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# **ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYEES' EMPLOYABILITY ENHANCEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

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# Introduction to the problem

- Ongoing changes in Polish public organizations significantly influence career development of their employees. They lead to numerous changes in employment relationships limiting the role of rigid institutional ties in employees' career development.
- The traditional model of lifelong employment in a public organization has weakened.
- Previous approach to the development and career management becomes more and more ineffective in contemporary public organizations.
- Simultaneously, the role of employees in managing their careers rises. This situation poses new challenges for employees of public organizations which they will be able to face only if they enhance their employability.



# Introduction to the problem

Strong needs of transformation and flexibility, high unemployment, growing social expectations regarding the quality of public services make the issue of employability enhancement an important problem not only on the individual and organizational levels but also on a social level.

- The literature study leads to the statement that although basic HRM processes generally do not differ from the logic of HRM in the private sector but employability enhancement of employees in the public sector needs consideration of the specificity of public organizations which results from roles, structures and process characteristic for these organizations (A. Frączkiewicz-Wronka 2009, p. 32).

# Significance of the problem

The problem of employability enhancement should be examined for the following reasons:

- The issue of employability enhancement in the public sector is very rarely analyzed by both Polish and foreign researchers
- Only few empirical studies on employability of public organizations employees have been carried out
- There is lack of measurement instruments of employability adjusted to the specific needs of the public sector
- Changes and their extent which can be observed in the Polish public organizations cause new challenges for their employees and they will be able to face them only if they enhance their employability

# Significance of the problem, cont.

The traditional model of life-long employment is changing; today relationships of employment in the public sector are much more temporal

- Pressure of the environment and growing social expectations lead to transformation of many public organizations, what results in changes in employment, and is often connected with the necessity to dismiss some employees
- Today public organizations need highly employable employees, who are able to act flexibly and adjust to changing conditions of the environment and current requirements of the organization

# Significance of the problem, cont.

- High unemployment in Poland and “uncertain” job situation of many employees make the issue of employability enhancement very actual in the public sector. This problem acquires the greater importance because 21.6% of Polish employees are employed in the public sector (data: the end of 2012) and their number decreased about 5.6% in comparison to 2002 (GUS 2012)
- Demographic changes and the growing number of older employees result in the necessity to pay special attention to life-long professional development of employees in public organizations and maintaining their value in the labour market

- *Empirical research in this area will allow to fill the existing knowledge gap in the HRM theory regarding problems connected with professional development of employees of the public sector and concurrently they will contribute to building the practical basis for effective employability enhancement.*

# Key questions

- What factors determine employees' employability in the public sector
- What are the conditions of its maintenance and enhancement in the Polish public organizations?
- What are the results of employability enhancement in the Polish public organizations?





# Employability: A Theoretical Framework

- Over the last twenty years employability has become a popular issue considered not only in the contexts of unemployment and labour market policy but also in the HRM literature. However, the complexity of the employability concept results in a variety of its definitions.
- In simple terms, employability can be understood as “the ability to get a job”, “the ability to be employed” or “the chances of getting a job”. This simplified interpretation of the concept emphasizes its objective aspects which are external and independent from an individual and which stem from the situation on the labour market. On the other hand, today many researchers stress the subjective aspects of employability and they associate it with diverse features of an individual.

# Employability: the notion and concepts

- The concept of employability has evolved over time.
- Four basic periods of development of the concept can be distinguished i.e.
  - ✓ the first period encompassing the beginning of the 20th century till the 1950s,
  - ✓ the second from the end of the 1950s to the late 1970s,
  - ✓ the third from the end of the 1970s to the 1990s,
  - ✓ the fourth period encompassing the end of the 1990s until now.

# The first period

- The notion of employability appeared in literature at the beginning of the 20th century. It was introduced in 1909 by Beveridge (1909, pp. 215-216).
- This term was mostly applied in relation to the individual's ability to work and studies were focused on the problems of unemployment and mobilization of the unemployed to find a job.
- In the 1930s, along with the Great Depression the interest in the concept decreased.

# The second period

- The concept of employability became popular again at the end of the 1950s. It began to be understood in a more diversified way.
- In this period employability started to be analyzed from two different perspectives, i.e. macroeconomic and the individual perspectives.
- The researchers who analysed employability from the macroeconomic perspective concentrated on the labour market and its policy.
- Other researchers tried to recognize barriers of employment for socially marginalized groups such as e.g. qualifications, skills and abilities.

# The third period

- In the late 1970s globalization, recession and growing competition led to increased interest in the issue of employability because companies looking for new sources of competitive advantage tried to limit costs connected with employment hence traditional, long-term employment started to be replaced with the so-called flexible forms of employment (Marzec et al., 2009a, p. 454; Van der Heijde, Van der Heijden, 2006, p. 451).
- The importance of general competences started to be emphasized in the literature on the subject.
- Employability was often linked with matching employees' competences to the requirements of a job.

# The third period

- In the 1980s, the concept of employability was tied to 'suitability for work' and 'flexibility of organizations'.
- Concerns with development and career were emphasized (Thijssen 1998).
- An increasing problem for organizations became the reconciliation of 'numerical flexibility' with 'functional flexibility of Human Resources'.
- According to Ghoshal and Bartlett (1997), a loyalty model, where employee loyalty was exchanged for life-time employment, has been replaced with a flexibility model, where competencies (and flexibility) are exchanged for interesting work and career development.

# The fourth period

- Since the end of the 1990s, the growing unemployment accompanied by threat of a job loss among many employees, spread of flexible employment forms and new career models have resulted in the rising interest in the issue of employability, not only among theoreticians and practitioners of management but also employees.
- The problem of employability enhancement has gained great social and political importance because of the growing unemployment in the EU member states.
- In 1997 the Amsterdam Treaty was adopted during the Luxembourg Jobs Summit. It has become the basis for launching the European Employment Strategy (EES). This strategy was based on four pillars, i.e. employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities.



# The fourth period

- In Poland this issue gained greater social interest along with the accession to the European Union and implementation of its recommendations on the employment policy in member states.
- The “National Development Plan 2004-2006” contained activities planned to be implemented after Polish accession to the EU. Caring for employability enhancement of the Polish society was mentioned in this program as one of the greatest challenges which Poland had to face (MG 2003, p. 97).
- Also according to the “National Development Plan 2007-2013” (2005, p. 31), employability enhancement of the society was an important part of national social policy.





# Nowadays ...

- The concept of employability is analysed from various perspectives.
- For some researchers taking macroeconomic perspective, the key issue is the employment policy.
- Others are focused on individual factors determining employability as well as on conditions of its maintenance and enhancement in organizations. They also maintain that employability is an important factor influencing career success of an employee and it should be understood as a “career potential” of an individual.



# Individualistic concepts of employability

- According to Forrier and Sels (2003, p. 105), employability is a specific ability of an employee, which allows him/her to identify and to realize chances for employment in the external and internal labour market as well as other chances for career development.

# Fugate and Kinicki's model

- Also Fugate and Kinicki (2008, p. 523) connect employability with individual characteristics and they maintain that employability is a multidimensional phenomenon representing these features of an individual which enhance his/her chances for employment and career success.
- They introduce the notion of “dispositional employability” which they define as “a constellation of individual differences that predispose individuals to (pro)active adaptability specific to work and careers” (Fugate, Kinicki, 2008, p. 503). They claim that employability encompasses openness to change at work, work and career resilience, proactivity at work and career, career motivation and work identity (Fugate, Kinicki, 2008, p. 507).

# The competence-based approach

- This approach is proposed by Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) who present a competence-based model of employability.
- In their opinion, employability is “the ability of continuous maintaining, acquiring or creating work through optimal use of professional competences” (Van der Heijde, Van der Heijden, 2005, p. 143).

# The competence-based approach

- From this point of view employability is defined as specific competencies of the individual which allow him/her to identify and to realize chances for career development on the internal and/or external labour market (Marzec et al., 2009, p. 91).
- It is associated with competitiveness of an employee on the internal and/or the external labour market and the importance of specific, generic competences which determine employability of an individual is strongly stressed.



# The competence-based approach, cont.

Van der Heijde and van der Heijden (2006) present the model of employability encompassing five dimensions, i.e.

- **Personal flexibility**, which is connected with an employee's ability to move from one job to another, from one organization to another, capability to adapt to changes in the labour market,
- **Occupational expertise**, which includes general knowledge, as well as professional knowledge and skills of an employee,
- **Optimization and anticipation**, which concern an employee's ability to anticipate changes in a job and striving for the best possible results,
- **Corporate sense**, which is related with an employee's sense of community with other employees in the organization,
- **Balance**, which is an employee's ability to reconcile private and work life as well as self-interest and interest of the organization.

# The competence-based approach, cont.

- According to this model, employability is a combination of specific professional expertise and skill as well as general competences.
- It should be noticed that this model was used in empirical research on employability of ICT professionals conducted in Poland and six other European countries as part of the Indic@tor programme from 2002 to 2006 (Marzec et al. 2009).

# Employability enhancement

Researchers taking individual perspective assume that many diverse factors may influence employability, i.e.

- macroeconomic factors,
- organizational factors,
- individual factors (e.g. demographic characteristics, personality features, etc.).



# Employability in the public sector

## *Public organizations*

- Public organizations have to react to social requirements and should fulfill them at the best possible level, what also affects expectations regarding their employees.
- Changes in Polish public organizations lead to rationalization of the employment structure, what is often connected with lateral movements of employees inside the organizations as well as the necessity to dismiss some employees and their move from public to the private sector.

# Employment in the public sector

- The model of employment in the public sector differs from the private sector, what undoubtedly also influences employability of employees.
- These differences have their roots in the accepted paradigm of public management and legal regulations concerning employment in the public sector.
- Stability of employment in public organizations is still greater than in private organizations.



# Employees' development in the public sector

The issues of employees' development in the public organizations are the most widely discussed with reference to public administration employees.

- According to “Strategy of human resource management of civil service in years 2011-2020” [2011, p. 13] the quality of the employees' competences is an important element of building social trust to public institutions.
- This strategy also stresses the necessity to improve professional competences and to update knowledge of civil service employees. These actions are aimed at enabling employees quickly and effectively react to new social and economic challenges [Strategy... 2011, p. 22].

# Employees' development in the public sector, cont.

One of the important aims of the Strategy is increasing professionalism of civil service employees.

- This aim should be realized by supporting professional development of employees by individual developmental plans, introduction of changes in the system of professional development, and various trainings of civil service employees (Strategy... 2011, p. 22).
- The paths of employees' professional development and careers are frequently rigidly directed. Simultaneously, the problem of employability enhancement is rarely taken into consideration in public organizations what in the situation of the decline of employment security results in a threat of future career of many employees.

# Public sector employees

- Many researchers suggest significant differences between employees in public and private sector, particularly in relation to their motivations and values (e.g. Willem, De Voss, Buelens, 2010).
- Public sector employees are often more pro-socially inclined than employees in the private sector (Tonin, Vlassopoulos, 2014).
- They are often motivated by the intrinsic need to act “pro publico bono”.
- Despite limited autonomy and strong control they are characterized by a high level of job satisfaction, which is often more important for them than other forms of rewarding (Crewson, 1997).

# Employability of public sector employees

- Employability in the public organizations is often dependent on several specific competences of employees.
- The competences of employees in public organizations are characterized by a high level of specialization what not only negatively affects external employability but also the flexibility of organizations.

# Employability of public sector employees

- Due to specific requirements regarding employees' competences, also rules of their evaluation and advancement are significant factors affecting employability in the public sector.
- The employability policy should be aimed at the development of general competences, which are transferable across organizations and sectors and which strongly affect the employees' position in the external labour market.
- In this context employees' adaptability and their functional flexibility acquire special importance.

# Employability enhancement in the public organizations

- Cohen and Wheeler maintain, that employability enhancement in public organizations should be directed by the same rules as in private organizations (Cohen, Wheeler 1997).
- However, some specific characteristics of public organizations such as, e.g. extended organizational structures, bureaucratic culture, autocratic leadership style, high level of specialization, centralization of decision making process and very limited autonomy of employees may negatively influence employability.
- So far little empirical research on employability and conditions of its enhancement has been carried out in the public sector.



# Employability enhancement

- Empirical research carried out in the private sector suggests that the organizational factors which significantly affect employability include e.g. organizational culture and climate, job content, leadership style, professional networks, employees' evaluation and development systems, etc. (Marzec et al., 2009, pp. 92-93, Marzec, 2015).

# Organizational culture as a factor of employability enhancement

- It is often emphasized that the culture of public organizations differs from the culture of private organizations.
- According to Hofstede's definition, organizational culture is a set of values, norms and rules shared by employees and it is in fact "programming of employees' minds" (Hofstede, 2000, pp. 38-41). In this approach organizational social reality is manifested in the specific language and symbolic behaviors of organizational members.
- Organizational culture influences employee perception, interpretation and expectations of organizational environment

# Organizational culture as a factor of employability enhancement

Organizational culture may informally regulate employees' behaviours more effectively than formal rules and procedures.

- Organizational culture which emphasizes the value of continuous learning, independence, flexibility, creativity and initiative simultaneously supports employability enhancement.
- Empirical research carried out in one of the biggest public universities in Costa Rica, suggests that learning culture positively influences employability of employees (Camps, Torres, 2011, p. 216).

# Organizational culture as a factor of employability enhancement, cont.

- The bureaucratic culture of Polish public organizations has been changing to the culture which encourages adaptability, initiative and proactiveness of employees.
- Public organizations striving to enhance employability of their employees should create organizational culture and climate, stressing the value of learning, which stimulates employees to actively look for the possibility of their professional development.

# Trainings as a factor of employability enhancement

- The significance of employees' participation in trainings is one of the organizational factors influencing employability which is most frequently mentioned in the literature.
- Polish public organizations mostly offer their employees the possibility of trainings.
- However, these trainings concentrate on the current area of expertise and they are subordinated to employees' career plans due the high specialization level.
- Trainings in adjacent areas or in different areas of expertise are relatively rare, hence they primarily support maintaining and enhancing internal employability.



# **Trainings as a factor of employability enhancement, cont.**

Today, practically every employee should be prepared for changes in his or her career (Boerlijst, 1994, p. 265).

- Participation in trainings in adjacent and completely new job areas acquires special importance for employability enhancement of employees in the public sector.
- This problem is particularly significant because the employees of public organizations are characterized by little functional flexibility which manifests itself in low career mobility and small independence (Kożuch, 2011, p. 88)
- Trainings in adjacent and new job areas develop the range of employees' competences and functional flexibility increasing their changes in the external and internal labour market.

# The quality of relationships between supervisors and subordinates as a factor of employability enhancement

- An important factor affecting employability is also the quality of relationships between supervisors and subordinates.
- Today, supervisors should become partners of employees in a continuous process of knowledge and skills development becoming their role models (Waterman Waterman and Collard, 1994).
- Hierarchical power and autocratic leadership, which are typical for Polish public organizations, do not encourage creating such relationships.

# Participation in decision making as a factor of employability enhancement

Participation of employees in decision making enables them to enrich their job experiences and to develop competences. It empowers employees and encourages processes of “learning in action” and enhances their employability.

- Participative supervisors share their knowledge and experiences with employees and motivate them to professional development.
- The challenge for “tomorrow's managers” of public organizations is to find such a way of managing their employees to help them in realization of their career potential also by providing them with interesting and challenging tasks.



# Job content as a factor of employability enhancement

- Specialization, highly-routinized tasks, numerous procedures and limited independence which are characteristic for many jobs in public organizations can negatively affect employees' employability.
- In this context the importance of learning value of the job should be pointed out.
- Learning value of the job concerns “the extent to which occupational knowledge and skills can be used and expanded in one's job position” and it depends on the specificity of the job, its aims and challenges which it provides as well as skills required to proper execution of the tasks (Van der Heijden & Bakker, 2011: 234).

# Job content as a factor of employability enhancement, cont.

- The job should provide employees with the possibility to learn and improve their skills.
- The job content should be complex and diversified as well as employees should have some degree of autonomy in the realization of job tasks to maintain and enhance their employability (van der Heijden, Bakker, 2011).
- The assignments of challenging and complex tasks as well as a variety of new work experiences positively influence employability.

# Job content as a factor of employability enhancement, cont.

- Empirical research showed that proper job design affects flexibility and adaptability of employees (Badran, Kafafy, 2008, p. 35).
- Survey research in Dutch enterprises revealed that learning value of the job is significantly connected with employees' expertise and flexibility (Van der Heijden, 2006).

# Professional network as a factor of employability enhancement

- Also professional network is considered as an important factor of employability enhancement.
- An extensive network provides an employee with access to knowledge of its participants.
- Due to the spread of the new career models, its impact on employability and career success of an employee increases.
- Empirical research revealed that professional network is related with objective and subjective career success of employees (Bozionelos, 2003, p. 41-66).

# Potential results of employability enhancement

Employability enhancement may bring positive results not only for employees but also public organizations.

- Polish public organizations need employees who are characterized by high employability, i.e. who are able to adapt to changing conditions of the environment and adjust to present requirements of the organization.
- However, in this sector employability enhancement requires taking into consideration organizational conditions specific to this sector.

# Empirical research

## The method

- Empirical research was carried out from June to August of 2015 as the first stage of the two-years research program.
- The research has been developed within the framework of the research project entitled “Organizational conditions of employees’ employability enhancement in the public sector”. The project is funded from the resources of the National Science Centre (Poland) granted by the decision no. DEC-2013/11/B/HS4/00561

# The method of empirical research, cont.

- Semi-structured interviews with top management in 27 public organizations providing public services (i.e. 7 Municipal Social Welfare Centers, 9 Poviast Labour Offices and 11 public healthcare entities) were carried out (1 interview with 1 representative of management was conducted in each organization).
- In order to get a more complete view of the situation organizations operating in the South, North, Central, East and West Poland were targeted.

# Research questions

The main aims of the interviews were to answer the following questions:

- What factors determine employability of employees in the examined public organizations providing social services?
- What are the conditions of its enhancement in the examined organizations?
- What are the key results of employability enhancement in the examined organizations?



# The method of empirical research, cont.

- Interviews were conducted in line with the scenario prepared by the project team, what allowed to direct the raised issues and to acquire the necessary information.
- The interviews started with the arrangement of the discussion, explanations of the research aims, and the notion of employability.

# The method of empirical research, cont.

- The interviews included 32 questions concerning the general situation in the public sector, HRM strategy, factors deciding about employability of employees, the conditions and the results of employability enhancement in the public organizations.
- The interviews lasted about 45 minutes.
- All interviews were recorded after getting approval of interviewees.
- Interviews were transcribed in full and analyzed.



# The method of empirical research, cont.

- A coding schema, in which similar statements of the interviewees were grouped, was used in the analysis.
- The statements of the respondents' were grouped into categories, which emerged as a result of the process of the data analysis (Baarda, de Goede, Teunissen, 1995).
- Comparable answering patterns were aggregated to create overall frequency tables of responses (Scholarios, 2008, p. 1041).

# Research Findings

- All interviewees claimed that in their organizations the management pays attention to the issue of maintenance and enhancement of employability (27 persons).
- Simultaneously some stated that they try to support employability enhancement but they do not always have such a possibility due to financial limitations and high costs of these actions (5 persons).
- In some opinions, employability enhancement is guaranteed by law in public organizations, because of a specific role of these organizations in the society (2 persons).

# Research Findings, cont.

- The interviewees emphasized that their organizations provide various opportunities of employability enhancement to employees.
- Trainings were the most frequently mentioned activities undertaken in order to maintain and enhance employability (27 persons).
- The importance of self-education (5 persons) and the exchange of knowledge between employees was strongly stressed (4 persons).
- In 5 organizations managers declared that their organizations support the employees in studying.
- The interviewees also claimed that the employees' appraisal and motivation systems encourage employability enhancement (5 persons).



# Research Findings, cont.

The other listed activities aimed at employability enhancement in the examined organizations included:

- study leaves (3 persons),
- training planning (1 person),
- security and the stability of employment provided by the organization (1 person).

*Some of the respondents only generally stated that employees have the possibility of professional development in their organization.*

# Research Findings, cont.

- Limited financial resources of Polish public organizations result in the search for new methods and tools of employees' development and their employability enhancement. In this context some researchers stress the importance of proper job design because the extent to which occupational knowledge and skills can expand in one's job is acknowledged as a vital factor influencing employability (Van der Heijden, Bakker, 2011, p. 234).

# Research Findings, cont.

- The answer to the question concerning frequency of changes in the job content and tasks, given by the vast majority of respondents was that in their organizations job content is (rather) constant (21 persons).
- Only in 3 organizations (1 welfare centre, 1 labour office and 1 healthcare entity) job tasks are sometimes changed.
- Some explained that the changes in the job content are impossible because of the low regulations in the public sector (4 persons) or the rigid structure of the organization (1 person).



# Research Findings, cont.

- A few interviewees maintained that despite the constant job description, the extent of employees' tasks and responsibilities is enlarged because of new challenges (2 persons) and employees' participation in the new, additional projects (1 person).
- Simultaneously, most of the respondents expressed the opinion that job redesign positively influences employability of employees (16 persons), because it creates the possibility of learning, development and enrichment of professional experience.
- One of the managers stated that „***such a practice develops organizational human capital***”.

# Research Findings, cont.

Studies in private organizations indicated that the high quality of the relationships between supervisors and subordinates positively influences employability and facilitates employees' career success (Chiaburu, 2005; Epitropaki, Martin, 1999).

- Also in the examined organizations the quality of the relationship between a supervisor and subordinates was recognized as an important factor of employability enhancement (23 persons).
- According to some of respondents, a supervisor should be a mentor and a teacher who supports professional development of subordinates by his advice, knowledge and the choice of proper trainings (6 persons).
- One of the interviewees indicated that: ***“a relationship between a supervisor and employees develops their skills and it contributes to employees' remaining in the organization”***.

# Research Findings, cont.

- In most of the examined organizations employees participate in decision making processes (22 persons) but this participation is often limited and depends on the position of employees or the kind of decision (15 persons).
- Most managers claimed that they delegate responsibilities to employees in such way that they can develop their competencies and enhance employability (17 persons).
- Only one of the interviewees said that it is impossible due to the legal regulations existing in the public sector.

# Employees' performance appraisal system as a factor of employability enhancement

Employees' performance appraisal systems have become a commonly used instrument of HRM in Polish public organizations due to the existing legal regulations and a high pressure on effectiveness.

- The majority of the managers stated that in their organizations the criteria used in employees' appraisal translate to their employability enhancement (19 persons).
- They maintained that job appraisal determines the directions of competences development, trainings, bonuses, etc. (3 persons).
- However, some also noticed that this impact is limited because of the legal regulations, rigid organizational structure, subjectivity of the used criteria and stability of employment (5 persons).

# Research Findings, cont.

- Regarding the question about practices of career management supporting employees' career development outside organizations, interviewees listed a variety of practices, which were directly and sometimes very indirectly connected with career management, e.g. the possibility of training, study and advancement (10 persons), the opportunity for cooperation with other people and organizations (2 persons).
- Relatively numerous interviewees stated that there is no career management in their organizations (6 persons).

# Research Findings, cont.

- The examined managers emphasized that their organizations cooperate with many other organizations in their environment hence employees have a lot of opportunities to extend their professional network (23 persons).
- However, according to 9 managers of the examined organizations cooperation with other organizations and their employees is mostly limited (7 persons in the healthcare entities).
- In the opinion of respondents, the need for the extensive cooperation results from the specific role of public organizations.
- They also expressed belief that it positively impacts employability (24 persons) because it allows to develop knowledge and competencies of employees.

# Research Findings, cont.

- In the opinions of the interviewees, the possibility of employability enhancement positively influences not only employees' job satisfaction but also their career success (respectively: 23 persons and 21 persons).
- Some explained that it increases the chances of an employee's advancement (5 persons) and employees can use the achieved competences in other organizations (2 persons).
- The managers also complained that the subjective success is not connected with the financial success in the public organizations (4 persons).
- A few interviewees also said that the chances of advancement are very limited in their organizations, what results in employees' frustration and disappointment (2 persons).

# Research Findings, cont.

- Today, some researchers indicate that an organization also gains benefits from employability enhancement because it influences employees' performance.
- Most managers confirmed that employability enhancement positively impacts employees' work outcomes (24 persons). In their opinion better performance is related with competences development (9 persons).
- Some claimed that employees feel grateful for the possibility of development and they want to reciprocate doing their job better (2 persons).



# Research Findings, cont.

- Regarding features which generally determine an employee's ability to deal with the situation on the labour market, the significance of education and professional knowledge were the most frequently mentioned by respondents (17 persons).
- Next, adaptability, flexibility and openness of employees to changes (15 persons) as well as social competences (including, e.g. communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, self-presentation skills, etc.) (9 persons) were listed.
- Due to quick pace of knowledge obsolescence the value of the ability and willingness of an employee to learn was also strongly stressed by some of the managers (7 persons).
- Other mentioned factors included, e.g. proactivity and creativity (5 persons), professional experience (3 persons), reliability (2 person), self-confidence (1 person), computer skills (1 person), etc.



# Research Findings, cont.

- Most interviewees expressed the strong belief that specific knowledge, skills, abilities and competences decide about employability of the employees in the public sector (19 persons).
- They indicated that employees not only have to meet formal requirements, particularly regarding the educational profile but also they should possess specific social competences.
- In some opinions, work in public organizations requires willingness to serve other people and high empathy (7 persons).
- One of the managers explained: ***“in the public sector a job is perceived as a service and mission, not just doing a job”***.

# Research Findings, cont.

The importance of some specific competencies as factors which can determine employability in the public sector was examined. They encompassed:

- ethical and civil competencies,
- proactiveness
- social competencies,
- adaptability,
- professional knowledge and skills,
- willingness to learn and develop
- the ability to keep balance between work and home.



# Research Findings, cont.

- In the opinion of the respondents professional knowledge and skills are factors, which mainly decide about employability in the public organizations due to specificity of these jobs.
- Regarding adaptability, proactiveness and willingness to learn and to develop all interviewees recognized that they are important elements of employability.
- The significance of ethical and civil competencies was strongly emphasized as a specific factor which determines employability in the public organizations because of their mission and a special role.
- The interviewees also emphasized that the quick pace of changes results in the necessity of continuous learning to stay employable on the labour market, hence the willingness to learn and develop is expected from all employees.

# Research Findings, cont.

- At the present time, social competences are one of the most desired and expected by employers' competences of employees.
- The conducted interviews showed that social competences also belong to key factors which decide about acquiring and maintaining jobs in public organizations (24 persons).
- In the context of specificity of work the significance of the ability to keep balance between work and home was strongly stressed because: “**this work is very heavy**” and “**it is necessary for psychological well-being**“, though, as the interviewees stated, “**it is difficult to keep balance in this kind of work**” (16 persons).



# Research Findings, cont.

- The most desirable individual characteristics of an employee in the examined organizations encompassed professional competences (22 persons) and social competences (e.g. communication skills, empathy, interpersonal skills, coping with stress, etc.).
- Other listed factors included, e.g. motivation and commitment (2 persons), professional experience (2 persons), willingness to work in this kind of an organization (2 persons), as well as flexibility and self-reliance (2 persons), high performance (2 persons).

# Research Findings, cont.

- At the end of the interviews the subjects of employees' perception of job insecurity and their situation on the labour market were raised.
- Generally, managers maintained that employees are afraid to lose their jobs (13 persons).
- The reason was mostly the situation on the labour market (5 persons).
- However, many respondents do not fear for their jobs (5 employees 5 of healthcare entities ).
- Some also think that if they lose their jobs they will easy find a new job in another organization (12 persons)

# Discussion

- The carried out interviews allowed to better understand the essence of employability, its elements and the context of its enhancement in the public organizations providing social services. The interviews also showed diverse emotions, attitudes and opinions of the respondents regarding this subject.
- It has been observed that the employability issue is of concern to management in the examined public organizations. This tendency, characteristic for current HRM policy in the public sector, is best explained by the fact of changes in employment relationships and the difficult situation on the labour market.



# Discussion, cont.

- The undertaken activities are mainly focused on trainings oriented to the enhancement of internal employability.
- Public organizations planning to enhance employability of their employees may partly replace expensive trainings with other developmental activities, e.g. jobs' redesign, mentoring, encouraging employees to self-education, etc.

# Discussion, cont.

- Supervisors should support these actions by creating relationships based on mutual trust and respect with their subordinates.
- They also ought to encourage employees' professional development enabling them to participate in decision making processes and delegating tasks which can improve their competences and enhance their employability.
- They may encourage employees to extend their professional network outside and inside the organizations what will contribute to the exchange of knowledge and information bringing benefits to both employees and the organization.

# Discussion, cont.

■ At the organizational level, employees' appraisal systems may contribute to employability enhancement by taking into account long-term improvement of employees' general competences.

■ The employee's appraisal mainly focuses on current competence needs resulting from the employee's organizational role.

■ The character of the employee's appraisal oriented at employability enhancement is more general and it takes into consideration broad development of general competencies.

# Discussion, cont.

- The research suggests that employability is a complex phenomenon encompassing several key dimensions, e.g. professional knowledge and skills, social competences, proactiveness, adaptability, the ability to keep balance between work and home, and the willingness to learn and develop.
- Some of the competences determining employability of employees may differ in the public and private sector. These differences stem from the role, structures and processes characteristic for the public organizations which also impose specific requirements regarding employees' competences.
- The particular role of ethical and civil competences as a factor determining employability of public sector employees should be emphasized due to high expectations regarding these features of employees in public organizations.

# Discussion, cont.

- It should also be mentioned that there were some differences in the expectations of managers regarding features of employees in social welfare centres, labour offices and healthcare entities.
- In the case of the ability to keep balance between work and home it was stronger stressed in the social welfare centres because of the specificity of these jobs, which in the opinions of managers is connected with a high psychological stress.
- In healthcare entities the significance of professional knowledge was more stressed.



# Discussion, cont.

- The relationships between employability enhancement and employees' effectiveness seem to be stronger in healthcare entities than in labour offices and welfare centres.
- Due to the existing legal regulations employees' performance appraisal systems have become a commonly used instrument of HRM supporting employability enhancement in labour offices and social welfare centres but they are still relatively rarely applied in healthcare entities.

# Discussion, cont.

- Fewer employees of healthcare entities than employees of labour offices and welfare centres are afraid of job loss and more employees of healthcare entities are convinced that in such a situation it will be easy for them to find a new job.
- This situation stems from a growing demand for medical services and relatively high demand for medical personnel on the Polish labour market.

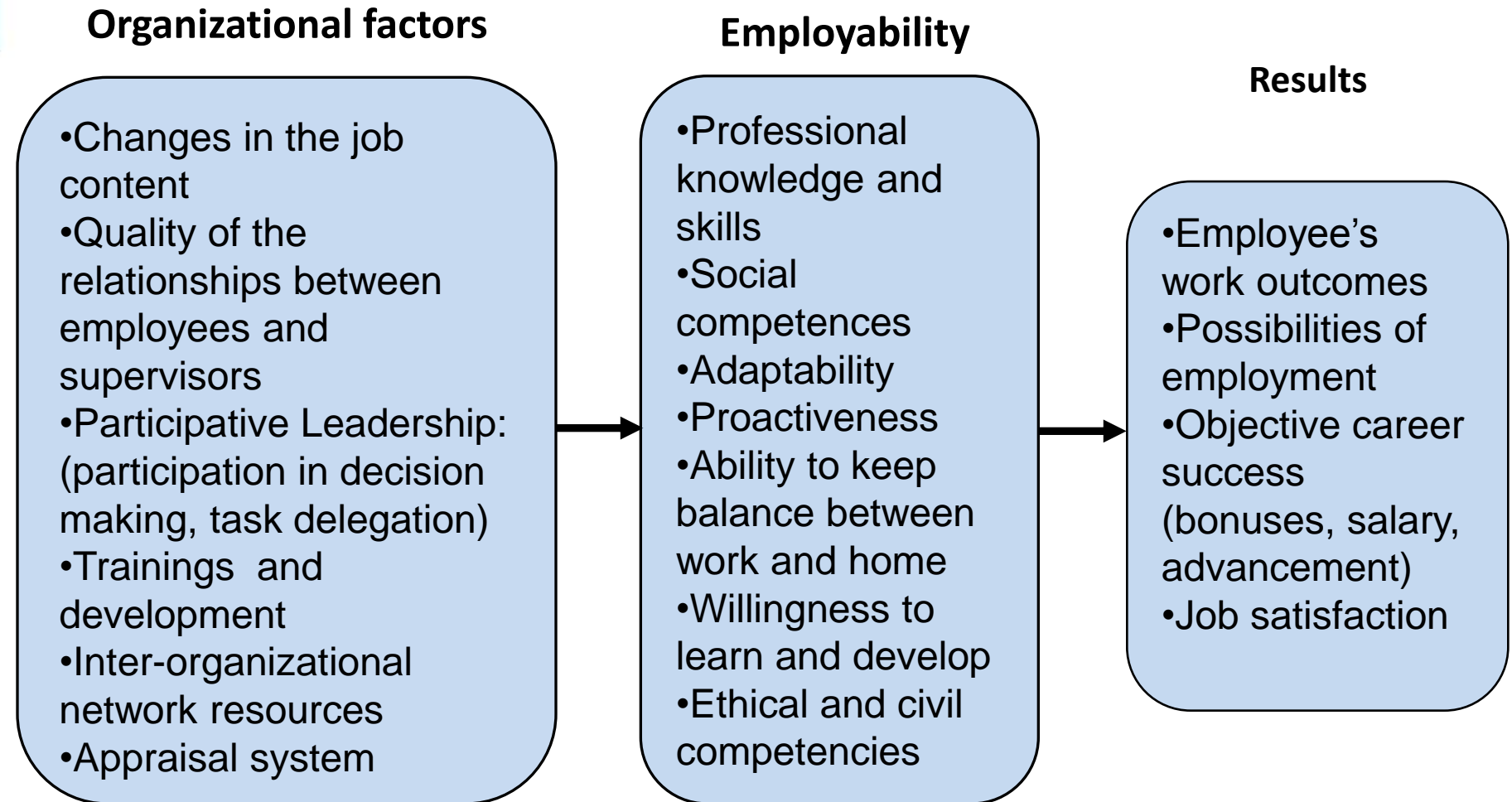


# Discussion, cont.

- On the basis of the conducted interviews some of the relationships between employability, its predictors and outcomes can be proposed (Figure 1).
- However, legitimacy of these relationships should be examined in further literature study and next, if can be, in future quantitative research.



# Model of relationships between employability, its predictors and results in public organizations



# Conclusions

- Employability can be analyzed from different but interconnected perspectives.
- Pressure on effectiveness and unstable environment result in increasing expectations towards public sector employees, which they will be able to meet only if they enhance their employability.
- Public organizations should support their employees in these efforts by providing them with various opportunities for professional development.
- This requires taking into consideration characteristic features of public organizations which impose expectations regarding their employees.
- The future quantitative research should be aimed at identifying essential organizational and individual factors affecting employability of employees in public organizations.

# The future research

- In the second phase, quantitative research will be conducted, i.e. a survey research encompassing public organizations' employees. In this stage an employability measurement instrument created especially for this research will be used.
- In order to examine employability, the author's scale will be created, in which previous measurement models of Fugate and Knicki (2008) as well as Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) will also be utilized.

# The future research

- Because one of the aims of the project is to validate the measurement model of employability in this sector, thus the sample will include both employees and their direct supervisors, what will allow to test convergent and divergent validity of the model.
- Employability will be measured with two different methods, i.e. self-ratings and supervisors' ratings (Van der Heijde, Van der Heijden 2006, p. 461). Also, two corresponding versions of questionnaires will be prepared.
- A multitrait–multimethod (MTMM) analysis, EFA and CFA will be performed.

**Thank you for your attention**



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