get “Beacon status” and engage to organise workshops, site visits, to publish materials, to offer tailor-made tutorials
- Eventually replaced by Local Innovation Awards Scheme <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies>

EPSA

- Organisers 2007: Bertelsmann Stiftung, EGPA - European Group of Public Administration, German School of Administrative Sciences Speyer
- Org. 2009 onwards: EIPA, European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht
- WEB : <http://www.epsa2019.eu/>

EPISA – Sections (1)

- 2007: Collaborative governance, Targeting with scarce resources, Coping with demographic change
- 2009: Performance improvement in public sector delivery, Citizen involvement, New forms of partnership working, Leadership and management for change

EPISA – Sections (2)

- 2011: Smart public service delivery in a cold economic climate, Opening up the public sector through collaborative governance, Going green: concrete solutions from the public sector
- 2013: Weathering the storm – Creative solutions in a time of crisis
- (to be continued)

EPSA – Selection

- Call for applications
- Administrations apply
- Standard format on line [template]
- Experts prepare a shortlist for each sections
- Site visits
- Jury sitting for the decision

EPISA – what does the jury look for

- Innovation
- Concept quality and strategy
- Implementation and degree of maturity
- Benefits and value-added
- Transferability
- Value retention and value orientation
- Sustainability

EPSA – Final congress

- The whole process ends with a congress in November
- Award ceremony for the winners and the diploma recipients; presentations
- The award has a nominal value
- Networking and diffusion start at this moment

How to evaluate the award schemes?

An award scheme helps to discover and diffuse best practices under this conditions:

- Large participation
- Reputation and independence of experts
- Transparent selection
- Effective site visits
- Availability of financial resources
- (after some years) reputation of the award

What changes for the winners - issues

- Impact on behaviour (any evidence?)
- Impact on consolidation and diffusion
- Impact on the overall orientation to innovation
- Reputation of winners may be influenced

Impact for other institutions

- The external impact can refer to:
- learning platforms
- Case studies and case histories
- Pressure to innovate

Further reference

- Borins S. (2001), Innovation, success and failure in public management research. Some methodological reflections, Public Management Review
- Innovation review, <http://www.innovation.cc>
- IMPJ, International Public Management Journal
- IPMR, International Public Management Review