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# CHANGE MANAGEMENT - THE KEY TO MODERNIZATION AND EFFICIENCY OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

**Abstract.** *The process of organizational change is a continuous and inevitable process that is associated with change management and presumes the overall creation, management and evaluation of changes within an organization. Changes can take the configuration of news, adjustments, optimizations, as well as excluding past errors to achieve the expected results. On the other hand, this activity involves functions of coordination, organization and control of conducting the introduction activity of change until the system operates in its new state. The changing process is a cumulative one that is repeating and restructuring on the go, being considered as well extremely complex, but at the same time, capable of generating new processes much more qualitative and modern.*

*In the research was applied the methodology of: evolutionary analysis of managerial processes, classification, synthesis, analogies and the method of scientific abstraction.*

*Remediation of the higher education system as a process presumes applying the principles of change management through the modification of organizational structure, implementation of technologies and mechanisms of operation for all the components of this system, in accordance with the new ideas of the subjects, those being the managers. Only such a radical or dimmed change ensures the increase of universities independence and their transition to full-fledged market relations as a subject of concurrency on the educational services market.*

**Keywords:** *change management, modernization, higher education system.*

## Introduction

The modernization in the context of higher education institutions has to be understood as a systematic interaction of the management subjects at different levels so as to ensure the functioning in an efficient way of the organization, since the philosophy of influence is nowadays being substituted by a new doctrine in the field of management that is based on the activities of cooperation and interaction.

Under this circumstance, the change management is a new strategy of systematic networking and planning, the achievement of which requires influencing the organizational structure, culture of the organization and individual behavior, thus creating successful situations for both employers and employees of higher education institutions.

In the last decades, the national education system has experienced multiple attempts of reforming and modernizing. During this period of endless reform, the possibilities for changing management, technologies and evaluation outcomes in education have been explored. New leaders have emerged with modified professional attitudes and skills, committed to bring multiple changes in education, but they also face various obstacles. At the same time, there are many potential leaders outside the educational system who deeply understand the responsibility for change and who could participate at the process of changing if a space for interaction would be created. As a result, the educational system requires the application of change management in the aspirations to become a truly modern system.

**Literature Review**

The concept of "change" is a new one in the science of management, although it is believed to have roots before the human civilization realized that progress is based only on change. Still in ancient times, more than 500 years B.C. Heraclitus insisted on the philosophical idea that "nothing in this world is constant except change". Today every manager recognizes that without change there is no life and progress, and this presupposes a constant adaptation to new conditions, because as the contemporaries say, even the development of the entire universe does not support the states of stability, because there are only two paths – progress and regression, and to make progress great efforts are needed  (Sendrea M., 2015; Newton R., 2009).

Organizational change, as a process, is as old as ate the organizations, and although change management is a relatively mature element in the professional segment, there exist several interpretations of this expression. According to modern researchers, change management defines a whole set of processes, tools, techniques, methods, and approaches for achieving a desired final state through change. Change management focuses on a successful transition from one state to another and involves creating, managing and evaluating changes in an organization as a whole. Changes can take the configuration of some news, adjustments, optimizations, as well as the exclusion of past errors (Newton R., 2009). In other order of ideas, organizational change management consists of "the whole process of forecasting, organizing, coordinating, training and controlling measures to replace, modify, transform or pretence the organization into form and content, with the aim of increasing its efficiency and competitiveness" (Deliu et. al 2011).

In the vision of many Romanian researchers, change management admits a set of distinct activities such as communication, mobilization, support and orientation of employees, so as to achieve the expected results. Also, this activity involves functions of coordination, organization and control of the activity of introducing change until the functioning of the system in its new state.

**Methods**

The research methodology applied in the paper is of a theorized type, as the informational support focuses on the visions of contemporary researchers in the field with reference to the fundamental concepts of change management. The opportunity of applying change management ensures significant improvements in the performance of the organization. On the other hand, the content of the change process starts from understanding the need for change and insists on expressing the desire for change, acquiring the necessary knowledge, forming skills and strengthening change, such as delineating the research problem, analyzing the level of knowledge relevant to the research problem and establishing the hypothesis.

The hypothesis is formulated starting from the results presented in the analysis section of the literature and consists in identifying the landmarks that would ensure the increase of the independence of higher education institutions and their transition to full-fledged market relations as a subject of concurrency on the educational services market.

**Results**

*3.1. Conceptualizing the need for change in organizational management*

Established researchers emphasize employee resistance to change phenomena occurring within the organization, thus reducing process action to a minimum, considering that change management focuses on "identifying sources of resistance to change and providing ways to

overcome them" (Nica et. al., 2019; Deliu et. al., 2011). This approach is totally focused on the study of the factors that influence the emergence of resistance to change of employees, and to some extent it is omitted that the change once produced must be managed in such a way that the result is positive. This can be influenced by the competence of the manager responsible for the change. So we can conclude that change management is based on two fundamental principles: to help the organization achieve its goals that cannot be achieved under the current conditions that is being organized, to operate or serve its customers, on the one hand, and on the other - to minimize at minimum the negative impact of any change. At the same time, we want to point out that it is also important to know about "resistance to change" as an essential element in change management. It is proved that resistance to change is more common among management staff than middle and lower level staff. So, well-designed and implemented change according to a well-thought-out algorithm can lead to significant improvements in the organization's performance. Thus, on the basis of the above, we can conclude that the approaches to change management are closely related to its constructive elements (Figure 1).
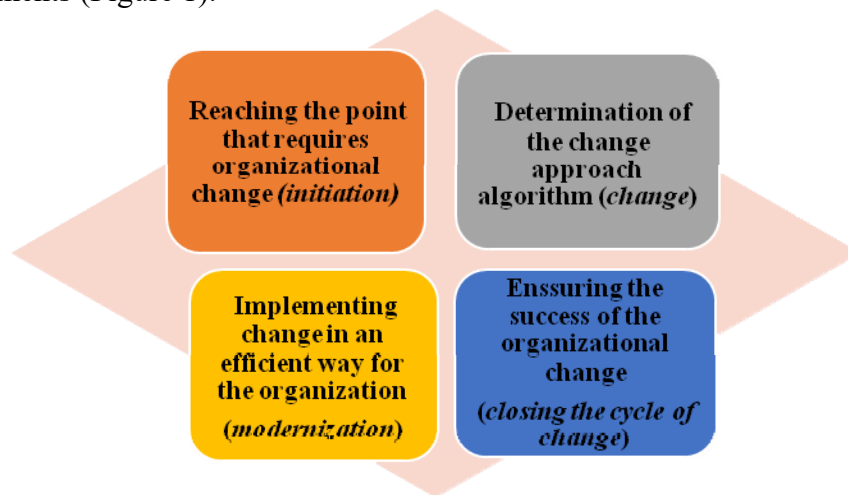


**Figure 1. Elements of organizational change management**
*Source: developed by the authors*

The concept of "change management" seeks to reshape the thinking of managers, from that purely economic orientation focused on profit chasing to new social value dimensions, for example, motivation and employee satisfaction or environmental aspects, for example. So a new model of change management is to focus on 5 simple steps: awareness, determination, willpower, implementation and recognition. For the most part, this model is widely applied by many practitioners in the field of change management. Triggering a process of change starts from understanding the need for change and insists on expressing the desire for change, acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills training and strengthening change (Popa, 2017, Robbins et. al., 2012; Tantau, 2005).

| Table 1 | |
|---|---|
| **The content of the change process** | |
| **Aknowledging the need for change** | ✓ The organization understands that a rapid and effective response to the challenges of the internal and external environment is vital to achieving change.<br>✓ The organization understands that it is vulnerable if organizational change is not associated with skills training.<br>✓ Groups understand business judgements and take actions for changes in culture, values and skills. |
| **Expressing the desire for change** | ✓ It is recognized that the lack of development and motivation to acquire new skills is negatively affecting the organization.<br>✓ It is recognized that change is necessary for the survival of the organization. |

| Acquisition of knowledge | ✓ The organization knows what needs to be changed and what skills and values are needed.<br>✓ All managers have a basic understanding of change management, both theoretically and practically, and can apply this knowledge to a specific case within the organization.<br>✓ Each group finds itself in the process of change and is aware of its own contribution to this process. |
|---|---|
| Skills training | ✓ Managers hold and correctly apply professional methods in the processes of achieving change.<br>✓ The executive staff, assisted daily by front-line managers, has the ability to apply new knowledge and skills. |
| Strengthening change | ✓ The organization directly encourages and rewards changes in culture, values and the initiatives.<br>✓ Reducing the resistance to change by supporting the acquisition of new skills and abilities. |

*Source: developed by the authors based on the source (Nica et al., 2019)*

Major changes are the result of a complex process in which are confronted the forces that generate change and the forces that resist and often have no rectilinear path from one state to another. The process of change is a cumulative one that repeats and restructures on the go, being considered extremely complex, but at the same time, capable of generating new processes much more qualitative and modern.

### 3.2. The opportunity in higher education institutions for organizational transformations

The process of conversion in higher education institutions of the managerial and organizational structures has become an imperative for the scientific and educational community worldwide as the process of transforming a post-industrial society into a knowledge society is ending, which has radically changed the nature of higher education, its paradigm, its strategic course, decision-making practices in universities, their organizational structures and organizational culture (Gryshova et al., 2019).

The paradigm shift of the university education system, which has emerged in recent decades, is associated to a large extent with a change in the role of the state as the main client and subject of influence, which has shaped the programs, forms of activity and standards for evaluating the activities of educational institutions (Drucker, 1993). Thus, the state weakens the monopoly on exclusive management in higher education, which passes into the sphere of personal initiative and accountability of the institution itself, transforming the university manager from an object of the educational process into an active subject. And the university management mechanism itself is beginning to take on the contours of "a modern academic space", where educational institutions are thought of as subjects of economic and entrepreneurial activity.

Professional training, nowadays, is provided by universities in a multitude of meaningful areas of activity, but also specialists with a vast research vision, capable of innovative ideas. Thus, the change management applied in higher education institutions determines the importance of these organizations and highlights their ability to solve the following tasks: to become the most important element of education-research-innovation infrastructure; to contribute to the formation of human capital; to enhance the reproduction and development of the socio-cultural code of the whole of humanity. In other words, knowledge is used for systematic innovation. This new role of universities, which consists in using knowledge to find the most effective ways of modernization, means, in fact, that the new paradigm of change management is primarily aimed for transforming the education system of higher education institutions into a more efficient mechanism.

In this order of ideas, taking into consideration the higher education system in the Republic of Moldova, we note, based on a flash survey in the national higher institutions that the reasons for a refusal by society in the face of changes consists in:

▪ The fact that there is no real qualitative change in the proposed reforms;
▪ It is much more comfortable to have a day-to-day situation than the stress of getting into certain disturbances that change brings with it;

- Usually changes can be impersonated, and they are irrelevant to society;
- The economic efficiency of the proposed changes is not argued;
- The proposed changes are not in line with current values in society;
- Leaders of change do not inspire trust in society etc.

The change management is becoming one of the most promising mechanisms for managing the development of higher education in an environment where universities face new opportunities and new risks imposed by globalization and the growing role of the human factor. The change management is starting to be considered as a re-launch point for a new type of management at the university level – a revolutionary management that provides the foundation for the organization's success tomorrow.

Many descriptions of educational reform emphasize the content, structures and other formal components of innovation. These are important elements, but they do not resonate with most people. The biggest change is personal experience. Success depends on the individual contribution, which is determined either by the personal value of the innovation or by the motivation to obtain the new skills necessary to implement change.
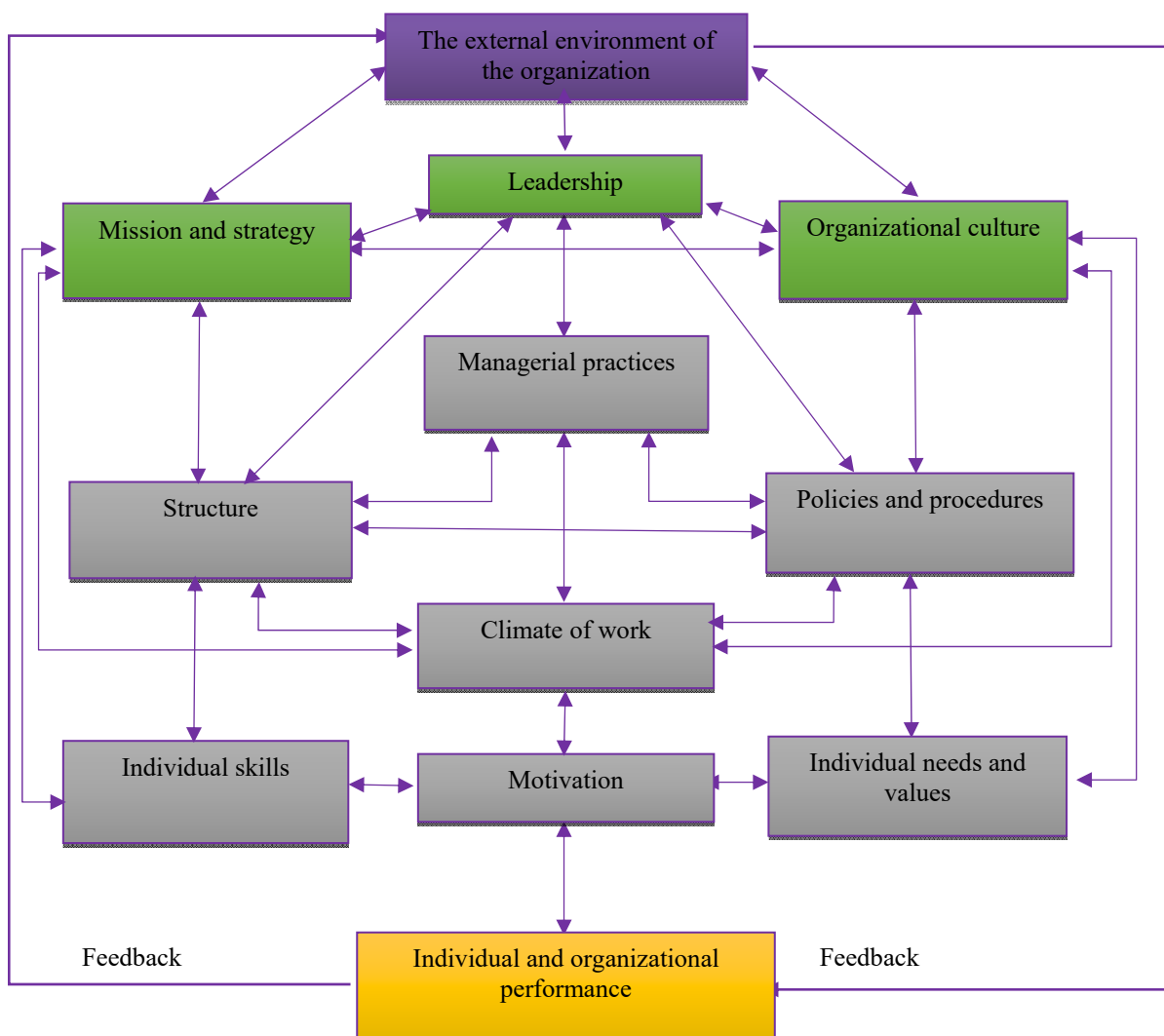


**Figure 2. Organizational change in the university**
*Source: developed by the authors*

Understanding individual responsibility, correlating individual differences, achieving group relationships – this is important for both personal and collective change: this is the essence of future change as a phenomenon. Understanding the change as a process of human change that provides the foundation needed to successfully manage the content of innovation, whether it is a new program,

technology, student assessment system or a new structure (Blinov and Ugryumov, 2015; Palmer et. al., 2016).

In modern conditions, the implementation of management models presented in their "pure" form with the originally established meaning is practically impossible. In this regard, the classical classifications for management models addressed in the management of the higher education system seem to be abstract, although, in their time, they have made a significant contribution to science. Thus, national system of management positions and demonstrates, according to the more common features and without a meaningful scientific justification, that it represents the primary advantage of the model. Furthermore, a disadvantage of the approach to typology is the lack of clear, understood criteria for separating countries and assigning them to one or another model of higher education management.

Organizational changes are the formation of a new organizational structure that is appropriate to the nature of changes in the external environment. Organizational changes are accompanied by a new perception of the values, norms and models of action that are common and shared by employees, as well as traditional ways of making decisions, which become an obstacle in the adaptation of the organization to the rhythm and directions of changes in the educational system and changes in the social behavior of the system subjects. Observations of the process of organizational changes in educational institutions allow us to distinguish several successive stages (Figure 2).

Many changes in the Moldovan educational system are determined by flows in the opposite direction:

- from top to bottom: changes initiated by the state generally by individual educational authorities at different levels, in particular, these changes are fixed in the form of normative or legislative acts and are mandatory for implementation in the practice of educational institutions;
- from bottom to top: changes initiated or spontaneously occurring in the internal environment, in other words, between the subjects of educational systems and processes of different levels and directions

**Discussion**

The university management and the university training management as part of the modernization of the higher education system is carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the direct regulatory authorities and state authorities, as well as of the international organizations represented by the European community through the participants in the Bologna process. Decision-making within each activity component is carried out within the tasks and mechanisms for the development of the institution, adopted at the organizational and managerial level.

The change management adapted to the current needs of higher education institutions is characterized by an active demolition and a transformation of the values and norms of activity. This stage is characterized by the involvement of key employees in setting new goals and developing new reform programs, as well as in the training of the passive majority of employees.

**Conclusion**

Modern approaches to the formation of an organizational system of university development management have formed to a greater extent within a conditioned market model for the development of the educational sector - when the university is considered as a full-fledged subject of concurrency relationships in the educational services market. In this regard, the most popular approaches to the formation of a management system for modern universities are based to a greater extent on the principles of the classical methodology of strategic planning, as well as on the training of the quality of educational services.

The opportunity that stands out in order to achieve a continuous productive development in the market of educational services is the process of increasing the independence of universities and

their transition to full-fledged market relations as a subject of concurrency. Under the aspect of modernization within the higher education institutions the processes that are in progress require a solution for the following groups of tasks that is going to result in the development of a mechanism within universities growth that is intended for organization management:

a) defining the concept of the development of the university, including its mission, collective values, individual motivation factors.

b) formulation and resolution of strategic (long-term) tasks that have a long-term focus and cover all the aspects of the university's activities. Strategic tasks are characterized by the complex predictability of the consequences of their implementation (for example, the inclusion of new educational programs, the creation of departments and faculties, the opening of subsidiaries, etc.). The strategic task also includes the improvement of the university's management system.

c) formulation of medium-term objectives. The planning period within this task group is slightly shorter than in the strategic group and ranges from 1 to 3 years.

d) formulation of short-term (tactical and operational) objectives. This task group has a limited time interval - from 1 day to one year. They are associated with the direct implementation of the university's long-term and medium-term development plans.

A characteristic feature of the modernization of the higher professional education system as a process is the implementation of measures to change the existing forms, technologies, mechanisms of operation and the existing connections of the components of this system, in accordance with the new ideas of the subjects managers. Such a change can be achieved in a "radical" way (in the form of direct and complete replacement of forms and mechanisms that are ineffective or inappropriate for the level of development with new ones) or in a "dimmed" way (by making partial changes to the existing forms and mechanisms of management of the higher education system).

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