

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – THE APPLICATIVE CONTEXT OF THE FACTORS WHICH DECISIVELY INFLUENCE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL ACT

Emil LAZĂR¹, Ionel Florian LIXANDRU²

Abstract

Romanian pre-university education, is at the point when it needs a rethinking, a reconsideration, a change. We speak about a necessity imposed by the endogenous factors of system, but required by external aspects of educational system, by the interaction of education with social subsystems and challenges humanity.

The article proposes a definition of change, of the structural elements susceptible to the change process and of the systematic approach, according to which this change may take place within Romanian pre-university education.

Key words: *Change management in education; Levels of change; The transforming change in education.*

1. Premises of educational change management

As meaning, *management* signifies a process (the activity exercised by people over others, to determine them to do what it has to be done), the decisional factor (authority, competences, responsibilities), science (set of knowledge, skills and attitudes connected with the structure and the development directions of an organisation).

Speaking of educational management, E. Păun, (1999, p. 142), sustains that "it reunites all basic features of organizations management", that's why "is more important to identify those characteristics which customize and differentiate it: the moral-axiological dimension (it cannot ignore the educational finalities and values tablet, according to which they are established), the substance of educational management being constituted by the mobilization of human resources, cantered upon a human dimension, the major objective of educational management being the valorisation of human entity and its capacities, it refers to persuasion ethic, that leads to individual freedom and responsibility ethic, which presupposes honest assumption of responsibilities, it develops between centralization and decentralization, between centralism and decentralization measures (at least, in terms of Romanian education)" (*ibidem*, pp. 142-144).

The field of education has been submitted for several decades to a lot of reforms and modifications of its values, in reference to:

¹ Senior Lecturer PhD., Teacher Training Department, University of Craiova, Romania, e-mail address: lazaremile@gmail.com, corresponding author.

² PhdC, University of Bucharest, Romania, e-mail address: lixandru_florin@yahoo.com.

- the „modernization” of its performance;
- the adjustment to social demand;
- the reduction of operating cost;
- and, finally, the increase of the ”performance” (the beneficiaries’ success, the striving against school dropout, gaining fundamental knowledge, persuasion, courses attendance during higher education, international ranking etc.)”.

Modification and reform involve a *changes management* and it refers to how to lead and organize evolution and/ or the transformation of a completed collective action. Such an approach takes into account:

- Managing change implementation: instruments and mechanisms/ devices (a vision based on resources), which means:
 - ✓ Designing a strategy, defining objectives, project management, plans, budgets;
 - ✓ Work setup structures, procedures and processes, information systems;
 - ✓ Assessment of collective and individual performances.
- Managing individuals and their preoccupations: meaning and values (a human-centred vision), which means:
 - ✓ Creating meanings, innovations, values change, collective projects;
 - ✓ Change management, new forms of work setup, individual and collective motivations, conflict/ cooperation;
 - ✓ Assessing the change impact.

To be noted that both visions are useful and found within managerial practice. The emphasis on one or the other, the predominance of one over the other, are consequences of social contexts within which organizations evolve.

It is necessary for educational management to benefit from the contribution of both visions, especially in the conditions of inverted relations between society as system and education as social subsystem.

The vision that has human being in its centre, a personalist approach, promotes ”common reglementation” (Reynaud, 1997, *apud* Păun, 1999, p. 34), considered to be a process of elaborating the ”rules of game” that allows the appearance of relations of trust and cooperation. *Common reglementation* implies management and staff. It involves juxtaposition and transformation of some collections of tools and of some *examples* of different approaches.

That’s why, at the heart of common reglementation there are “the legal formalities that have to be replaced in relation with practice”, (Ungureanu, 2015, p. 9), beginning with the reality that ”in each individual is stored *the collective* in the form of sustainable dispositions, such as mental structure”, (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 29).

The common reglementation within an organization, and the principle is also valid in the case of School, derives from an extensive organizational culture, that is based on an accumulation structure.

One way of reglementation establishes a ”set of procedures and individual and collective behavioural model that have to simultaneously reproduce social relationships”, (*ibidem*, p. 30). In guiding collective or individual behaviour, there are *three principles of action of institutional forms*: the law (understood as rule or

reglementation), negotiation (sometimes in the form of compromise) and the set of values, representations or routines.

The reglementation operates in two forms:

- a) in the form of management systems (a reglementation of control), involving:
 - mission and projects;
 - structures and hierarchy;
 - rules and procedures;
 - standards and formal values;
- b) pursuing individual and group dynamic (autonomic reglementation) referring to:
 - motivations and real objectives;
 - interpersonal networks;
 - behaviours;
 - norms and real values.

Between the two forms, there functions a common reglementation, daily operated by managers.

Organization, as an open system, is described by Alexandre-Bailly (Alexandre-Bailly *et. al*, 2016, *apud* Chomienne, 2019) with *principal variables* organized through strategic management:

- „organizational devices (structures, informational systems, rules and procedures);
- organizational culture/ cultures;
- values;
- behaviour of generic actors;
- environment”.

These variables give a complex, unpredictable character, which is the object of study of strategic management.

Within the strategic management there may be encountered a formal organization (strategy, values, setup, available resources, instruments), but also an informal organization (interpersonal relations networks, practices and habits, national and professional cultures, individual norms and values, conflicts and collaborative relations, feelings, needs, motivations, real power and prestige, social climate).

2. Change management in education

2.1. The transforming change in education

An important *variable* for an organization is *change*. This means that *transformation* (“the transformation of the relations with others; results the creation of new rules (...). To change means to transform the ways through which things, relations, statuses are realized”, (Bernoux, 2004, *apud* H. Chomienne, 2019).

Change is understood as an informal and/ or formal process:

- in the form of a difficult to control evolution, emergent and progressive (even diffuse) of representations, behaviours, practices and values;
- or as a succession of steps that is necessary to be mastered, which leads to the unfolding or the transformation of formal devices (structures, rules, tools).

In Table 1, is presented a typology of change situations that influences the process, considered on two axes, at the meeting of which result two approaches: a planned, proposed, directed one, the other continuous, effect of contingency, incremental (of rising, development in time and interaction, of addition, progress):

Table no 1. A typology of change situations that influences the process

(Source: Autissier and Moutot (2016); Autissier *et al.* (2018))

	Imposed change	Negotiated change
Permanent change	Organised change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ is necessary the change of objectives, because these are vague; ▪ experiments have deadlines set by the leadership and actors identify objectives. 	Continuous change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ emergent modifications in behaviour, practices to change working methods.
Change as rupture	Channelled/ directed change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ tailor-made solutions with strong constrains and implementations deadlines 	Proposed change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ results and program are set by management, ethos and arbitrations are set by actors.

There can be identified two main alternative logics of change:

- a) „a directed change (involving a planned approach) based on:
- a framed, clear vision of desired future and how to get there;
 - precise definition of the organization’s elements that are to be modified to get to this vision;
 - key-players make decisions up to bottom;
 - the existence of a relatively small space for manoeuvre left for the actors, who need to implement and adapt.
- b) a continuous change (sequel of an interpretative approach) beginning with:
- an open flexible vision of desired future and how to get there;
 - definition of a participative approach to co-build the modifications which have to be done;
 - the desire to highlight new behaviours through common diagnosis and decisions;
 - a great freedom of action for the actors to nurture each creativity and autonomous behaviour, experiments”, (*apud* Vandangeon-Derumez, 1998, and Autissier *et al.*, 2016).

It is obvious the useful desirable manner for the change. Reality proves, at least social Romanian reality, that directed change and of rupture one, are the most common.

Planned change is a formalized process in successive stages:

- a) Diagnosis and definition of change (Context: why?, where?; Content: what?, who; Process: when?, how?);

- b) Co-building and/ or communicating change (gives meaning, informs, changes, explains, experiments);
- c) Training during change project (training for displaying, assurance, support);
- d) Management of concerns/ change (implementation, observation of produced effects and strategies, management, resistance/ resiliency, cooperation);
- e) Transformation management (assessment, adjusting, anchoring in daily reality).

But a reality is consists of contingencies, interactions, negotiations and adjustments, and then, management of transformations become *integrating changes and practices*.

We can distinguish, within change management, amongst three elements: the context (intern and extern), *change process/ process of change* (actions, reactions and interactions, actors affected by change) and *change content* (areas subjected to change), (Brouwers *et al.*, 1997).

Educational change is strongly connected to *the organizational climate of School and its culture/ cultures*.

From this perspective, change refers to "myths and beliefs, symbols, ceremonies and rituals, the system of metaphors and specific language, system of values and norms", (Higgins, 1991, p. 65).

Educational change may be *unplanned* (unscheduled, evolving, exceeding the will of leadership), *planned* (scheduled, reactive), *imposed* (when all alternatives have been exhausted, may generate a lot of dissatisfaction and resentments, can end up at the same time with "the disappearance of the power source or in lack of adequate sanctions"), *negotiated* (depends on a certain strategy, is collaborative, demands receptivity from generic actors and dialogue), *participatory* (needs a much more time, is durable, "favours the implementation of change and participants' adherence to change process"), (*apud* Nedelcu, 2015, pp. 24-25).

A. M. Huberman (1978, p. 20) appreciated that "educationally we can talk about of at the following levels: individual perceptions, teaching-learning process, institutional system, environment".

In this regard, the quoted author saw as types of changes within school systems:

- "material changes (those which complete and modernize material base, equipment and didactic materials);
- outlook changes (which refer to elements related to principles, didactic methodologies);
- changes within interpersonal relations", (*ibidem*, p. 20).

The profile of a "School open to change" involves characteristics such as *clearness and acceptance of objectives, satisfactory communication, optimal equalization of power, cohesion, efficient use of resources, capacity of innovation, adjustment, ability to solve problems*.

As certainty and clearness are preferred, there occur two questions, the answers to which involve an extended analysis:

- Why do not all changes succeed?

- At what levels do blockages "happen"?

Within educational managerial practice there are blockages at the organizational level ("fixed positions, manager's limits, lack of specific proactivity", P. Senge, 2016), at individual level (stereotypical thinking, "double thinking, dissociation between official thinking and intimate thinking of the individual, who thinks and acts differently within private context, informal, and within the official one, formal", G. Orwell, formal adherence to change, "thinking by mandate, when the individual offer solutions not because this is the way he judges the situation, but because this it should be, he is being asked, he would be close to what would managers ask for", (cf. Lerbet), lack of conviction that change is necessary).

Change in education "should be consistent with *quality* and value, all the more as the effects of this change reflect upon students' training but also upon teachers and school in generally", (Scurtu, 2015, p. 17). That is why "*value* becomes the essential motive in critical identification and assessment of main educational changes, in analysing how they are structured, in detecting possible technical contradictions they may cause", (*ibidem*). Change means, within this context, increased, added value.

2.2. Change management in education

A change management implies "a methodology", which promotes change:

- „identifying the factors that trigger change;
- recognizing the need of change;
- diagnosticating the problem;
- identifying the methods and alternatives through which change can be achieved;
- presenting the existent conditions;
- choosing the method;
- overcoming the change resistance;
- implementing and coordinating change", (Ivancevich and Gibson, 1989, p. 302, *apud* Andronache, 2012, p. 193).

The function of change, implicitly of change management, is, in essence, corrective, ameliorative, optimizing. It follows the categories of phenomena encountered in "the life" and activity of the organization.

- "objective phenomena through which there are solicited the elimination or at least, subduing the existing dysfunctions in organization.
- subjective phenomena, generated by certain organizational deficiencies, and involving the improvement of management towards their elimination", (Scurtu, 2015, p. 20).

Change management in education may be defined as a coherent, systemic administration of the transformations required/ claimed by reporting to the society to which educational system belongs, or by internal requests of its internal organization, for its efficiency and effectiveness.

The notion itself, change management, is imposed by social changes and by their projection within educational system, is of social origin and socially grounded,

even if through pedagogical, financial and instrumental-acting mechanisms and levers.

School is, in the light of *Europe Strategy 2020*, Education and Training, as "education organization within school education as integrated learning system", which involves:

- „a clear vision of the quality of education, with common values regarding the development of school, teachers and students;
- an approach concerning student-based making-decision, to create significant learning experiences and environments that contribute to the child's general development;
- collaborative decision-making processes, which imply trust and sustained dialogue among various stakeholders at all system levels, as well as, promoting a sense of commitment, responsibility and accountability;
- school development as learning organization that supports efficient decisional process and becomes context for a research process and of permanent development at local level;
- contribution to policies that support very trustful and competent professional communities, recognition of teachers and school managers as key-agents for change, promoting shared leadership, collaboration and innovation, as well as investments in reinforcing the abilities that will motivate their on-going development, to ensure high-quality teaching and learning;
- generating and usage of different types of data from different parts of the system, which can contribute to a better identification of strengths and domains that need improvement;
- elaborating, proper policies, meaning that these, directly respond to change needs within the system, with specific implementation processes, with adequate duration, as well as coherence with other current policies, for a sustained and renewed change", (C.E., *Professional Education and Training 2020*, 2019, p. 6).

That is why a school should be characterized by *the capacity of sustainable change*, that refers to structural components, such as: *quality assurance, continuity and transitions in students' development, human resource and management, school results*.

The priorities of educational change management, are considered to be: *planning, change monitoring and assessment, beyond implementation* phases.

Change management within social field, generally, and within education especially, operates with contingent and complementary realities and concepts such as: change administration, change anticipation, vision, change planning, the nature of change.

At the same time, there are found wrong and unfit realities: discontinuity, defective management, preconceived optics (selective retentions), wrongful replacements (substitutions), limited viability of change, inadequacy, deficiency, defective organizational communication, control intensification, lack of vision on change, ("managers tend to analyse the change process from one point of view, the other options being excluded; this limitation of perspectives, inevitably leading to

limiting the access to levers of change”, Tichy, 1999, p. 86, *apud* Cherechean, 2010, p. 126).

„Some outstanding leaders have a vision for their school – a mental image for a desirable future – that is shared to all members of educational community”, sustain Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989, p. 99), while ”in practice, many visions are in fact generalized educational objectives”, (Bolam *et al.*, 1993, *apud* Bush, 2015, p. 15).

For the Romanian educational system, change meant and still means, the connection to European educational practices, beginning with its recognized traditions. This connection involves *reorientation and reconsideration of educational management*, ”anchoring educational institutions within community reality, the individualization and streamlining of educational act, Romanian contributions to the identity of European education” (Scurtu, 2015, p. 21).

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