

THE INFLUENCE ADVOCACY STRATEGY ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The nongovernmental sector makes an important contribution to strengthening democracy, by monitoring governance activities, acting to increase transparency in public decision-making process and accountability by the authorities, but also by increasing the participation number of citizens, encouraging direct disadvantaged local groups in developing and implementing solutions to problems that they are facing, culture and behavior influence the decision makers of public institutions and citizens.

Keywords: organizational culture, advocacy, public management, public policy

Paper type: Viewpoint

Influencing public policy in terms of change management focuses on how the system is organized, how it is open to suggestions and collaboration, and approach changes as a continuous and transparent process, based on the idea of partnership and interaction between concerned factors (stakeholders), implementers and socio-political environment, which ends when the desired changes are achieved and the expected impact has been obtained.

Advocacy is an ongoing process that leads to positive changes in attitudes, behaviors, and relationships at all levels, starting from family and job, up to the level of communities and society.

To build a common understanding of advocacy term is important to identify **ideas and common elements** that we find in most approaches:

a) Advocacy is a process: it includes a set of activities aimed at influencing policy makers and public authorities' activities

b) Advocacy means **non-government sector involvement in the work of the government** and public institutions to influence decisions and behavior, meaning that is essentially **a form of citizen participation in government**, whereby they negotiate control over decisions that are affecting their lives

c) Advocacy means **visible activities, carried out in the public arena by civil society representatives** - informal groups or organizations - in response to decisions (or lack of decisions) and behaviors of authority - and public policy makers

d) Advocacy involves **a group of beneficiaries** in whose name it carries, whether they are citizens of a state / community or a significant part of it (a social category, a minority or different categories of disadvantaged groups, whose rights and needs are ignored, neglected, or knowingly violated by those empowered)

e) Advocacy is motivated by a negative situation / conflict created by the public authority by ignoring, neglecting, or willfully breach/abuse of rights, the needs of citizens in general or a particular part of society – of a disadvantaged group.

f) Advocacy **activities affect the existing balance of power**, being designed to make citizens more powerful to influence those who hold power

g) Advocacy requires **a clear vision of desired change** leading to the elimination of the negative situation / conflict that triggered the reaction of people or non – government structures

Including the concept of organizational culture in the context analysis of actors and institutions involved in advocacy and influencing public policy is essential, and helps to promote sustainable change, influencing behavior, making participation more effective and contributing to increased confidence and an adaptive and evolutionary culture to the demands of the external environment. The impact of advocacy activities can be structured on three levels:

1. Content change (amendment / promotion of a law/rulings/decisions, initiation/modification of a public policy)

2. Changes in the functioning of the system and public decision making;

3. Changes in how people perceive the power and influence are involved in its activities

Organizational culture as the iceberg theory approach involves the analysis of two levels: the visible level and the invisible level. The visible level is reflected in laws passed, decision procedures, structures, institutions, official positions. Thus, the manager of the Public Utility makes decisions on formal policies, covers matters of public life, establishes procedures for implementing, but these are interpreted and implemented in accordance with informal policies: depends on attitude, priorities and outcome of the negotiation process, but also performance and the capability of the public. The invisible level, depth of organizational culture is given by the beliefs, values and standards to be applied in the organization, and by basic concepts of the organization's management, employees, partners, etc. Thus, decision makers and public institutions maintain and grow their influence through increasing control of people that take place / are invited to the negotiating table, but the themes to be discussed at this meeting and the information they make available. Not infrequently, they are connected with influential groups that remain in the shadows, but whose interests are persuaded. This is possible, especially where the media is absent from the negotiation table. By exercising this type of power, decision makers and institutions responsible may limit participation or just "mime" it, may exclude certain groups from the negotiation table, may exclude topics and issues of public interest, may misinform, both those involved in decision and also the public. Invisible Power is based on thinking and perception of citizens or those involved in advocacy activities.

We identify a number of factors that influence the process of advocacy approach. They may have different importance, depending on the venue and the topic that apply respectively to the public institution.

Socio – cultural context

Each society / community is characterized by a set of values, beliefs and traditions, that are accepted and are the unwritten laws, attitudes and behaviors that influence policy makers and civil society, about tolerance, acceptance of diversity and even change. To all this it is added the awareness of rights and obligations in society, and their appetite for involvement in political and social life.

Political and institutional environment

The legitimacy and power of governments and authorities are perceived differently by civil society in each country. Openness and transparency of government structures and their

receptivity to reforms is also different. Political decisions are made differently, depending on the number and power distribution centers, the way of reaching them.

Opportunities and constraints of the moment

Usually, each period has different opportunities and constraints for change, which are influenced by the international context, internal or external events.

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Changes in the functioning of the system and public decision making;

Changes in how people perceive the power and influence are involved in its activities.

The capacity and resources of civil society

The type of approach is clearly related to experience and capacity of group /organization that is committed in its efforts to influence public policy and promoting change, human resources, information, material and financial resources that it has at its disposal, meaning how strong the organization is.

The type and organization's mission

Advocacy approach depends on the type of organization. We propose to structure the organizations by *representing various interests* criterion, by the *approach* criterion or on the type of social and political *participation* criterion.

Relationship with the public institution can be dictated and influenced by the diversity of the following types.

When we talk about advocacy as a process represented by *interests, priorities and values*, we can have the following types of groups / organizations generally called *pressure groups*:

- organizations established to *promote causes, recognition and application* of principles, such as a clean environment, equal opportunities for women, child protection, public health;

- organizations formed around *common interests and goals* such as a trade unions, professional associations,

- organizations that promote change in general, including a complex set of interests, such as social and economic development

- organizations which are gathered around a common interest

Efforts to influence public policy through advocacy should be linked with activities that influence culture and behavior, both those of the government's as well as those of citizen's. Possible activities to contribute to this are as follows:

- Training programs for local leaders, to address existing leaders or informal leaders, whether governmental or non-government sector, on issues of change management and strategic planning, citizen participation in making decisions, public policy making, sources of power, negotiation, communication, public policy analysis and risk analysis

- Initiation / involvement in civic education programs in schools, colleges on topics related to democracy and implemented success stories: citizen participation in decision making managing conflicts and differences, human rights

- Initiate publicized discussions and workshops, on specific topics, related to critical issues, involving authorities and representatives of the non-governmental sector, aimed to improve communication and build trust between government and civil society

- Collection and promotion of better practices on citizen involvement in community life

In this approach, NGOs which are involved in advocacy and public policy change, must identify the organizational culture when enter in all kind of relation with public institutions. The analysis of the organization's mission shows that NGOs can effectively monitor the implementation of public policies according to how they are putting into practice the values and concepts of management and how consistent are they with the environmental changes.

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