

CRITIQUE OF ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE CYCLE MODELS - THROWING THE BABY OUT WITH THE BATHWATER? PART I

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Introduction

A review of prior academic scholarship on firm growth suggests substantial heterogeneity in a number of factors that characterize this phenomenon [Delmar et al., 2003, p. 190]. The topic of enterprise growth is broad and multidimensional. Even the concept of growth is not completely clear: the term *growth* is often treated as synonymous with the term *development*, while in fact they are not. In the most general sense *development* is a lasting process of changes oriented at the goal, including the stages of successive changes; enterprise growth, in turn, means positive, measurable change in the size of the enterprise.

A considerable number of studies concerning organizational growth and development are carried out on the basis of *organizational life cycle* models (further referred to as OLC models). The Authors of these models basically assume that the phases of the organizational life cycle generally occur in a predictable order [Davidsson et al., 2005, p. 14]. It is hard to determine the exact number of proposed growth models based on the OLC concept. It was a popular trend in the literature concerning organizational growth and development until the end of the 1990s [Kazanjian, Drazin, 1989, p. 1489; Hanks et al., 1994, pp. 6–7; Davidsson et al., 2005, p. 2]; later, the number of publications on the subject dropped considerably. Davidsson and others are of the opinion that the drop was caused by excessive critique, which „seems to have led not to better research but to no research at all in this stream more recently. This is unfortunate because it represents the type of knowledge ... managers typically need” [Davidsson et al., 2005, p. 2].

It is worth noting that other models – alternatives to OLC ones – have been proposed, concentrating on „problems encountered in the course of growth”. They disregard the number of stages in the organizational life cycle, their sequence, or the occurrence of crisis phenomena, and concentrate on indicating typical problems related to organizational growth and their early detection [Gladwell, 2000; Phelps et al., 2007]. Such models are usually not just an extension of OLC models. They are mostly based on their critique, and often even on their complete negation.

The critical view of models, theories and paradigms is desired in order to make our knowledge more and more complete. Finding faults in models, theories and studies is not particularly challenging. This research establishes some very important questions though. Is the critique of OLC models constructive? Are the critics’ arguments justified? If so, to what extent? Does this critique lead to better research, models and

publications? Does it provide sufficient grounds for negating OLC models? Or maybe the critics negating OLC models ‘throw the baby out with the bathwater’? Author’s aim was to analyse selected OLC models in the context of this criticism, to take a stance on the critical arguments they are subject of, and point out the areas of possible future research. Nine models, further referred to as „early” or „earlier” ones, were analysed in this article [Table 1]. Eight models, further referred to as „late” or „later” ones, will be analysed in the article to come. Although the distinction between early and late models is not sharp, the Author decided to classify the models published until mid-eighties of XX century into earlier ones and those published thereafter into later ones. Late OLC models are more mature than early ones. They build on the broad literature review and are usually validated in empirical research while many of early OLC models are conceptual, based on their Authors’ experience and are rarely validated in empirical research¹.

Research methodology

The article was written on the basis of a systematic literature review [Czakoń, 2011]. The Author searched for publications in the databases available in e-resources at <http://www.bg.ue.wroc.pl/index.php/en/databases/internet-databases> and scholar.google.com, containing the words: *stage, life, cycle, growth*, published after 1970. Following their preliminary analysis, the publications database was supplemented with articles indicated in the first layer of the literature, using the snowball method. A more thorough review of abstracts resulted in the recognition of approximately 50 titles as worthy of insightful study for the purpose of this paper. Not all of the works included model proposals. Some models were described in several publications, and some publications referred to the subject of growth and development of enterprises without proposing any model. The models to be included in this publication were selected on the basis of the reputation of the journals they were published in, or – since a few models published in places other than scientific journals had a great response from scholars and managers – their popularity (measured by the number of citations of the publications, according to the scholar.google.com search engine).

Critique of OLC models

Although models based on organizational life cycle intuitively seem to capture the nature of organizational



Table 1. Evaluation of characteristics imputed to selected early OLC models

Model	Linearity	Sequentiality	Determinism	Invariance	No study basis	Comparison to organisms	Inconsistency with other models	Comments
Steinmetz [1969]	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	The model „may have some relevance to other small, growing companies, especially in the high technology area”
Greiner [1972, 1998]	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	The vestiges of one phase remain as new approaches are introduced. Overlaps are most notable in the case of the first-phase entrepreneur hanging on when professional management is added in the second phase of direction
Strauss [1974]	no*	no*	no*	no*	analysis of five cases	yes, with indication of similarities and differences	no	* The route of development is „frequent and persistent” and „may have some relevance to other small, growing companies, especially in the high technology area”
Adizes [1979, 1989, 1996]	no*	no*	no*	no*	yes	yes, with indication of similarities and differences	no	* Reservation: it is a „typical” model
Aplin, Cosier [1980]	partly*	partly*	partly*	partly*	partly*	no	partly*	* Mostly explains the mechanisms related to renewal
Galbraith [1982]	no*	no*	no*	no*	yes	no	no	* Possible disturbances in the typical path by environmental factors or management mistakes
Churchill, Lewis [1983]	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	They present alternatives to the typical course of development
Quinn, Cameron; Cameron, Whetten [1983]	no	no	no	no	case report, reference to other studies	no	no	There are companies which follow the path of development other than the „typical” one
Miller, Friesen [1983]	no	No	no	no	no	no	no	There is „a common but by no means universal tendency for firms to move through the phases”

Source: author's own study

evolution, they have been subject to criticism [Davidsson et al., 2005, p. 2; Phelps et al., 2007, pp. 2–6; Leitch et al., 2010, pp. 254–257]. The objection against them is that they only suit a relatively constant/even path of development established in a deterministic way, and that they are based on the assumption that the organization undergoes all the stages of life cycle and each stage has an optimum configuration. Another source of criticism is that they mainly focus on the development of formal structures, whereas informal structures and processes are equally important. These objections are

repeated in many publications. Later in the article the Author concentrates on the critical arguments included in a publication by R. Phelps, R. Adams and J. Bessant [Phelps et al., 2007, pp. 1–30]. Granted, some polemics with its Authors concerns the arguments which they used when criticizing OLC models, not the „conceptualization of firm growth” they proposed [Phelps et al., 2007, p. 13]. The objections those Authors pose to OLC models are their linearity, sequentiality, determinism and invariance, as well as the fact that they have no empirical support. Moreover, they claim that the comparison

of organizations to organisms is inappropriate, and that individual models are inconsistent with each other. It is noteworthy that when criticising OLC models, Phelps et al. always refer to other scholars. For the sake of clarity, selected models will be briefly described with emphasis on their characteristics in the context of the above-mentioned objections. The summary of this evaluation is presented in Table 1.

Early growth and development models

The model proposed by L. Steinmetz [1969, p. 29] was one of the earliest and simplest OLC models. In the initial words of his publication Steinmetz explains that it refers to „succeeding” businesses, and from the content of the publication we can conclude that he means businesses which grow. Firms whose size has stabilized for whatever reasons can „develop” following other patterns, so Steinmetz implicitly allows the existence of other routes of development. Yet, as regards growing businesses, he argues that unless the company undergoes the described phases in a proper way, „the alternative” to the pattern presented in his model is „probable loss of nearly fifty percent of the assets” [Steinmetz, 1969, pp. 29, 36]. The model is conceptual and descriptive and refers to seven other publications, including one by Steinmetz and two from the interwar period. It is written in a „journalistic” style and does not draw upon empirical studies, but was published in a scientific journal. The model is indeed linear, sequential, deterministic, invariant and not supported by empirical research. It was not based on the comparison of organizations to organisms or any similar biological metaphors.

In the case of Greiner’s model [Greiner, 1972, 1998], not only do linearity, sequentiality, determinism and invariance result from narration (a firm develops in an evolutionary way, and at a certain moment of evolution problems typical for a given phase occur, reaching the intensity of a „crisis”, the overcoming of which means transition to the next phase, etc.), but they also result from the Author’s argument that managers should „be cautious” when tempted to skip phases. It is so because each phase „produces certain strengths and learning experiences in the organization”, which are essential in the subsequent phases [Greiner, 1998, p. 66]. However, Greiner explains that the boundaries between phases in his model are not as clear as might seem from the description. „The vestiges of one phase remain as new approaches (to management – Author’s note) are introduced. Such overlaps are most notable in the case of the first-phase entrepreneur hanging on when professional management is added in the second phase of direction” [Greiner, 1998, p. 64]. Greiner also points out that „miniphases” usually occur in each phase [Greiner, 1998, p. 64]. With the example of the delegation phase, he adds that his words concerning typical managers’ behaviours in particular phases should not be treated very literally. In that phase, involving (among others) decentralization of structure, giving much greater responsibility to the managers of plants and market territories, top-level executives at headquarters limiting themselves to „managing by exception” based on periodic reports „from the field” etc., there are still some cases of „manual control” [Greiner, 1998,

pp. 61–62]. What is important though, is that managers actually no longer fully manage the processes and organizational units they are responsible for, as in the previous phases. Greiner also emphasizes that the boundaries between „evolution” and „revolution” are symbolic and often unclear. They provide „only a simple outline of the broad challenges facing a management concerned with growth” and the presented phases are „only approximations” [Greiner, 1998, p. 67]. The model „is not a cookie-cutter solution or panacea”: it should not be treated as a template for solving problems related to business growth. „The rate of growth, the effective resolution of revolutions, and the performance of the company ... still depend on the fundamentals of good management: skillful leadership, a winning strategy, the heightened motivation of employees, and a deep concern for customers” [Greiner, 1998, p. 65]. It is worth mentioning that Greiner does not use the analogy of organizational growth to the organisms. What is also worthwhile is that Greiner’s article was not published in a scientific journal but in „Harvard Business Review”. In that context it is surprising that the article had such a great influence on the academic world, as well as that it was criticized for being „non-scientific” (as the place of publication suggests, „scientificity” did not seem to be Greiner’s aim). That model is indeed descriptive and conceptual. The Author does not cite any studies, nor does he refer to contemporary knowledge.

Just like in the case of Steinmetz’s or Greiner’s model, the objections against OLC models by Adizes are in a large part justified. Adizes presented his model in a number of publications [Adizes, 1979, 1989, 1996]. His model is conceptual, based on Adizes’ experience as a consultant; it does not refer to the state of the art or empirical studies [however, it is noteworthy that the 1979 article was published in a scientific journal]. With colourful, journalistic language Adizes describes his theory assuming the existence of six typical passages of development; than he describes „treatments” for problems typical for each of them, mostly concentrating on changes in organizational culture. Adizes uses the comparison of organizations to living organisms: „People, products, markets, even societies, have lifecycles ... At every lifecycle passage [of the life cycle – Author’s note] a typical pattern of behaviour emerges” [Adizes, 1979, p. 4]. Yet, he adds that „while it seems a law of nature that all things grow and decline, foresightful management of the attitudes and style of an organization’s managers may provide a means for ensuring a long and effective life to an organization” [Adizes, 1979, p. 3]. Just like in Greiner’s model, the sequence of phases in a company’s life cycle is predictable. Adizes does not explain directly whether a developing organization can pass over a phase or drop back to a previous one. It may be inferred from the context, however, that it would probably not be possible or desired. As a consequence, in Adizes’ model growth would really be linear, sequential, deterministic and invariant, but for Adizes’ explanation that „such a typology has been found to be repetitive as a pattern in a significant number of organizations”. Thus, Adizes implicitly allows for other patterns of growth and development, while his model is a „typical” one. In that context, raising the objections of „linearity, sequentiality, determinism and invariance” seems inappropriate.

An interesting model was presented by G. Strauss in 1974. The Author emphasizes that „the patterns observed were frequent and persistent”, so his models „may have some relevance to other small, growing companies, especially in the high technology area” [Strauss, 1974, p. 4]. He also notes that not all companies do grow, and that they often go bankrupt or are wound up in the early stages of their growth. Strauss compares the growth of an organization to human growth. The expressions used by him in this context, however, require some consideration. He indicates that the similarity – or rather analogy – is limited to the fact that growth is related to „stresses and strains”. He also emphasizes that there are many differences between the way organizations and humans growth. The model was based on his experience and the description of five cases. The language used is rather journalistic, although the text was published in a scientific journal. The Author hardly draws on the current state of the art. It is worth noting that although his model „may have some relevance to other small, growing companies, especially in the high technology area” [Strauss, 1974, p. 4], the Author does not define the „high technology area” and the term is used in the article only once.

Another well-known OLC model is one presented in 1982 by J. Galbraith. He assumes that the internal dynamics of a new organization growth is „predictable” but it can be disrupted by unpredictable events within the company’s environment [Galbraith, 1982, p. 70]. His model refers to „new” firms from the high technology industry. „New” means organizations that just past the stage of „ventures” and become „companies”, characterized e.g. by the existence of profit centres, strategic planning, matrix structure, high level of decentralization, professional management, etc. [Galbraith, 1982, p. 79]. Actually, we usually recognize them as large companies. Galbraith claims that when the organization achieves „company” status, it can continue developing in several different ways. Apart from external factors which may disturb the path of growth he describes, management mistakes may also play a role. Galbraith describes the phenomenon of getting accustomed to well-tried methods of management and reluctance to change. Hence, a company’s growth according to Galbraith is linear, sequential and, to a certain extent, also deterministic, unless it is disturbed by external factors or mistakes in management. The assumption of no disturbances caused by events in the environment or management mistakes considerably weakens the linearity, sequentiality or determinism of the model. Galbraith does not compare the growth of a company to the human growth or any other organism. Similarly to Greiner or Adizes, Galbraith wrote his text in simple, sometimes colourful, journalistic language. The model is descriptive and based on the Author’s experience, which is, however, obscure. It was published in a scientific journal; nevertheless, it did not refer to the current state of the art.

So far, 5 models published by the early 1980s have been briefly described above – further referred to as „early models”. To a considerable extent, they have the majority of the criticized characteristics: linearity, sequentiality, determinism and invariance, as well as lack of empirical support. Still, comparing the development of firms to the development of organisms is rare. Besides, it is hedged around with the re-

servations that the similarities only refer to selected, isolated phenomena. The models are different and to *some* extent the inconsistency exists among them. After all, it is not surprising and desirable that different researchers present different views, approaches, conceptualizations, etc.

Later OLC models evolved towards more „mature”, less explicit and more varied ones. They were often constructed on the basis of the existing knowledge and verified in empirical studies. The model by C.N. Churchill and V.L. Lewis [1983], one of the most well-known models of organizational growth and development, can be considered as the „precursor” of them. Unlike the „early” models it is constructed (albeit slightly) on the basis of the knowledge available at the time. The Authors refer to models by J.W. McGuire and W.W. Rostow, C.R. Christensen and B.R. Scott, L.L. Steinmetz, and L.E. Greiner, as well as the results of the research they had conducted, involving a sample of 83 firms. It assumes the existence of 5 phases of the life cycle, whereas one of them („success”) may have two different forms: „success-disengagement” or „success-growth”. Apart from the „basic” route Churchill and Lewis present several possible routes of business growth in each of the development phases; they are predictable and, to a great extent, voluntary. „Dropping back” to the previous stages is also possible. The model also takes into account the routes leading to: long stagnation, restructuring, satisfying conscious avoidance of further growth, sale or merger of the company, or even bankruptcy. The Authors emphasize that the boundaries between phases are sometimes vague, and the company may even be undergoing a few stages at the same time: „... while a number of companies appeared to be at a given stage of development, they were, on closer examination, actually at one stage with regard to a particular factor and at another stage with regard to the others” [Churchill, Lewis, 1983, p. 48]. They add that such an „imbalance” may cause serious management problems. What is worth highlighting is that this publication does not include any references to living organisms or biology, and, despite the fact that it meets the criteria of being „scientific”, it was published in Harvard Business Review. It should be also noted that some later publications present the results of studies which confirm the accuracy of this model [Mitra, Pingali, 1999; Shim et al., 2000]. To sum up, all of the arguments OLC critics raise are unsubstantiated as regards to this model.

Another model which can also be placed between the „earlier” and „later” models is one by J. Aplin and R. Cosier [1980]. Since it differs from the models described before, it is worth presenting its main assumptions briefly. The Authors distinguish three phases in a company’s life: first, the creative/entrepreneurial phase, very dynamic and characterized by high growth (provided that the enterprise survives). This is followed by a short transition period, which, if gone through properly, ends with professionalization of the organization and moving to the administrative/maintenance phase. It is focused on the issues of administration, control of expenses, coordination and effectiveness. Still, the behaviours typical for that stage usually lead to the freezing of the organization. Thus, the company should undergo strategic renewal involving the return to entrepreneurial behaviours while retaining the attributes resulting from being a big, professional

company. That means a transition to the creative/maintenance phase. Lack of renewal or performing it in a wrong way usually means the company gradually losing the ability to meet the needs of the environment. In fact, features of the administrative/maintenance and the creative/maintenance phases tend to alternate and intertwine, whereas behaviours typical for a given phase still dominate. In bigger companies, a dualism may occur: some units may be in the administrative/maintenance phase, and others in the creative/maintenance one [Aplin, Cosier, 1982, pp. 60–61]. Mature companies may regularly go from the administrative/maintenance phase to the creative/maintenance phase and so on. Hence, as the above brief description shows, this model only partly represents the characteristics criticized by the opponents of OLC models.

Integrative models

Since the early 1980s, several models similar to the above-mentioned ones have been proposed. Despite the differences between them, mainly resulting from concentrating on different factors and phenomena accompanying growth, concerning the structure, pace and comprehensiveness of changes, managers' and employees' mentality, main organizational activities, management tools, etc., there are still some similarities among them and there is „some consensus ... about the characteristics of certain developmental stages” [Quinn, Cameron, 1983, p. 40]. On the basis of these similarities, several integrative models were proposed in the 1980s. Most of them were validated by studying research samples of a few dozen or (more rarely) a few hundred companies. The issue of life cycle stages was no longer the centre of attention since it was regarded as proved, despite certain reservations. In several articles scholars proved their occurrence in the course of their studies, which concentrated, e.g. on sets of key problems characteristic for particular phases, description of organizational structures in particular phases, changes of the priorities in resource management, etc. Earlier publications had also tackled these topics but more superficially, concentrating on the question of whether the phases occurred in the life cycle or not instead.

One of the best known integrative models was proposed by R. Quinn and K. Cameron [1983]. It is based on nine other models presented in publications between 1967 and 1979. It assumes the occurrence of four main stages in the development of an organization: the entrepreneurial stage, the collectivity stage, the formalization and control stage, and the elaboration of structure stage. The Authors observe that some of the nine analyzed models admit that firms „frequently revert to earlier stages of development as environmental turbulence is encountered, as turnover in membership occurs, as the primary task changes, or as the leadership style is altered” [Quinn, Cameron, 1983, p. 40]. They emphasize, however, that „shifts in state of development are resisted”. Predictability of development in the early stages of an organization's life is greater than in the later ones; „the stages from birth to maturity may be the only predictable ones”. The Authors pay a particular attention to an organization's „effectiveness criteria” in particular sta-

ges of development. They also describe the results of their three-year-long studies at the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene, employing approx. 900 people in six „areas” with annual turnover exceeding 9 million dollars, as the illustration of their model. They quote the results of „empirical studies suggesting that the models may be predictive” [Quinn, Cameron, 1983, p. 49].

The same integrative model, additionally taking into account the tenth one: one by Child and Kieser of 1981, was then slightly differently substantiated and described in a publication by K. Cameron and D. Whetten [1983]. The Authors reviewed the literature dealing with organizational life cycle, and at the same time provided constructive criticism of the publications. The Authors define models based on organizational life cycle as attempts „to identify ... elementary dynamics of organizational change, and to outline models of the major transitions that occur in organizations” [Cameron, Whetten, 1983, p. 274]. They seek similarities in the evolution of organizations to the evolution of social groups, also noticing differences between them. Just as social groups evolve in accordance with certain principles, organizations – being systems of social groups – follow „more or less the same sequential pattern” [Cameron, Whetten, 1983, p. 282]. Provided the organization operates under normal circumstances, the order of the stages is predictable: „Under normal circumstances progressive changes will not easily reverse themselves” and their occurrence is „hierarchical, that is, latter forms will dominate and integrate earlier ones” [Cameron, Whetten, 1983, p. 282]. Returning to previous stages is possible, e.g. „as a result of a merger, a substantial decrease of resources, a major loss of personnel”, etc. Cameron and Whetten show the paths of potential „returns” to earlier stages of organizational development. In their opinion, the possibility of „returns” is the reason why „some writers argue that sequential change does not occur”. They explain that there is more evidence for sequentiality „in the early history of organizations”, whereas returning to previous stages mostly occurs in mature companies. They observe that units of bigger organizations may be undergoing different stages at the same time. While they see the differences and inconsistencies between the ten analyzed models, they concentrate on the similarities: „all ten models suggest similar life cycle stages”. They also admit that „the final stage ... presents problems from all three of the previous stages” [Cameron, Whetten, 1983, p. 282]. The Authors indicate that, unlike phenomena occurring in groups, organizational development models have not been (up to then – Author's note) based on systematic empirical investigation. Instead, they were proposed only on the basis of the observations and experiences of the Authors themselves. Still, they mention a few examples, primarily based on case studies which seem to provide evidence for OLC models. They explain that failure to meet the requirements of respective development stages does not necessarily mean liquidation or bankruptcy for the organization: it may simply continue operating but less effectively [Cameron, Whetten 1983, pp. 290–292]. In Author's opinion, practically none of OLC models opponents' arguments, seems to be right with regard to integrative model presented above.

D. Miller and P. Friesen [1983] are scholars who fit in the „new trend” of studies of organizational growth and development cycles. In the first of their publications they point out the existence of „a common but by no means universal tendency for firms to move through the phases of the corporate life cycle”. These are: birth, growth and maturity; potential divisionalization combined with diversification may result in the occurrence of the revival phase; sometimes a decline phase occurs after maturity or revival [Miller, Friesen, 1983, p. 339]. Studying particular phases they concentrate on the changes concerning the intensity and the methods of information collection and processing, decision-making and the degree of innovation. Their research was carried out on the basis of secondary data concerning 36 American corporations, available in books, reports, magazine articles, etc., as well as of a survey questionnaire filled in by their former or current top executives. They observe that there are both successful and unsuccessful firms in each of the phases. While they make the reservation that their research results should be regarded as „tentative”, they indicate clear differences between the successful companies and those which do not succeed; the reason for the observed differences is different intensity of the studied characteristics [Miller, Friesen, 1983, p. 351]. In their 1984 publication, based on the same research, Miller and Friesen elaborate on OLC phases, e.g. describing some cases in which the firms did not develop closely following the pattern typical for OLC models: „clearly there are a large number of transitional paths available to organizations”. Table III „*The Sequencing of the Life-Cycle Phases*” on page 1176 presents an interesting summary of deviations from the typical paths. They claim that each organization can be assigned to a particular life cycle phase, regardless of the order that has led to the current one. There are organizations which do not grow; therefore they do not undergo all of the life cycle phases. Time alone does not lead to greater complexity, so it does not necessarily mean changes in the structure of such companies. Those that do not grow are „arrested” in one phase until the strategy alters. As regards the life cycle phases sequence, the Authors use words such as „usually”, „most”, „often”, „sometimes”, etc. They conclude that „there may be no common corporate life cycle. But there are indeed common life-cycle stages which differ broadly and consistently from one another” [Miller, Friesen, 1984, p. 1177].

Conclusions

It is hard to determine the exact number of proposed growth models based on the organizational life cycle concept (OLC models). It was a popular trend in the literature concerning organizational growth and development until the end of the 1990s, later, the number of publications on the subject dropped considerably. The reason for this drop was caused by excessive critique that OLC models were subject of. Their critics claim that OLC models are linear, sequential, deterministic, inconsistent with each other, have no empirical support and they compare organizations to organisms, which is inappropriate. Davidsson and others are of the opinion that this critique „seems to have led not to better research but to no research at all in this

stream more recently. This is unfortunate because it represents the type of knowledge ... managers typically need” [Davidsson et al., 2005, p. 2], though they do not present any detailed arguments supporting their opinion. This research proves that the criticism that OLC models received is, to a large extent, inappropriate. Critical opinions deserve agreement in the points they are right about: with respect to *some* assumptions, in *some* of the models. The Author partly agrees with critics’ arguments as regards to early models, published by early 80s. Integrative models are free from the weaknesses that the critics raise.

This article was concentrated on “early” OLC models. In the article to come, the Author will analyse “later” OLC models, introduced in late eighties and further on.

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Endnote

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Krytyka modeli opartych o cykl życia organizacji - dziecko wylane z kąpielą? Część I

Streszczenie

Jednym z głównych nurtów literatury dotyczącej wzrostu i rozwoju organizacji jest nurt związany z badaniem ich cyklu życia. W ostatnich latach został on poddany istotnej krytyce. Zarzuca się m.in., że w modelach opartych o cykl życia organizacji (organizational life cycle – OLC) rozwój jest porównywany do rozwoju organizmów, jest liniowy, sekwencyjny, deterministyczny i bezwariantowy. Wskazuje się też, iż wiele modeli nie zostało poddanych walidacji w badaniach empirycznych oraz że są one niespójne ze sobą. Krytyka ta nie doprowadziła jednak do lepszych badań, modeli i teorii, doprowadziła raczej do zaprzestania badań w tym obszarze. Wydaje się także, iż była ona przesadzona. Celem opracowania jest analiza wybranych modeli opartych o cykl życia organizacji, ustosunkowanie się do krytycznych uwag formułowanych pod ich adresem. Autor przestudiował siedemnaście wybranych modeli OLC w kontekście stawianych im zarzutów. W niniejszym artykule przedstawił swoje wnioski w odniesieniu do wczesnych modeli, opublikowanych do wczesnych lat osiemdziesiątych XX w., w kolejnym zaś – przedstawi wnioski odnoszące się do modeli późniejszych. O ile zgadza się z wieloma krytycznymi argumentami w odniesieniu do niektórych, głównie wczesnych modeli, o tyle uważa, iż całkowite ich negowanie nosi znamiona przyśłowia „wylewania dziecka z kąpielą”.

Słowa kluczowe

wzrost, rozwój, cykl życia, OLC