

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

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Purpose: The aim of the paper is to identify the role of social innovation in public organisations and to analyse the selected examples in the context of modern research in Poland and abroad. The reason for doing research on this subject is due to the lack of scientific studies on social innovation related to the public sector.

Design/methodology/approach: The research related to this topic was based on an analysis of literature of the available international and Polish texts.

Findings: The publication focusses on issues of social innovation. The paper identifies the lack of a universal definition of social innovation in the literature and explains the criteria for creating such definitions by researchers. Furthermore, due to the diversity in the tasks and functions of the public sector analysed by researchers in individual countries, the lack of a clear understanding of this concept was highlighted. Particular attention is paid to the possibility of public organisations working with private and nonprofit sectors to implement social innovations to disseminate them and develop further ideas. The article also discusses examples of social innovations implemented in public organisations, in view of contemporary research in Poland and abroad.

Originality/value: The issue discussed in this article concerns social innovation in the public sector, which plays an increasingly important role in meeting the needs of the population. The implementation of social innovations in public organisations is important due to the difficulties faced by societies not only in one country but throughout the world. This relates mainly to permanent changes at the technological, social, and economic levels. In addition, social innovation is a branch of cooperation between public entities, private and non-profit organisations and contributes to solving social problems.

Keywords: social innovation, innovation, public sector.

Category of the paper: A literature review.

1. Introduction

Innovation is not only of academic interest, but also the subject of political and business discussion. This is mainly due to the dynamics of change in the global environment and the challenges of economic, environmental, and demographic problems, including poverty, low

food security, gaps in health and education systems, and climate change (United Nations, 2015). Consequently, the search for new and improved solutions to reduce the conditions that lead to the emergence and persistence of these phenomena is crucial.

In this sense, social innovations are of particular interest, as many authors point out that they play an important role in improving the quality of life of citizens and communities (Olejniczuk-Merta, 2013; Wronka-Pośpiech, 2015; Markowicz, 2019; Pinto et al., 2021; Grilo, Moreira, 2022; Millard, Fucci, 2023). Therefore, society should be the main actor benefiting from this type of innovation. However, it should not be forgotten the cooperation of public, private, and non-profit organisations in implementing innovative solutions and the interconnections created by actions taken.

Given the intensity and complexity of the difficulties confronted by modern societies, the search for tools that meet the needs of their members should be a priority for power figures in many countries. In this sense, it is important to take measures that contribute to increasing the knowledge and awareness of this type of innovation by society, public, private and third-party organisations, as well as the extent of the emergence and impact of social innovation projects. In the face of growing social problems, it also seems important to establish an institution that supports social innovation to develop and spread innovative solutions.

Analysis of literature on this topic has concluded that innovative public sector activities are not only aimed at improving relations with citizens, but primarily at increasing the quality and access of public services provided by local authorities, resulting in improvements in the quality of citizen life. However, it should be emphasised that social innovations in this field are not only related to internal improvements in public institutions, but should have an impact on society.

Despite researchers' interest in the phenomenon of social innovation, theoretical and cognitive analysis revealed a lack of scientific studies on social innovation in public organisations. The identified cognitive gap was reflected in a research gap related to the identification of selected examples of social innovation in public organisations in light of modern research in Poland and abroad.

The lack of social innovation research in public organisations motivated the author to conduct research in this field. Moreover, the author's research indicates that there is a shortage of studies as well as it comes to examples of social innovations implemented in public sector that may inspire other stakeholders. The author hopes that the results of this study will contribute to increasing the knowledge of entities of the public organisations and society about the importance and need for implementation of social innovations and cooperation between public, private, and third-party organisations, thereby creating new networks that will generate ideas of innovation in the future. In addition, the orientation of scientific research towards the public sector was based on the conviction that due to the escalation of problems affecting contemporary societies, attention should be paid to this issue. Furthermore, social innovation is important from the point of view of the public organizations that introduce them, as it has

a positive effect on their image and cooperation with other organizations creates new relationships and can lead to carrying out other projects in the future.

This research was carried out using a literature review methodology to formulate appropriate aim and hypotheses (Czakoń, 2020). To fill the identified gaps, the aim of the study was specified as follows:

Diagnose of the role of social innovation in public organisations and analysis of exemplary innovative solutions in this area that have been implemented in selected countries.

In response to this objective, research hypotheses were developed:

H1: Social innovation plays a significant role in public organisations.

H2: Social innovation solutions implemented in public organisations in selected countries address various social problems.

Hypotheses were validated on the basis of the literature review.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social innovation

The term "innovation" has been treated as renewal or change since 400 BC (Gruszevska et al., 2018). In addition, the word is derived from the Latin word "innovatio", meaning to create new things (Tidd, Bessant, 2011), and "innovare" being understood as a renewal (Topoła, Praszczyk, 2002). In the literature, innovation is generally regarded as introducing new products, technologies or solutions, or improving existing products. However, it is impossible to create a universal definition of the term due to the diversity of the researchers' understanding of the term (Lynn, Gelb, 1996; Wyrwa, 2014; Burget et al., 2017; Knosala, Deptuła, 2018). Considering the multidimensional nature of innovation concepts, many types of innovation types are distinguished (Janasz, Koziół-Nadolna, 2011; Tidd, Bessant, 2011; Zastempowski, 2016; Oslo Manual, 2018) such as: product, organisational, process, marketing, and social innovation.

2.2. The concept and essence of social innovation

In the social sciences and humanities, the term "social innovation" is not new, as the first period of interest in this paradigm dates back to the early 1960s. At that time, the inherent feature of social innovation was the nontraditional or non-typical solution of problems affecting a particular community compared to the available systemic solutions. However, over the years, the understanding of social innovation has expanded to include additional qualities. The current definitions of literature do not merely require the characteristics of a specific social problem's "new" solution, but also emphasise its other characteristics (Wiktorska-Świąćka et al., 2015).

Despite the researchers' interest in social innovation (Olejniczuk-Merta, 2013; Voorberg et al., 2015; Wyrwa, 2016; Anderson et al., 2018; Mihci, 2019), the definition of this construct remains uncertain. Based on the analysis of literature and the definitions of social innovation summarised in Table 1, it can be concluded that the understanding of this concept is varied and diverse. It is primarily related to the interdisciplinary nature of social innovation and the focus of individual authors on the various characteristics of this concept, leading to a contradictory interpretation (Ćwiklicki, Tarnawska, 2012; Sempruch, 2012; Kwaśnicki, 2015).

Table 1.

A selection of definitions of social innovation

Author	Social innovation definition
Ogburn (1969)	The author was the first to use the term "social innovation" to describe the "cultural gap" defined as the distance between cultural and technical development.
Mulgan et al. (2007)	"Innovative activities and services motivated by social needs. They are developed and distributed mainly by organisations whose main objective is social activity".
Murray et al. (2010)	Social innovation is considered by these authors as a new concept (product, service, model) that simultaneously meets social needs and creates a new social relationship. This type of innovation is good for society and increases its ability to act.
Olejniczuk-Merta (2014)	The author defines social innovation as a new social action aimed at improving the quality of life of societies and nations.
Voorberg et al. (2015)	According to these authors, social innovation is about creating long-lasting outcomes aimed at meeting social needs by fundamentally changing the relationships, attitudes, and rules between the stakeholders involved in the collaboration undertaken.
Wyrwa (2014)	"New and better ways to solve social problems".
Drucker (2004)	"The ability and willingness of individual members of society to break the habits, perception forms, and types of goals that guide the allocation processes".
Degelsegger, Kesselring (2012)	"'Social' is not a criterion that would allow to differentiate social innovation from economic or technological innovation. All innovations are social processes of interaction and communication (...). Furthermore, all innovation outputs – from the washing machine to the mobile phone – potentially have social outcomes and impacts".
Howaldt, Kopp (2012)	"Social innovation is a new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts prompted by certain actors or constellations of actors in an intentional targeted manner with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices".
Phills et al. (2010)	"A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals".
Hochgerner (2012)	"Social innovation may be considered any activity that expands the capability to act (of parts or the whole of society), and enables or leads to concrete action".
Podręcznik Oslo (2018). Wytyczne dotyczące gromadzenia, raportowania i wykorzystywania danych dotyczących innowacji (2020).	"Innovations defined by their (social) goals of seeking to improve the well-being of individuals or communities."

Source: own study based on literature.

An analysis of the indicated definitions of social innovation in Table 1 concludes that social innovation is a process whose main beneficiaries are individuals and societies, as the implemented initiatives not only improve their quality of life, but, thanks to the cooperation of a wide range of actors from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors in their implementation, new connections within the society are created.

2.3. The creation process and the life cycle of social innovation

In the literature (Gillwald, 2000; Gerometta et al., 2005; Mulgan, 2006; Nicholls, Murdock, 2011; Tanimoto, 2012; European Commission, 2013), 'process' is a characteristic of social innovation. The Guide to social innovation (2013) distinguishes four basic phases of the social innovation process, as shown in Figure 1.

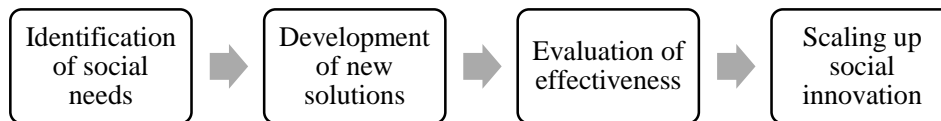


Figure 1. Social innovation implementation process

Source: Own study based on the European Commission (2013).

In the analysis of the process of implementing social innovations, it is important to remember that all phases are aimed at addressing social needs identified in the first step, which have not yet been identified in the community or which have not been adequately or fully met. Meanwhile, the last step is to expand social innovation to have a real impact on the community.

Figure 2 graphically presents the six phases of the social innovation life cycle, as distinguished in the literature. The authors emphasise that this cycle is not always sequential, as some innovations move on to further phases, skipping the initial ones. In addition, there is a feedback loop between the listed phases (Murray et al., 2010).

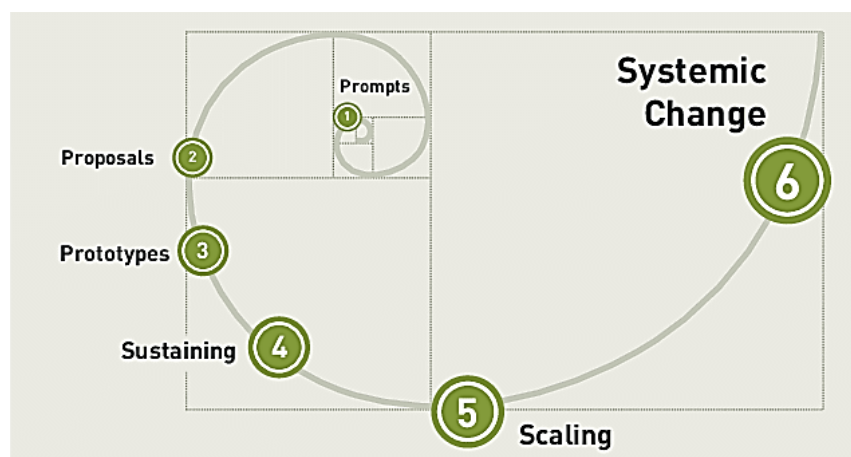


Figure 2. Social innovation lifecycle.

Source: Murray et al., 2010.

The social innovation lifecycle, illustrated in Figure 2, consists of six phases:

- a) identification of needs (*prompts, inspirations, and diagnoses*) – recognition of the need to implement social innovation by first identifying new social needs or those that have not been fully or adequately met;
- b) generating ideas (*proposals and ideas*) – formulation of ideas that can be a possible solution to identified social needs. It should be emphasised that these ideas may come from a variety of sources;
- c) verification of ideas in practise (*prototyping and pilots*) – pilots are conducted to make potential modifications to improve an idea;
- d) maintenance (*sustaining*) – this phase includes the implementation of innovative ideas and the development of a business model, management model, funding sources or a plan for the development of operational systems (e.g., supply chain systems, risk management systems);
- e) distribution of innovation (*scaling and diffusion*) – the selection of appropriate strategies for the development and dissemination of innovation;
- f) change of system (*systemic change*) – the stage of the ultimate objective of social innovation. It is important to emphasise that the implementation of changes requires the introduction and application of a number of elements, from business models to legal regulations to the adoption of new ways of doing and thinking.

The analysis of the above stages of the social innovation process leads to the conclusion that it is locally embedded and takes place in a specific context and environment, e.g., in the sense of a specific country that defines innovation policy and related regulations.

2.4. Public sector characteristics

According to Podlasiak (2009), the entities that make up the public sector perform the three basic functions ascribed to the state today (allocative, redistributive, stabilising) by carrying out tasks using appropriate means and instruments. Citing Miłaszewicz (2014), this results in the alternative use of the terms *state* and *public sector* by authors of publications in different academic fields. The author also emphasises that the term *government sector* is synonymous with the term *public sector* and that a consequence of the financial determinant of the concretisation of tasks and functions of the public sector by public finance is the identical use of the terms *public sector* and *public finance sector*.

Due to the diversity relating to the tasks and functions of the public sector in the different countries analysed by researchers Cole (2010); Schaefer, Warm (2015); Englmaier et al. (2022); Mortimer-Lee (2023), some difficulties are identified in the literature when trying to concretise the term. The selected definitions of the public sector are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
Selected public sector definitions

Author	Public sector definition
Statistics Poland (GUS) (2023)	"The entirety of national economy entities grouping national property (of the State Treasury and state-owned legal entities), the property of local self-government units or local administration legal persons, and "mixed property", with the majority of the capital (property) of public sector entities. In the case of equal share of public capital (the total share of the ownership of the State Treasury, state-owned legal persons, and local self-government units is 50%) and private (the total share of the ownership of: domestic natural persons, other domestic private units, foreign persons is 50%), a national economy entity is classified to the private sector".
Brol (2013)	According to this author, the public sector is an organisationally subordinate collection of all state and local government entities.
Lubińska (2010)	The set of institutions established by the State to perform public tasks.
Pater, Cywiński (2019)	The part of the economy, which consists of all government and government-controlled enterprises, except private enterprises, voluntary organisations, and households.
Łuczyszyn (2011)	"The public sector is composed of legal persons, non-incorporated organisation entities and special purpose funds under the command of the public authorities, the state and the local authorities. Public sector activities are applied to the state, regional, and local levels, and their activities are based primarily on the provision of social welfare for citizens, the guarantee of national security, and the planning of spatial development".
Teneta-Skwiercz (2017)	"The public sector is part of a nonmarket environment in the company. It is formed by entities of state and local government, organizedly subordinate to public authorities".

Source: own study based on literature.

The analysis of the public sector definitions summarised in Table 2 based on the literature analysis shows that there is no unique and standardised interpretation of this concept, which is also emphasised by Kieżun (2011). When analysing the definitions of the public sector indicated by the authors in Table 2, it is important to note their high multidimensionality and the fact that they consider the public sector from different perspectives.

The literature highlights the possibility of defining the public sector on the basis of three research approaches, shown in Table 3.

Table 3.
Defining the public sector - research perspectives

Public sector	The subjective approach	Within this framework, three sectors are distinguished: public, business and households. Membership of each sector is determined by the nature of the entity's income and expenditure.
	The subject approach	Revenues and expenditures of central and territorial government bodies, insurance funds and public law funds separated from the state budget and state enterprises.
	The functional approach	Entities whose primary objective is to create conditions for the protection of the economic interests of those entities in relation to which they exercise sovereign functions. In this view, the public sector includes state and local government organisational units.

Source: own study based on Przygodzka, 2008 and Struś, 2021.

The research approaches presented in Table 3, on the basis of which the authors are able to interpret the public sector in three perspectives, lead to the conclusion that in the literature the essence of this issue may be understood broadly or narrowly, depending on the criterion adopted. Moreover, the existing ambiguity of concepts may contribute to the problems of analysing the public sector in the context of its reorganisation or performance evaluation.

Furthermore, it is also important to note the characteristics that are attributed to the public sector in the literature. Brol (2013) distinguishes the non-profit nature of the activities of entities constituting the public sector and the possibility of coercion. The author emphasises that it is possible to specify paid services or the production of goods, however, it should not refer to the entire sector, as the main purpose of remuneration in these cases is to induce the minimisation of excess consumption, to lead to the achievement of revenues limiting the incurrence of high fixed costs or the combination of both. The acceptability of coercion, on the other hand, is linked to the institutionalisation of the actors that make up the public sector.

2.5. Examples of social innovation in public organisations

Throughout the world, innovation in the public sector is challenging as it requires coordinated action by different types of public organisation to respond effectively to social and technological challenges. The literature emphasises that innovation in this sector is important not only for enhancing the reputation of governments and the image of public services (Lekhi, 2007), but can also contribute to changes in the management of public services, by increasing efficiency and the level of user involvement and satisfaction. Innovation in the public sector focusses on implementing new or improving existing processes in the organisation (internal orientation) or services (external orientation) (León et al., 2012). Importantly, "Innovation in public administration or the public sphere can be understood as activities concerning influencing, creating, and implementing solutions that can contribute to social change and, therefore, to the emergence of social innovation" (Kwieciński, 2016, p. 522).

It is important to emphasise the important role that social innovation plays in the formulation of environmental policy. It influences social groups and local communities as it creates new ideas or develops existing ideas and solutions to growing problems that affect society. An example of social innovation that addresses this issue with the aim of transforming the city into a climate-neutral and climate-adapted city by 2050 is Berlin's ongoing energy and climate protection strategy since 2014 (Climate-Neutral Berlin 2050 Recommendations..., 2023). Berlin's local authorities emphasise that climate protection concerns everyone and highlight the need to raise awareness of climate protection among citizens in order to achieve informed behaviour and attitudes of the general public in the long term.

An interesting example of social innovation implemented is the Citizen Assessment Tool in the Netherlands, which is a tool aimed at citizens and users of digital public services to assess the effectiveness of the services offered. Anyone who experiences poor or exceptionally good service can report this to an organisation specialised in digital accessibility, by giving a brief

description of the incident and adding attachments. In addition, the description should also indicate the relevant quality requirement as set out in the e-Citizen Charter, a document consisting of the rights of citizens and the corresponding obligations of government bodies in the area of digital relations between these actors, the scope of which includes information exchange, service provision, and political participation (Poelmans, 2006). A complaint or praise made about a digital public service will be forwarded to the public authority that is responsible for its implementation. In this regard, it should be noted that the usage of a citizen review tool does not replace the formal procedure for filing a complaint with a public body.

Another example of social innovation in a public organisation is the 115 number (115: The public administration's customer service, 2023) introduced in Germany, which is a direct telephone line to public authorities and the first point of contact for all kinds of question from citizens, relating to matters such as registering a newly purchased motor vehicle, applying for an identity card, and setting up a business. This type of innovation originated at the 2006 Federal IT Summit, while in 2007 the initial concept of a single number for all public sector bodies was developed. In 2009, the 115 number started operating in the first municipalities, so that other municipalities, state, and federal administrations in Germany could join the bodies after a two-year pilot phase. In addition, many other organisations and associations have expressed interest in joining the number 115 base. More than 550 municipalities, numerous state authorities, and the federal administration, more than 88 bodies and institutions, are currently participating in this initiative. It is also important that entities present in the 115-number database provide the system with information related to the scope of activities of these organisations and that are most frequently requested by citizens, so that each service centre has the possibility of providing an immediate answer to a citizen's question, even related to another entity, without losing quality of service. The special service of 115 is a sign phone, which allows the use of this service for hard-of-hearing and deaf people.

An example of social innovation in a public organisation that deserves attention is the *Virtual Warsaw* app (Virtual Warsaw, 2023), created to improve the ability of visually impaired people to travel through the city using their smartphones. The idea was designed with the cooperation of public and private sector actors - representatives of the Warsaw local government with a local company that was responsible for building personalised Bluetooth transmitters. Potential users of the application were also involved in the development of the project. In addition, nongovernmental organisations, universities and experts in the field of visual impairment were also important stakeholders who influenced the creation of the app, helping the tool's creators to better understand the challenges and needs of the target group. Although the *Virtual Warsaw* app is in its pilot phase, it is beginning to create opportunities to increase accessibility and independence for visually impaired people. The benefits of implementing the idea should be considered from both the perspective of the user and the Warsaw municipality. The value received by the user of the application is greater independence and, consequently, improved quality of life. The indirect benefit for the local authority,

on the other hand, is improved efficiency. It is important to highlight the interest of almost 40 other cities around the world in replicating this solution.

It should also be noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were examples of social innovations implemented by public organisations in Poland (Łuczyn, 2022). During the initial phase, the activities of the local authorities included mainly helping to supply residents with medical supplies, mainly masks, whose prices were high at the time and often not available on the market. In multiple instances, as part of their initiatives, local government institutions have cooperated with social and civic organisations and local entrepreneurs. One example of such cooperation are projects for the benefit of elderly people, because elderly people are the most at risk of infecting coronavirus - in the municipality of Łapy, elderly people could "(...) find masks sewn by MOPS employees, the Community Self-Help Centre and the Community Centre, as well as members of the village's women's circles and scouts in their mailboxes" (Łuczyn, 2022, p. 2). Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind the actions taken by the local authorities to reduce the number of cases of diseases - for this purpose, technological solutions such as urban surveillance (Gdynia) or drones (Siemianowice Śląskie, Koszalin) are often used. Public organisations have also provided assistance to residents in this difficult period by setting up assistance lines for people in need or providing psychological support to children and youth. Local authorities also took important measures to address parents (e.g., exempting local kindergartens and kindergartens from fees at the time of closure) and entrepreneurs (e.g., reducing or abolishing fees and taxes).

Cooperation between entities representing different sectors is very important in the implementation of social innovations, because each party can bring different aspects to the project depending on its own experience and capabilities. Jointly developed Ordinance No. 2008.2017 of the Mayor of the City of Częstochowa of 8 September 2017, and Housing Management Company "TBS" in Częstochowa, that is connected with assisting people in difficult financial situations in repaying debts incurred by using housing units included in municipal housing resources, and the introduced programs by the Housing Management Company "TBS" in Częstochowa, under the patronage of the Mayor of the City, showing assistance to people who have difficulties in repaying debts, can be treated as examples of partnership between public and private sector while implementing social innovation (Kabus, Dziadkiewicz, 2022). The authors also present an interesting insight into the social innovations implemented by the Częstochowa City Commune, which focus on a number of problematic issues faced by residents in terms of public housing resource management. The solutions include, for example, activities taken to increase the safety of young and elderly people, carbon monoxide and natural gas detectors which are installed in apartments in multi-family buildings, the "Work for rent" program designed for people who were facing difficult financial circumstances (Kabus, Dziadkiewicz, 2023).

The examples provided of social innovations implemented in Polish and foreign public organisations give an overview of the difficulties faced by contemporary societies. At the same time, particular attention should be paid to the scope of the activities of the public sector aimed at reducing the negative factors affecting the inhabitants of a particular administrative division and focussing on their needs, which so far have not been met partially or fully. In addition, it is important to emphasise the cooperation of public entities with the private sector and nongovernmental organizations, because it not only gives more access to target groups to meet their needs, but also spreads implementation innovations that may inspire other entities.

3. Methodology

To identify the theoretical basis of the question under discussion in this study, the literature review method was used as a research method. This method can generally be described as a form of collecting and synthesizing past research (Tranfield et al., 2003), that's why it can reveal what is still not yet recognised by the scientists. It also identifies research gaps and, in the next phase, enables the deduction of research hypotheses (Czakov, 2020).

There are several stages of literature analysis distinguished by researchers, as shown in Figure 3.

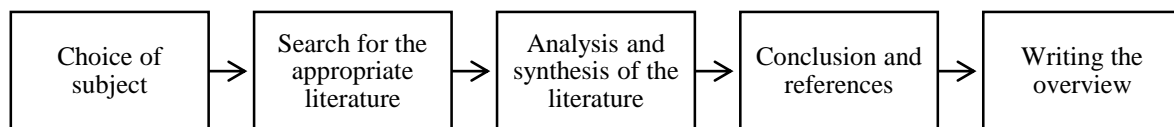


Figure 3. Literature analysis stages.

Source: Own study based on Cronin et al, 2008.

The first phase of literature analysis is to choose the topic to be studied. The next step is to search for the literature related to the topic. Today's databases available on the Internet are necessary and extremely useful, allowing searches to be carried out by selecting variables that can greatly facilitate the research process, such as keywords of interest to researchers or scientific publications' time spans. The next stage is to analyse and synthesize the literature sources selected, and then write an overview of the themes that have been studied. The final step of literature analysis are conclusion and references (Cronin et al., 2008).

The research process conducted by the author consisted of the following stages: literature analysis, gap identification, formulation of research hypotheses and their verification through literature review.

4. Results and discussion

The analysis of literature allows to conclude that social innovation is defined by researchers from the perspective of different criteria that they consider crucial. Some authors have developed definitions for the purpose of social innovation, focusing on noun "innovation" that enables analysis of this definition in the context of the theoretical innovation framework and innovation system (e.g., definition by Degelsegger, Kesselring, 2012); a "social" adjective that is derived from the perspective of social sciences (e.g. definition by Howaldt, Kopp, 2012); an adjective and noun "social innovation" that defines social innovation as an activity aimed at solving social problems (Howaldt, Swarz, 2010). The definitions of social innovation presented in this division can be further divided into broad and distinctive definitions. A broad definition includes activities at different sectors and levels of society, thus broadening the concept of social innovation in this definition (e.g., definition by Hochgerner, 2012). Similarly, distinctive definitions include innovations to meet social needs and focus on improving the quality of life of the population to achieve these goals (e.g., definition by Olejniczuk-Merta, 2014).

Despite the popularity of social innovation phenomena, there is no universal and widely accepted definition of this construct. Considering the definitions of social innovation provided in this article, it should be concluded that a social innovation can be considered a new solution aimed at satisfying social needs that have not been completely or adequately satisfied so far. In this context, the cooperation of public entities with other sectors and the relationships that are developed within it are also emphasized.

The results of the literature review have allowed to find gaps in research in the current state of knowledge. Social innovations in the context of public institutions are important and current issues, because the problems affecting modern societies affect not only their quality of life, but also have impact on their satisfaction with the actions of public institutions in promoting the aid provided. Studies have shown that there is not enough literature sources combining social innovation and public institutions issues. There is also a lack of sources aimed at public organizations' staff to improve knowledge of social innovations, as well as the need for their implementation and cooperation with other entities.

The challenges faced daily by modern societies should lead to greater awareness among public sector institutions of the importance of implementing social innovation. In this regard, attention should be drawn in particular to the impact of social innovation in public institutions on improving the living conditions of citizens in a particular administrative unit, since the objective of its implementation is to achieve long-term results to meet the needs of society that have not yet been adequately or fully met.

However, innovative solutions can also have a positive impact on the functioning of those who implement them, who will be respected by the population and increase their efficiency. In this regard, it is necessary to emphasise the cooperation of public sector organisations with

private and non-profit sectors, creating new relations and increasing the chances of social innovations being spread and new ideas being implemented.

Analysis of the examples of social innovation implemented in public organisations in Poland and abroad leads to the conclusion that public entities are aware of the problems that currently affecting members of society. In addition, mentioned examples of social innovation implemented in public organisations in selected countries address various social problems, what is connected with different problems faced by societies in these areas. Moreover, public entities are currently trying to reach out to citizens through the use of the Internet, social networks, and artificial intelligence, also in order to improve the quality of public services offered. It is also important to highlight the role of members of the public involved in the social innovation, as the actions taken can strengthen the relationship between citizens and the state and influence the level of public satisfaction resulting from the activities undertaken by public entities.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of literature on the subject leads to the conclusion that social innovation plays an essential role in public organisations. First, they positively affect the public by satisfying their needs, which is the most important issue in this regard. Second, it has the effect of creating positive perceptions of the public organisations that implement them by residents and creating relationships with other entities that can contribute to new innovative solutions, including in other areas.

This article aimed to draw attention to the role of social innovation in public organisations. The essential values of this research are the following:

- a) at the theoretical level – emphasizing the important role of social innovation in public institutions and its effects on society and on the public entities themselves;
- b) on a practical level – the possibility of using the given examples of implemented social innovations in selected countries by public entities that are looking for solutions, as they face similar problems.

Interesting part of the research appears to be examples of social innovation implemented in selected countries' public institutions, demonstrating the interest of public organisations in social problems and showing actions to meet the needs of residents. The results of the research can be further used by public institutions employees because mentioned examples of social innovation implemented in public institutions in other countries may inspire a similar solution in the environment of a particular organisation. Furthermore, the research could even more increase public institutions' awareness of the problems facing the inhabitants of their administrative areas. However, the results of the research cannot be considered comprehensive.

The main limitation of the study is that it treats social innovation from a general point of view and does not consider specific examples of community problems. This may lead to less interest in public institutions seeking solutions to specific problems. In this regard, it seems that it would be better to limit the study to the specific problems faced by contemporary societies, which can be useful for public institutions seeking solutions in this area.

It is important to emphasise the need to conduct further research on social innovation in public organisations in the future, both in general and in particular cases. In addition, more detailed approaches to social issues are also crucial for public organisations to better plan and implement social innovation at different levels. Therefore, taking into consideration the constant change in the organisational environment, it seems reasonable to continuously analyse the issues that relate to social needs and the solutions that may be crucial to meet them.

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