THE HUMAN FACTOR AND THE SUCCESS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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The topic chosen for this study regards the concept of change, associated nowadays with the notion of existence. Starting from statements according to which change involves the direct participation of the members of the organization, we have formulated the study hypothesis from the perspective of the symbolic-interpretative theories which sustain that social changes result from the interaction between organizations, their members and the social actors.
Using specialty literature, we have offered a pertinent sociological perspective on change processes. We have discussed different analysis perspectives and some models of change analysis. We have investigated, on the basis of a research launched in the Academy of Economic Studies, the willingness to change of some young students that will graduate soon and we have drawn conclusions useful for the educational process in the field of business management.

Key words: organizational change, models of change, dynamic models, willingness to change

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1. Mechanisms of organizational change

Organizational change represents an almost obsessive concern in the sociology of the organizations, maybe because of the importance paid to the bureaucratic slowness and rigidity or to the concrete problems permanently faced by the organization managers and by those responsible with the administrative reforms. In order to understand the mechanisms of organizational change and innovation, we should take into account, as M. Crozier and E. Friedberg[494] do, the created character of change. *Change is not natural: it is a problem that must be researched.* That is why we will discuss in the ollowing the next aspects:

a) change by crisis and adaptation: Michel Crozier and Erhard Frierberg[495] (op.cit.) state that an organizational system whose main characteristic is rigidity cannot adapt easily to change and consequently will tend to resist to any change. *Yet, the resistance to change, on which the organizational managers keep on insisting, is only an aspect of the bureaucratic problem, either public or private.* Their excessively centralized character makes change be considered a descendent trend, which should be applied uniformly and impersonally to the whole organization. Michel Crozier notices that from this fact results a crisis, often profound, which affects all the levels of the organization. The period of crisis is accompanied by unexpected behaviours: personal authority tends to replace the rules and the members are constraint to obey the arbitrary of some of them. The readjustments of the system of bureaucratic organization are operated by the means of such a crisis. Consequently, these involve not necessarily a transformation, but an adaptation meant to contribute to the continuity and development of the system of bureaucratic organization. It results that this system is formed not only from routine procedures, as we used to think, but also from short periods of crisis that fuel, by the adjustments they facilitate, the long stability phases.

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[494] Crozier M., Friedberg E., L'acteur et le système, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1977.
[495] Crozier M., Frierberg E. – op. cit.

In the last chapter of the book *L'Administration en Miettes,* Francois Dupuy and Jean-Claude Thoenig[496] develop a similar point of view, analyzing the existence of mechanisms of adaptation in the French administration. Thus, the negotiated arrangements or the successive adjustments that eventually prove a great flexibility of the administration are meant only to avoid some more profound changes: administration "adapts by not changing".

b) change by collective learning: Crozier and Friedberg suggest that any type of change action is conditioned by the discovery and acquirement of some new collective capacities, new ways of thinking, new modalities of living together. Change means thus learning, especially learning a different way of cooperation - that is of inventing and establishing new "game" models. Imposing a model from outside or from above is replaced by involvement in a collective process, in which individuals and groups become actors of change.

Yet, this way to conceive change is confronted with a series of obstacles. The first of them consists of the previous structure of the concrete systems of action. The actors acquired abilities and competences related to this structure. This allows solving certain problems, but represents an obstacle for the collective learning, as it structures the participants' experience, their ways of thinking and acting, conditioning thus their capacities to invent new "game" rules. However, do all the organizations succeed in favouring a collective change process?

The answer offered by Crozier and Friedberg can seem paradoxical at a first glance, as the most favorable changes prove to be the organized assemblies in which there are many vicious circles – these are the most diversified assemblies. Indeed, where there is a redundancy of the vicious circles, the rigidity is lower because each of them put a weaker pressure on the system on the whole. At its turn, the system is less dependent on each of the regulation mechanisms it established and is not profoundly affected if one or more of them are broken. The multiplicity of the vicious circles produces within the organization new intervention limits. Change is thus facilitated by the game of the integration mechanisms. For Crozier and Friedberg, both the solution and the difficulty of change consist in breaking the existent vicious circles and in establishing some new ones. On the contrary, the poor diversified organizations, such as army, maintain themselves by strict constraints: coercions, a simplistic ideology etc. These types of rigid organizations cannot afford the smallest change without risks: this would affect the whole assembly and would lead to a crisis.

Does this mean that, according to Crozier and Friedberg, change can be done without crisis? We could doubt it, as well as we could regard skeptically the criteria on the basis of which it can be established if we deal with a reproduction or a transformation of the system of action. Despite of these, such an analysis draws attention on the fact that change is an open process that remains contingent.

c) change as a form of development: The change analysis proposed by *Renaud Sainsaulieu[497]* develops around the concept of development, largely used by economists interested in the future of the third world societies. Renaud Sainsaulieu transfers in the field of enterprises the concept according to which the development and the changes it involves can result only from certain local initiatives based on the progressive learning of other production and management practices. This conception on the change attributes an essential role to the cultural phenomena: they will determine the learning possibilities. Following Crozier and Friedberg, Renaud Sainsaulieu considers that the social development of an enterprise results not necessarily from an action change decided *ex nihilo,* but from a series of complex collective reactions to the pressures of the external environment and of the internal functioning. The common strategic „games" and the cultural adjustments they favour can contain thus a dynamic of the learning and can bear creativity and renewal.

Understanding change as development seems to be from many points of view a variant of change as an effect of learning. Indeed, this last term is in the centre of the both approaches. Undoubtedly, Renaud

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[496] Francois Dupuy and Jean-Claude Thoenig, L'Administration en Miettes, Paris, Fayard, 1985.
[497] Renaud Sainsaulieu, *L'identité au travail, Presse de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris, 1985.*

Sainsaulieu's approach is interesting, as it pays special attention to the existent resources, to the processes on the verge to begin, to the already started transformations and to their chances to spread and generalize. A similar perspective oriented also the hypotheses of a research programme focused on the analysis of the innovations within the public services. This programme followed especially the identification of the local renewal resources, as well as of the modalities to generalize them.

Yet, this latter approach delimitates from the strategic analysis, understanding change not as a crisis, as adaptation or as development, but as manifestation of multiple shifts and inter-shifts of the actors, cognitive schemes and involved tools. Renewal can be thus done in different ways, according to the resources used by actors in those organizations. On the other hand, the notion of shift, inspired by Michel Callon[498] and Bruno Latour[499], offers a more flexible framework for understanding various innovations and changes, drawing attention on the way some of them are acquired and consequently modified.

d) change and modernization: The common feature of the above mentioned papers is that all of them consider change as a problem and propose a conceptualized interpretation for it. Things are different with the notion of modernization that gained field at the end of the '80s, as an attribute of some different change processes, initiated both in the private enterprises, and in the public administration.

The notion of modernization has multiple meanings. It covers a diversity of actions, whose compatibility is not necessarily self-understood: investments in sophisticated technical material, redefinition of the relations with the clients or with the users, labour reorganization, applying the quality circles and other la important managerial techniques in Japan, communication campaigns aimed at modifying the internal and external enterprise image, etc. Moreover, it sends to different debates, as it is approached from the point of view of the public policies analysis and of the organizational sociology, or from the point of view of labour sociology and economy.

2. Models of change

The theories of the classical management and of the early modernism have always been focused on the idea of finding instruments of motivation, of knowing the organizations from the point of view of performance.

In these theories oriented towards stability, changes used to be seen as the result of the intention to do a good thing, more routine, more structure, and more rationality. A perspective focused on change gradually replaced the dominance of the views centered on stability, and all the three perspectives of the organizational theory embrace more now the dynamic ideas regarding the processes of the organization. On the other hand, in the post industrial societies, the interest for change has become more spread. More theoreticians believed that economic and technical changes were meant to lead to new organizational forms, such as the global structures and networks, but this idea did not prove to be true.

Modernists explained the needs for the new organizational forms in the terms of environmental change, without taking into account the predictions of the permanent and fast changes in products, markets, technology and society. In order to keep pace, the organizations had to be modeled for change and the organizational theories needed dynamic methods to be described and explained. As change has been more and more accelerated, theoreticians realized that the static models, although useful once, proved to be often inadequate.

All the symbolic-interpretative researches in the organizational theory are based on the dynamic methods because the processes of social construction regard aspects of the day-to-day life, which reproduce the existent structures and circumstances, or lead to their alteration. According to the

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[498]Michel Callon, Réseaux tehnico-économiques et irreversibilité, Les figures de l'irreversibilité en économie, Paris, Ed. De L'Ecole des Etudes en Sciences, 1991.
[499]Bruno Latour, *Organizational Studies, Critical Perspectives on Business and Management,* Edited by Warwick Organizational Behavior Staff, London, 2001.

symbolic-interpretative perspectives, organization is not a static entity, but rather a dynamic process in a permanent state of change. Similarly, the postmodernist view upon fragmentation and chaos rejects the vision of stability in the favour of a paradox of stability / change within the organizations. Thus, as the organizational theory continues to develop towards the directions defined by the symbolic-interpretative and postmodernist researches, the notion of organization is replaced by that of organizing, this change being called by Weick many years ago as the "theory of inaction".

Anyway, it should not be believed that modernism is left away by the discourse regarding the organizational change. On the contrary, the evolutionist and development models, such as population ecology and the organizational theories of the life cycle have become more and more sensitive and dynamic to change. Moreover, the recent discoveries as regards the theory of systems introduce ideas about the own reproduction and the own reference system of the organizational theory, which contribute to creating a new metaphor – learning organization. This metaphor challenges the ex modernist models of organizational change that assumed that the organization adapts to external pressures. Instead of these ones, they suggest that the organization creates its own internal dynamics which is described as a process of the organizational learning.

In order to illustrate the evolution of the way of thinking as regards the organizational change we will start with a first model of planned organizational change – Kurt Lewin's model: "unfreezing – change – freezing" – and we will continue with the "Big Tree" model that offers an example of the dynamic and evolutionist thinking about change from the perspective of the modernist trend.

a) *Lewin's model*

Kurt Lewin[500] developed a theory of social change that defines the social institutes as equilibrium of forces, some of them favouring change, and others restricting it. According to Lewin stability was not defined by the forces opposable to change, but it was rather a dead end between the pro and con forces. Lewin's theory was more a theory of stability than of change because he defined change as an instability that interrupts a stable equilibrium. According to Lewin's model, change involves three separate activities: *unfreezing* that melts the equilibrium sustaining the stability of the institutes; *change* that involves influencing the direction of movement in the system that was unbalanced by the unfreezing and *freezing* that takes place when the new behavioural patterns become stable or institutionalized.

b) Change according to the Big-Tree model

Kanter, Stein and Jick[501] called Lewin's model "the model of the organization as an ice cube", criticizing it as a static and linear concept that reduces an extraordinarily complex process to a childish formula. They state that change is ubiquitous and multidirectional and that is why Lewin's model cannot reach the level of complexity necessary for analyzing the phenomenon of the organizational change.

Kanter and his colleagues sustain that according to Lewin's model organizational change is seen only as an application of the efforts concentrated in a single direction, at a certain moment. Their theory considers change multidirectional and more or less continuous. What apparently has stability at the surface is an unfelt or unprovoked change.

Kanter and his colleagues had divergences as regards the concepts of organization that do not fit the conditions of apparent stability, considering necessary a new understanding of the organizations and management. For instance, rather than planning and directing change as in Lewin's model, the

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[500] Kurt Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology, McGraw – Hill Book Company Inc., New York, 1936.*
[501] Kanter, Stein and Jick, *The Challenge of organizational change: How companies experience it and leaders guide it,* Free Press, New York, 1992.

manager's duty within in a new organization is to react to, exploit and generate change. For the new organizations, Kanter and his colleagues presented their own Big-Tree model.

The Big-Tree model demonstrates as a variety of key concepts and theories produced by the theoreticians of the organization can be combined to form an integral explanation of the organizational change. In this regard, Kanter and his colleagues presented a theory of the relation between organization, environment, social structure, organizational culture and physical structure. What is intriguing at the Big-Tree model is the fact that it is built on evolutionist models, as a base for the theory of organizational change. In contrast with Lewin's model, there is not a single agent of change in the Big-Tree model. According to it, change is implemented during the process of organizing, which is sustained by a multitude of forces.

Kanter and his colleagues define organizations as a "bunch of activities" that are modified together with the change of the activities or when are included new unities and individuals. They sustain that this influence on the activity is restrained and the change takes place at the all three levels of analysis specified by the organizational theory – environment, organization and individual.

While Kanter and his colleagues present a theory of change considered more complex than Lewin's, it is not clear that their point of view is as dynamic as they state. Thus, they present only another picture of other combined theories and this picture is itself at level 1 (a non-dynamic system). Another reason can be the fact that the researches in this field are focused on the transmission of the patterns of organizational change, rather that on the change at the ordinary level of the day-to-day life in an organization. In other words, they incorporate the theories of the life cycle and of the ecologic population less dynamic than it happens in the symbolic-interpretative and post-modernist perspectives.

3. Research regarding the young people's willingness to change

The discussion upon the organizational change cannot avoid its relation with the organizational members. Under these circumstances, it is natural to know the effects produced by change and the modalities through which we can educate the individual's capabilities related to change.

Aiming to promote the psychological advantages at the workplace, J.M. Burns[502] draws attention on the fact that both the employees and the management should learn how to effectively face change. Burns offers a concept of change through which he recommends to know ourselves and to develop personal strategies, more efficient in conflict with the stress. He says that people generally prefer stability, but nowadays each of us should become more skillful to adapt to the fast change of the labour environment. The common stress factors at the workplace should be identified and where possible the stress sources should be reduced and eliminated.

According to Burns, the potential stress factors are: *problems of career development*; *lack of safety at the workplace; too many or too less responsibilities at the workplace; inability to adapt to the new work practices; boring or unchallenging work*; *weak management support; lack of the required qualities; inability to use the existent qualifications; inappropriate preparation /requalification; lack of involvement in the decision-making process*; *lack of socio-emotional support/counselling; rumors about future changes; uncertainty regarding future.*

Each individual should face the stress challenge. Colleagues, friends, family and experts can help by offering information and emotional support. Burns draws attention on the necessity to practice a positive management, a positive self-coordination including the relaxation techniques, appropriate diet and sleep patterns, physical exercises, time planning. It is important to cultivate the self-confidence and to overcome the anxieties and fears by the means of increasing the capacity to give up the negative and self-destructive thoughts.

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[502] Burns J.M., Strategies and the Management of Organizational Change – a strategic alignement model, Journal of Information Technology, nr. 8, 1993, www. palgrave-journals.com.

Education plays an important part in enhancing the individuals' chances to face the process of organizational change. In this regard, we have tried to investigate the willingness to change of some students of the Academy of Economic Studies by carrying out a survey that took into account the students of the Faculty of Business Management taught in foreign languages, where we delivered the course of Change Management.

We used the questionnaire proposed by Liz Clarke (Managementul schimbării - Ghid practic privind producerea, menţinerea şi controlul schimbării într-o firmă sau organizaţie), on a sample of 97 students. The questionnaire allowed us to frame the respondents in four categories: *heroes* – who distinguish themselves through real capacities of coordination and even leadership (14 %), *artisans* – who pay little interest to the routine tasks of the management activities as they dedicate most of their time to carrying out the product or the service (39%), *strategists* – having the most recommendable style for approaching change and developing the business (36%) and *pedants* – who are concerned with study, who spend time to solve problems, but who are also attracted by details, almost insignificant (11 %).

Conclusions

All the information provided by the past experiences creates the necessary and useful framework – even if it is not complete – to manage changes that will take place in our organizations. The success of our actions is decisively influenced by the capacity of the human resources to understand the specific of change, its nature and the actions to follow in each step. The development of the human resources starting from this request is a strategic axis that cannot be ignored without condemning us to economic, social and cultural stagnation with extremely harmful long-term consequences.

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