The New Trend Model of Change Planning for Post-pandemic Adaptation

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Abstract

The problem analyzed through this study reflects the national crisis situation of the Romanian educational system, against the allergic background of powerless political influences in a context in which many other systems, such as economic, health, tourism and not only are in a state of collapse. This aspect brings to attention the issue of paradoxes which, from the perspective of other researchers, characterize the process of changing the school organization. In order to better understand the nature of the contradictions of the current change, the experience of experts is relevant through the power of example. If post-pandemic changes mean misalignment, then there is a risk of imbalances and chaos. Therefore, the post-pandemic is becoming an insecure world that is exacerbated with the use of information and communication technology tools. In this case, the nostalgia of educational institutions for the past should probably not be surprised, especially since the change sometimes concerns only external demands, like a wound healed from the outside, leaving the inside in a greater suffering. Among the methodological activities used by the authors are the diagnostic analysis of the managerial documentation and of the quality assurance commission in the Romanian public educational institutions, the exploratory evaluation of the specialized literature. Finally, the result of this research generates analysis criteria for organizational adaptation and processing the stages of the planned institutional change process. These results can help the human resources that need this meticulous process of change and adaptation through the patterns of behavior provided by the authors.

Keywords

post-pandemic organizational adaptation, diagnosis of changing, institutional philosophy, crystallization of change

Introduction and theoretical background

Regardless of whether they have their source individually or at the organizational level of the school, resistance to change must not be ignored, but the most effective ways to improve them must be sought, as they risk affecting the achievement of change objectives and ability to respond appropriately to social requirements. They cause moral and psychological wear and tear, although there are cases when their manifestation is fully justified. It is the case of unplanned changes or, more precisely, those that are not appropriate to the context of each organization, their needs and demands. Organizational development is beginning to gain more and more importance for the individual as lifelong learning, as the main solution for adapting to the requirements of society. If initially the pace of change was slow, allowing the progressive evolution of ideas and values, it can be said that today the social environment and educational organizations are in a permanent dynamic, causing sudden changes that require anticipation. Achieving performance,

development, adaptation of human resources require a knowledge effort aimed at acquiring knowledge, skills, but especially attitudes conducive to change (Tsiuniak at al., 2020)

The educational organization has become the paradigm of modern organizations, being structures in which people have the ability to create the results they want by stimulating new ways of thinking, each having the freedom to aspire and learn how to adapt with others. Most of the time, the content of the change is varied and complex, requiring sustained efforts, but also the recourse to a set of strategies that facilitate the correct acquisition of the change or its real production at a practical-applicative level. The role of the managers of the educational organizations is particularly important in this direction, as they are responsible for carrying out the strategic analyzes and applying the change at the level of the guided organization. Adopting changes in education involves changing the institutional philosophy, the model of its operation, assuming responsibilities, but also an effort to penetrate the risks that lie in maintaining a bankrupt educational reality (Vărzaru and Vărzaru, 2013). Although it has clearly set goals, it has often been found that change has a mobile, non-linear trajectory, which is why "learning to change" would generate a vital experience to deal with the unpredictable.

The real content of this type of learning at the level of the educational organization is given by the concrete ways in which it can cope with change, namely the promotion of strategies to facilitate the improvement of personal and organizational performance, to reduce resistance to change, to develop prospective capacity or training pro-active skills (Vărzaru, and Vărzaru, 2009). For this reason, it is important to reiterate the need for education through and for change, both at the individual level and at the level of the organization as a whole. If change cannot be avoided, it is important that we at least learn to deal with it. The ways in which the organization can learn are among the most diverse. There is no need for a clear announcement of the moment from which the learning begins, not for a triumphant recitation of the content of this approach. Change must gradually creep into the lives of the organization and its people, without blatant leaps and bounds and through the adoption of compensatory mechanisms designed to mitigate "shocks".

The relationship between centralization and decentralization at the level of the educational organization is also a possible paradox. The fact that at the level of the Romanian education system there is talk of an autonomy of the educational institutions, the relativity of this concept cannot be overlooked (Iancu et al. 2022). It manifests itself at the internal level of the organization, in the sense that any manager, respectively teacher has the freedom to design according to the needs of the beneficiaries, to use those managerial and educational strategies that prove to be effective for achieving the proposed objectives.

1. Methodology

When faced with innovation, a doubt or a feeling of helplessness can sometimes arise. For this reason, dealing with change in education becomes a professional task, seemingly impossible when faced with psychological barriers or extreme solutions. In the opinion of the authors, there is a need to get rid of inefficient practices, critical reflection and reconsideration of socio-educational realities, as well as effective involvement in promoting change at this level. To this end, the social sector must take responsibility for the assistance of change when it is requested and facilitate the integration of trained young people, and the school organization must assume responsibility for coherent change and the quality of the managerial and educational act. The issue of organizational development and the process of change at the level of educational organizations bring into discussion two essential aspects. It is about the need for a diagnostic analysis to support the planning / design and effective implementation of change.

The results obtained from the diagnosis are relevant in drawing up a forecast of the evolution of the respective organization. For the realization of a viable project for the development of the school organization, the diagnosis has a crucial importance, being made by the headmaster in organizational development. In the case of the school organization, the task of diagnosis lies with the school manager and the management team at the organization level. The diagnosis should address the internal and external environment of the educational institution. (Table no.1)

In order to make a diagnosis to promote change, at the level of the educational organization it is necessary to identify the attitude of teachers towards change, the direction of change, as well as the problems that change raises. These are the first and most important steps in planning for educational change. Planned organizational change is another concept that has recently been promoted by organizational development specialists.

It can be generated from within, in which case it subsumes a set of activities aimed at changing individuals, groups, structure or organizational processes, or from outside, as a result of changes in technology, legislation or as a result of increasing competitiveness.

Table no. 1. Analysis criteria for organizational adaptation

Nr. crt.	The internal environment of the organization	The external environment of the organization
1	mission, objectives	timely
2	type of culture and organizational climate	existing threats at the local community level
3	the quality of the human resource and the degree of its motivation	competing organizations
4	quality of material resources	the requirements of the society
5	the organization's ability to financially support change	how school-community interactions are established
6	type and managerial efficiency	competing organizations
7	the organization's ability to develop and implement institutional development projects	partnerships and projects
8	the quality of institutional processes	legislation and new technologies

Source: Authors' concept based on the diagnosis of the two organizational environments

Upon a careful analysis of the existing specialized theories regarding the process of change, through their comparisons and revisions, the authors generate predictions that involve going through some stages, described in Figure no.1, which are at some point in true models of implementation of change.

Although relevant from the objective perspective it offers in understanding the moments of change, the staging proposed by Lewin and Schein overlooks the need for rigorous planning. In order to realize the importance, but also the complexity of this process, it is necessary to analyze its essential elements, described in stages of the intervention process for change and which are perfectly valid for the school organization of the change process, the diagnostic phase, the planning phase, the implementation phase and the effects assessment phase. The preparation of the change process involves concerns in the direction of analyzing and clarifying some issues related to identifying the problem and defining the conditions, specifying the goals and eliminating false goals, as well as verifying the feasibility of the change.

Very often, the resistance to change is due to the ambiguity of the problem and the contractual conditions, which is why it is necessary to identify the important aspects of the problem. It is the time when the most frequently asked questions are related to the nature of the activity. Analyzing most of the attempts to stage the planned organizational change, we find that we can speak of three basic moments: the beginning of change which involves preparation for change and diagnostic analysis, an intermediate moment, the implementation of innovative measures and a final moment, with a role evaluation of the quality of the results obtained. Although no infallible rules can be established to promote change, nor can immanent models, at the level of any school organization, it is necessary to go through additional moments that escape the cited authors.

2. Finding of theory and results

The planned organizational change, considered as the intention of managers and employees to improve the functioning of groups, departments or the whole organization, in its important phases, is necessary to be based on specific goals (Figure no. 2) and is oriented towards two fundamental objectives:

- improving the organization's ability to adapt to changes in the environment in which it operates;
- changing the behavioral patterns of employees.

Although both are important for change, the priority of its planning must be to change the attitude and behavior of individuals.
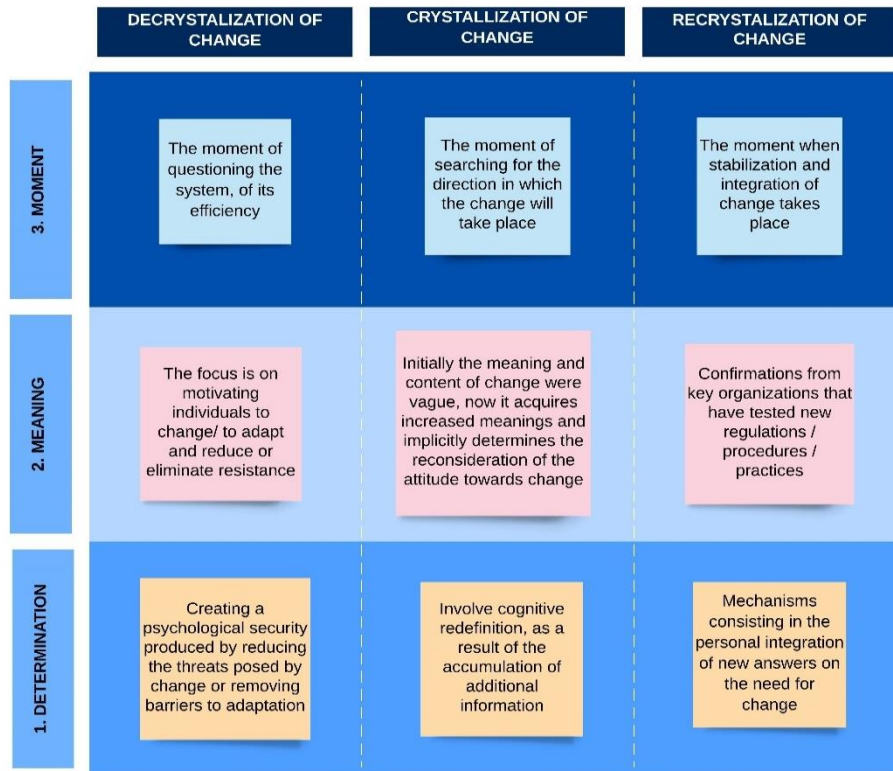
Figure no. 1. The stages of the planned organizational change process / adaptation
Source: Adaptation and processing of authors afterK. Lewis and E. Schein

Promoting change in the presence of change-resistant behaviors is nonsense, because changing strategy, which facilitates the adaptation of the organization to the environment, becomes effective only under conditions of proactive behavior. In other words, the success of the process depends fundamentally on the achievement of the second goal.

The conclusion that emerges from the analyzes performed by the authors is the following: at the level of educational organizations, the adaptation process has a multi-determined character (the internal needs of the organization, which may target the administrative, instructional-educational, managerial or social environment), multidimensional (change having strong psychological, educational, social, strategic influences), multilevel (targeting both the individual and the organizational level).
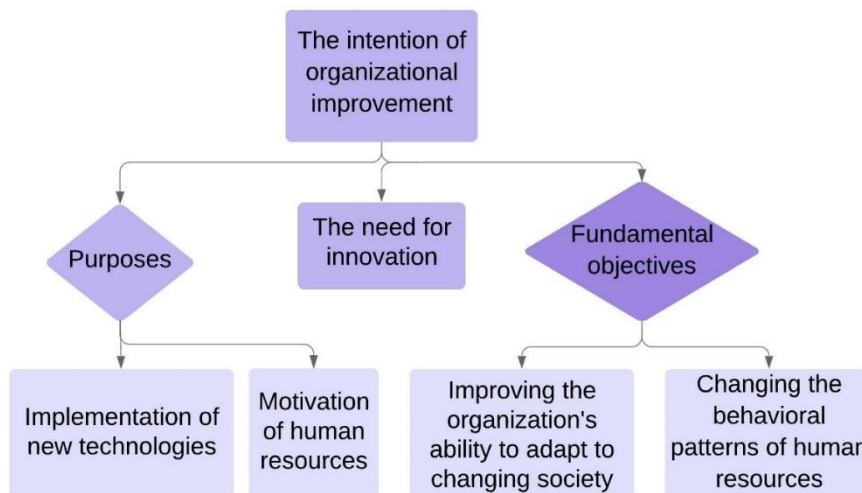

Figure no. 2. The new trend model for planning efficient organizational structures
Source: autors concept

Although rigorous planning of the changes needed for adaptation does not guarantee absolute success, it is preferable to unplanned, unanticipated change that runs the risk of failing in derision as a result of resistance to change. One of the justified reasons for an interrogative attitude regarding the sincerity of the acceptance of change by the educational organization as a whole is the finding of a major gap between the scenarios and adaptations promoted, on the one hand and the concrete aspects of organizational reality, on the other. In other words, change is not objectified in mentality and organizational practice.

In an attempt to analyze the characteristics of human resources refractory to change, the authors concluded that resistance to change is directly proportional to its volume, to the amount of change required, as shown in (Figure no. 3), a prediction that has among its motives the forces of change resistance.
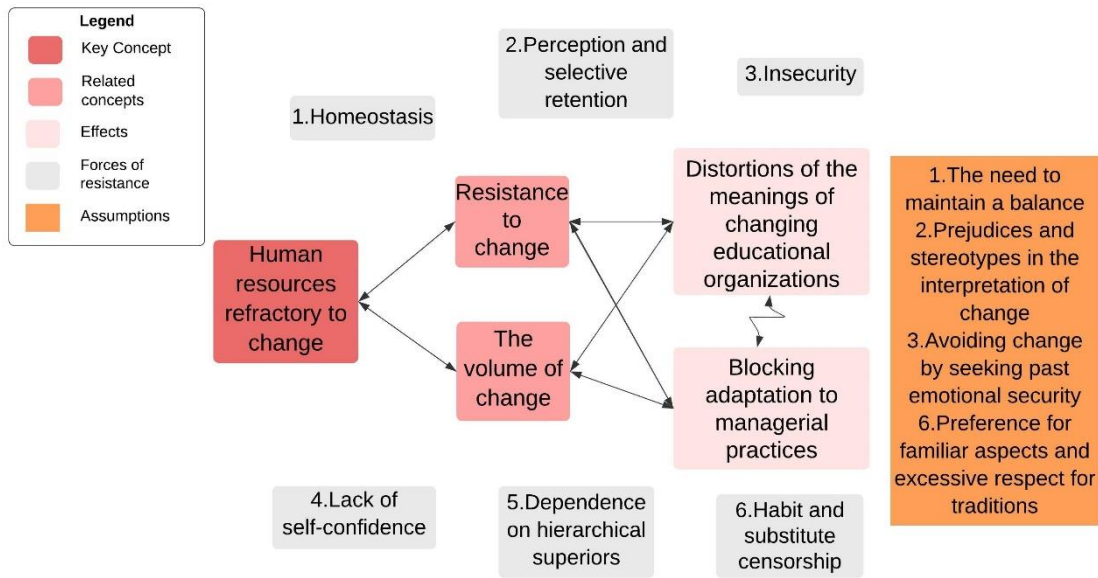

Figure no. 3. Behavioral patterns of human resources that need change and adaptation
Source: autors concept

To these forces the authors consider pertinent to add four individual variables, mentioned in Guskin's studies and which are common in the period of accommodation and adaptation of the educational system to the economic one. These are the sense of competence and vanity (fear of failure), authoritarianism and dogmatism, the feeling of threat and fear, self-fulfilling prophecies. The manifestation of these resistances, even if not in all the described forms, is unfortunately also found at the level of educational organizations. To these can be added eight reactions of refusal identified by the authors in specialized studies (Ibrahim and Aslinda), namely: refusal out of ignorance, refusal out of whim, refusal to maintain a status quo, refusal out of conformity to social grouping, refusal generated by interpersonal relationships, refusal by substitution, refusal due to lack of utility, refusal motivated by experience.

Although human resources reluctant to change are not willing to openly acknowledge the fear of failure, lack of confidence or vanity or active learning and superficialize the activity of educational management, they betray either ignorance, habit or insecurity. These can be considered psychological variables according to which individuals function and which manifest themselves in explicit behaviors.

3. Discussions

Regardless of whether they have their source individually or at the organizational level of the school, resistance to change must not be ignored, but the most effective ways to improve them must be sought, as they risk affecting the achievement of change objectives and ability to respond appropriately to social requirements. They cause moral and psychological wear and tear, although there are cases when their manifestation is fully justified. It is the case of unplanned changes or, more precisely, those that are not appropriate to the context of each organization, their needs and demands.

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the pace of change was slow, allowing the progressive evolution of ideas and values, it can be said that today the social environment and educational organizations are in a permanent dynamic, causing sudden changes that require anticipation. Achieving performance, development, adaptation of human resources require a knowledge effort aimed at acquiring knowledge, skills, but especially attitudes conducive to change.

The educational organization has become the paradigm of modern organizations, being, as stated by Spielberger, structures in which people have the ability to create the results they want by stimulating new ways of thinking, each having the freedom to aspire and learn how to adapt with others.

Most of the time, the content of the change is varied and complex, requiring sustained efforts, but also the recourse to a set of strategies that facilitate the correct acquisition of the change or its real production at a practical-applicative level. The role of the managers of the educational organizations is particularly important in this direction, as they are responsible for carrying out the strategic analyzes and applying the change at the level of the guided organization.

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Conclusions

In carrying out the process of adaptation at the level of the educational organization, it must be borne in mind that, above the requirements, principles or quality and necessity of innovations in education, change is made by human resources that can often show defensive attitudes towards of an aspect that they consider a real danger for their professional stability. These defensive attitudes need to be known and evaluated in terms of their intensity in order to anticipate the chances of adaptation, and consequently, of real implementation of change. Individual resistances become, by extrapolation, a mechanism of defense of the organization against transformative actions.

The perspective of systemic analysis is verified, the organization, tending to maintain its balance. For this reason, any transformation that occurs in this system involves the installation of a state of chaos or uncertainty until the restoration of balance. It can be said that the biggest paradox of change is the change itself, the fact that promoting the coherence of the system means nullifying the initial coherence. Also, the tensions manifested at the psychological level are often doubled by the nostalgia of the past, attitudinal conservatism, a real barrier to organizational change and adaptation.

Therefore, strategies to promote change must start from locating the motivation for this resistance. The important thing is that change is the expression of a voluntary behavior of individuals and the school organization as a whole, and not an added task, something imposed from the outside.

At the level of Romanian educational organizations, it is necessary to overcome the stimulus-response learning model. The demands of postmodernity force us to challenge change, to plan it rigorously and not to simply react to an external stimulus.

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