Controversies and Misunderstandings in the Issue of Assuming Responsibility for Changing Educational Organizations

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Abstract

The preparation of the change process involves concerns in the direction of the clarification of some aspects related to the identification of the problem and the definition of the conditions, the specification of the goals, and the elimination of false goals, as well as the verification of the feasibility of the change. Through multiple research methods, structured observations, survey techniques, and systematic analysis of documents, norms, and legislation specific to the quality of educational organizations, the present study offers, as an answer, implementation models of change. The result that emerges from the analysis is the following: at the level of educational organizations, the adaptation process has a multi-determined character (by the internal needs of the organization, which may concern the administrative, instructional-educational, managerial level or the requirements of the social environment), multidimensional (the change having strong psychological, educational, social, strategic influences), multilevel (targets both the individual and the organizational level).

Key words: planned organizational change, proactive attitude, resistance to change, organizational adaptation
J.E.L. classification: D83, I20, M12

1. Introduction

This study brings to attention the paradoxes that, from the perspective of other researchers, characterize the process of changing school organizations.

To better understand the nature of current contradictions and changes, it is relevant to consider the experiences and expertise of specialists.

The problem analyzed through the study's presentation reflects the situation of the Romanian educational system's national crisis against the allergic background of impotent political influences in a context in which many other systems, such as the economy, health, tourism, and others, are in one state of collapse.

If post-pandemic changes mean misalignment, there is a risk of imbalances and chaos. Therefore, the post-pandemic world is becoming unsafe, an insecurity that is accentuated by the use of information and communication technology tools. In this case, the nostalgia of educational institutions towards the past should not be surprising, even more so, as sometimes the change only targets external demands, like a wound healed from the outside, leaving the inside in tremendous suffering.

Regardless of whether they have their source in the individual plan or the organizational plan of the school, the resistance to change should not be ignored, but the most effective ways of improving them should be sought; the risk is that they will affect the achievement of the objectives of the change

and, last but not least, the ability to respond to social requirements adequately (Burlea-Schiopoiu, 2009). They produce moral and psychological wear and tear, although their manifestation is fully justified in some cases. It is the case of unplanned changes or, more precisely, those that are not appropriate to each organization's context, needs, and requests.

Organizational development begins to acquire increasing importance in terms of permanent learning for the individual as the leading solution for adapting to society's demands. If the pace of changes was initially slow, allowing the progressive evolution of ideas and values, today, the social environment and educational organizations are in a permanent dynamic, causing sudden changes that require anticipation. Achieving performance, development, and adaptation of human resources presupposes an effort to acquire knowledge and skills, especially attitudes favorable to change.

2. Literature review

The educational organization has become the paradigm of modern organizations, as stated by Sagie and Koslowsky (2000), structures in which people can create the results they want, stimulating new ways of thinking and having the freedom to aspire and learn how to adapt to others.

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

The adoption of changes in education implies the modification of the institutional philosophy, of its operating model, the assumption of responsibilities, but also an effort to penetrate the risks that arise from maintaining a bankrupt educational reality. Although it has clearly defined targets, change has not infrequently been found to have a mobile, non-linear trajectory, for which *learning to change* would generate vital experience in dealing with the unpredictable (Alehegn, 2020).

The actual content of this learning at the level of the educational organization is given by the concrete ways in which it can deal with change, more precisely, the promotion of strategies that facilitate the improvement of personal and organizational performance that reduce resistance to change, develop prospective capacity or training proactive skills. For this reason, it is essential to restate the demand for education through and for change at the individual level and the organization's level as a whole. If change cannot be avoided, it is important that we at least learn to deal with it (Lauzier er al., 2020).

The ways in which the organization can learn are among the most diverse. There is no need to clearly announce the moment from which learning begins or for the triumphant declamation of the content of this endeavor. The change must gradually insinuate itself into the life of the organization and its people, without glaring leaps, and by adopting compensatory mechanisms designed to soften the *shocks*.

The relativity of the idea of educational institutions' autonomy, which is discussed at the level of the educational system, must be considered. It shows up at the organizational level when a manager or member of the teaching staff is free to adapt their plans to the needs of the beneficiaries and employ instructional and managerial techniques that work well to accomplish the stated goals.

3. Research methodology

The school organization must take responsibility for coherent changes and the quality of managerial and educational acts. The diagnosis is relevant and must be carried out by the organizational development advisor to realize a viable project for the school organization's development. In the case of the school organization, the diagnosis task rests with the school manager and the management team at the organizational level. The diagnosis should target the two environments of the educational institution (Table No. 1).

Table no. 1 The analysis criteria for organizational change

The internal environment of the organization	The external environment of the organization
Mission, objectives	Opportunities
The type of organizational culture and climate	Existing threats at the level of the local community
The quality of the human resource and the degree of its motivation	Competing organizations
The quality of material resources	Society's requirements
The organization's ability to financially support its change	How school-community interactions are established
Managerial type and effectiveness	Competing organizations
The organization's ability to develop and carry out institutional development projects	Partnerships and projects
The quality of institutional processes	Legislation and new technologies

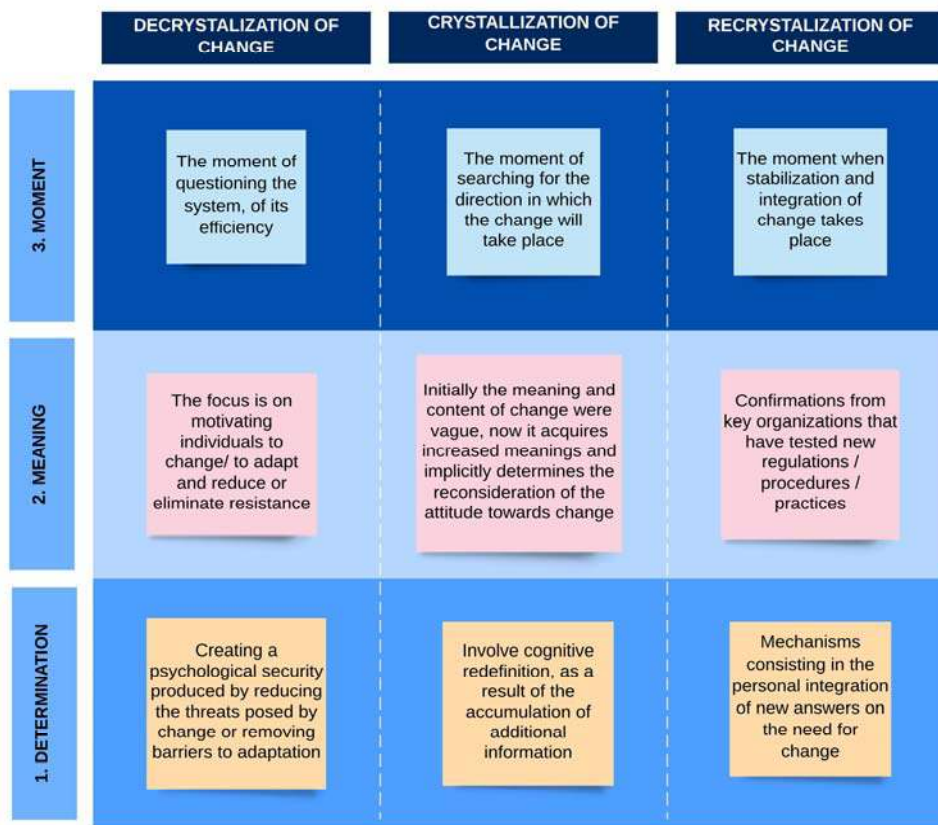*Source*: The authors' contribution

The relativity of the idea of educational institutions' autonomy, which is discussed at the level of the educational system, must be considered. It shows up at the organizational level when a manager or member of the teaching staff is free to adapt their plans to the needs of the beneficiaries and employ instructional and managerial techniques that work well to accomplish the stated goals. They represent the first and most important step in planning educational change.

According to organizational development experts, another idea that has recently gained traction is planned organizational change. It can be produced externally due to changes in technology, laws, or market competition or internally due to a collection of actions intended to alter people, groups, structures, or organizational procedures. After carefully analyzing the existing specialized theories regarding the change process, through their comparisons and revisions, the authors generate predictions that assume the passage of some stages, described in Figure No. 1, which are constituted at a given moment in accurate implementation models of the change.

Although pertinent through the objective perspective it provides in understanding moments of change, the phasing proposed by Levin and Schrum (2016) overlooks the need for rigorous planning.

In order to realize the importance and the complexity of this process, it is necessary to analyze its essential elements, described in what Constantin (2004) calls the stages of the intervention process for change and which are also perfectly valid for the school organization: the diagnosis phase, the preparatory phase of the change process, the planning phase, the implementation phase, and the impact evaluation phase. It is very important to identify the key components of the problem because unclear contractual policies and problem definitions frequently lead to resistance to change. At this point, inquiries about the nature of the activity are the most common. Analyzing most of the attempts to stage the planned organizational change, it is found that we can speak of three fundamental moments: the beginning of the change, which involves the preparation for change and the diagnostic analysis; an intermediate moment, for the implementation of innovative measures in practice, and a final moment, with the role evaluation of the quality of the results obtained. Although infallible rules for promoting change and no immanent models can be established, at the level of any school organization, there is a need to go through additional moments that escape the quoted authors.

Figure no. 1. The stages of the planned organizational change/adaptation process

	DECRYSTALIZATION OF CHANGE	CRYSTALLIZATION OF CHANGE	RECRYSTALIZATION OF CHANGE
3. MOMENT	The moment of questioning the system, of its efficiency	The moment of searching for the direction in which the change will take place	The moment when stabilization and integration of change takes place
2. MEANING	The focus is on motivating individuals to change/ to adapt and reduce or eliminate resistance	Initially the meaning and content of change were vague, now it acquires increased meanings and implicitly determines the reconsideration of the attitude towards change	Confirmations from key organizations that have tested new regulations / procedures / practices
1. DETERMINATION	Creating a psychological security produced by reducing the threats posed by change or removing barriers to adaptation	Involve cognitive redefinition, as a result of the accumulation of additional information	Mechanisms consisting in the personal integration of new answers on the need for change

Source: Adaptation and processing by the authors after Schein, 1992, 1996

The research adopted deductive approaches, with significant elements regarding examining the adaptation of change management in educational organizations, which emerge from the analysis of the empirical base found in the collected data and documents. Regarding the attitude of teachers towards change, the authors undertook quantitative research on a sample format of 100 employees of some educational institutions in Dolj County. After presenting the problem to the employees, using both face-to-face and questionnaire techniques and based on a thorough review of the current legislation, the survey results and their interpretation will provide details about the behavior change.

Figure no. 2. Distribution of the sample according to seniority in education
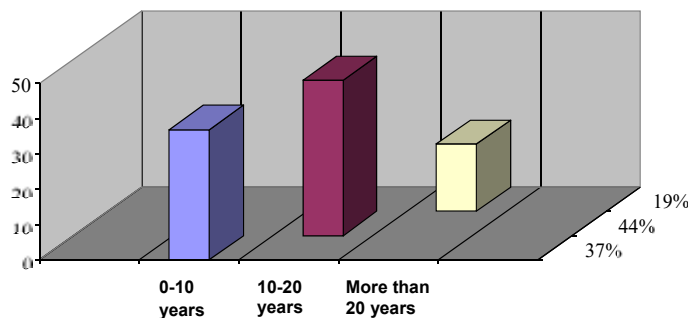
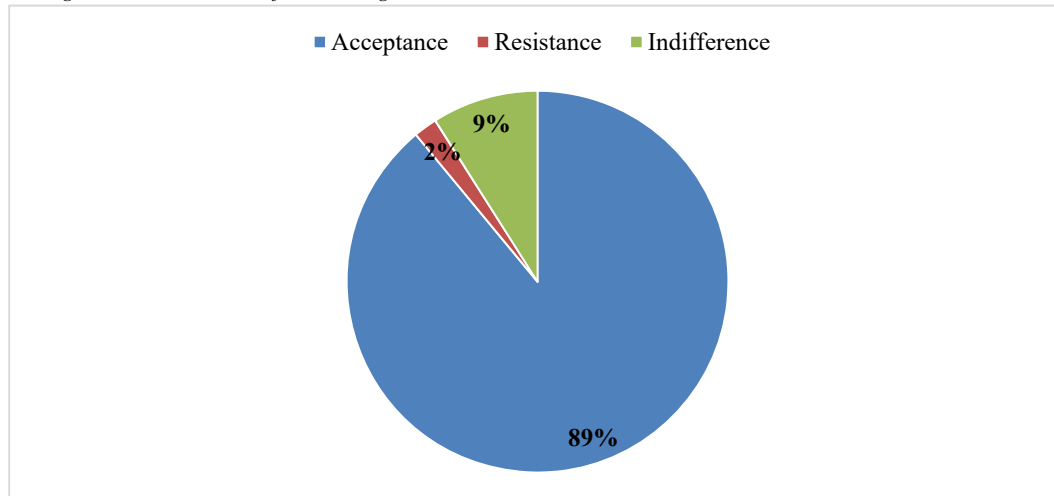*Source*: The authors' contribution

Following the analysis of Figure No.2, it can be seen that in the distribution of the sample according to seniority in education, most of the respondents have seniority between 10 and 20 years.

4. Findings

The investigation of teachers' perceptions of the change process confirms the hypothesis regarding the positive effects of accepting and embracing change on educational organizations. Within educational institutions, teaching staff consider it necessary and beneficial to implement change through responsible and assumed involvement.

The perception of the teaching staff selected in the research revealed an openness and willingness to change that was considered necessary by 89% of the respondents, while 9% were indifferent; they believed that the organization's situation would not be affected, regardless of the change. As shown in Figure No.3, only 2% showed resistance, considering that it is unnecessary and has a state of denial towards any form of change activity. The 98 respondents, those who accepted the change and those who showed indifference, thought the change was planned with great care.

Figure no. 3. The need for a change in the educational institution
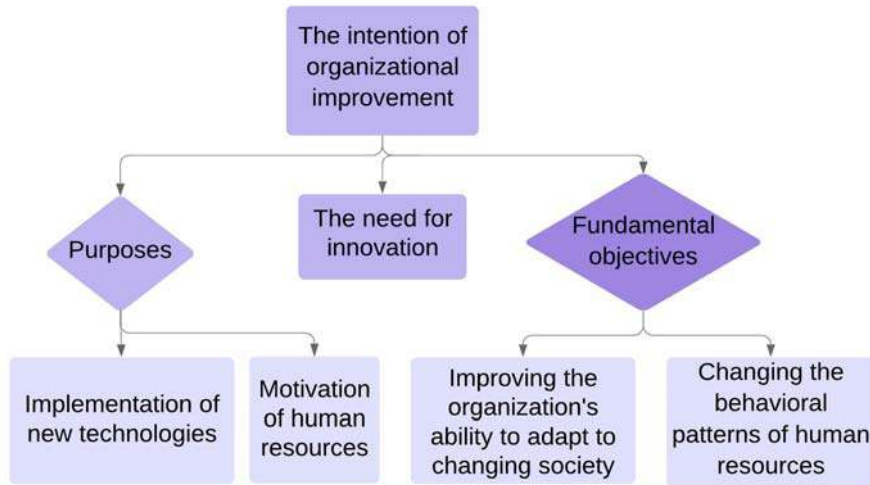

Source: The authors' contribution

Planned organizational change, considered as the intention of managers and employees to improve the functioning of groups, departments, or the entire organization in its important phases, is necessary to be based on specific goals (Figure no.4) and is oriented towards two fundamental objectives:

a) improving the organization's ability to adapt to changes in the environment in which it operates;

b) changing the behavioral patterns of employees.

Moreover, both are important for imposing change, the priority of its planning must be changing individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Promoting change in the presence of change-resistant behaviors is nonsense because the change of strategy, which would facilitate the organization's adaptation to the environment, becomes effective only in the conditions of proactive behavior (Burlea-Schiopoiu et al., 2011). In other words, the success of the process fundamentally depends on achieving the second objective (Kin and Kareem, 2017).

Figure no. 4. The new trend model for planning efficient organizational structures
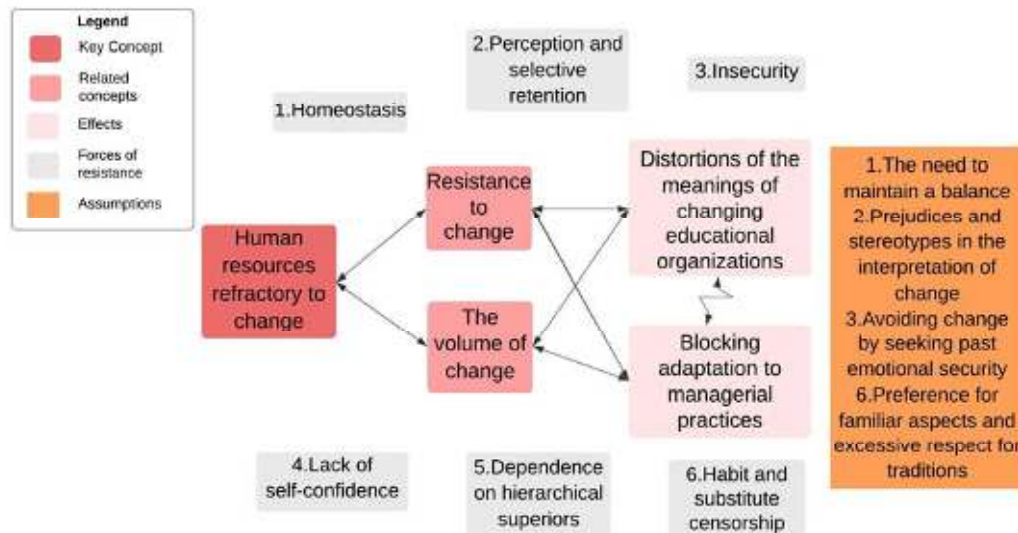

Source: The authors' contribution

Although rigorous planning for adaptive change does not guarantee absolute success, it is preferable to unplanned, unanticipated change, which risks failing miserably due to resistance to change (Burlea-Schiopoiu and Lefter, 2011; Clegg et al., 2021).

One justified reason for an interrogative attitude regarding the sincerity of the educational organization's acceptance of change is the finding of a major gap between the scenarios and adaptations promoted, on the one hand, and the concrete aspects of the organizational reality, on the other. In other words, change is not objectified in the mentality and in the organizational practice.

In an attempt to analyze the characteristics of human resources refractory to change, the authors concluded that the resistance to change is directly proportional to its volume to the amount of change requested, as can be seen from Figure no.5, a prediction that has among the confirmation forces the forces of resistance identified by Weiner (2020).

Figure no.5. Behavioral patterns of human resources that need change and adaptation

Source: The authors' contribution

To these forces, the authors consider it pertinent to add four individual variables mentioned in Guskin's studies (Fox, 2019), which are expected during the 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, and self-fulfilling prophecies.

The manifestation of these resistances, even if not in all the forms described, is unfortunately also found at the level of educational organizations. To these can be added eight reactions of refusal identified by authors in specialized studies, namely: refusal out of ignorance, refusal out of whim, refusal to maintain a status quo, refusal out of conformity to the social group, refusal generated by interpersonal relationships, refusal by substitution, refusal due to lack of utility, refusal motivated by experience (Rogers, 1964). Although human resources are reluctant to change and are unwilling to openly admit fear of failure, lack of confidence, 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.

5. Conclusions

During the adaptation process at the level of the educational organization, it must be taken into account that, above the requirements, principles, or the quality and necessity of innovations in education, the change is carried out by the human resources who, not infrequently, can 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 to anticipate the chances of adaptation and real implementation of the change.

Individual resistance becomes, by extrapolation, an organization's defense mechanism against transformative actions. The perspective of systemic analysis is verified, and the organization tends to preserve its balance. For this reason, any transformation that occurs in this system involves installing a state of chaos or uncertainty until the balance is restored.

Arguably, the greatest paradox of change is change itself, the fact that promoting system coherence involves undoing the original coherence. Also, the tensions manifested at the psychological level are most often doubled by nostalgia, attitudinal conservatism, a real barrier to change, and organizational adaptation.

Therefore, strategies to promote change must start with locating the motivation for this resistance. The change must represent the expression of voluntary behavior by individuals and the school organization, not an added task, something imposed from the outside. Within Romanian educational institutions, overcoming the stimulus-response learning model is imperative. The demands of postmodernity force change to be provoked, rigorously planned, and not simply to react to an external stimulus.

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