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Examination of the Concept of Change in Organizations, Factors Causing Resistance to Change with a Reflection on Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the concept of organizational change and the resistance displayed by employees during the change process from the perspective of change management. A comprehensive literature review on the topic has been conducted, and various change methods as well as factors influencing resistance to change have been examined. The article emphasizes the importance of successful change implementation in organizations for their survival and growth. The paper discusses the different dimensions of organizational change, including changes in objectives, structures, technology, and personnel. It also highlights the psychological, sociological, rational, and economic reasons that drive resistance to change among employees. Furthermore, the article categorizes individuals' reactions to change as acceptance, indifference, passive resistance, and active resistance. To overcome resistance to change, the article presents various strategies, such as education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support, negotiation and agreement, manipulation and co-option, and explicit and direct coercion. Each strategy is analyzed in terms of its advantages and disadvantages. The conclusion stresses the significance of considering the human factor in change management and emphasizes the need for eliminating employee resistance to change. The article provides recommendations for effectively managing change in educational institutions, focusing on communication, education, negotiation, incentives, and utilizing leadership in driving change. The paper concludes by underscoring the inevitability of change and its necessity for progress and advancement in education. It highlights the role of school leaders and higher education institutions in successfully implementing new approaches in education and preparing teacher candidates for embracing change. Ultimately, the article underscores the importance of creating a culture of change in organizations to ensure their efficiency, survival, and growth.

Keywords: Organizational change, change management, resistance to change, employee behavior, change strategies, culture of change in education.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations operating in an environment that constantly undergoes change face significant challenges, and one of them is their ability to adapt to these changes. The examination of factors influencing the process of change, which is a painful process involving the alteration of established individual and organizational behaviors, constitutes the subject of this article. This article aims to address the resistance displayed by employees during the organizational change process from the perspective of change management. A literature review on the topic has been conducted, and change methods as well as concepts of resisting change have been explained.

Change is among the fundamental issues faced by most of the organizations, and organizations that do not embrace change may not have the chance of survival. Therefore, organizations are obliged to implement change successfully. In organizations, some tasks, relationships, working methods, processes, and procedures may require to be altered to keep up with the changing needs and improvements in the world. However, employees resist change for various reasons. Overcoming resistance to change is crucial for the effective and efficient utilization of organizational resources and the success of the change process. As a result, organizational change plans should be taken seriously, and potential reasons for resistance and the measures to be taken must be considered. Methods such as training, communication, participation and support, and compromise can be used to overcome possible resistance to change. These measures may vary depending on the individual characteristics of the employees. To reduce resistance, it is essential to educate and prepare employees for the change. Successful organizational change can better be achieved through the participation of employees. To work on change and resistance in organizations, it is necessary to make terminological definitions related to organization, change, and resistance.

Organization and change

The concept of organization has been defined in various ways. Some researchers define organization as "a system of two or more individuals consciously coordinating activities or forces," while others argue that an organization emerges when individuals voluntarily contribute to action in order to achieve a

common goal and can communicate with each other. Organization is defined as "the rational coordination of activities of people coming together in a hierarchy of authority and responsibility to achieve a common aim or purpose." (TDK). According to Güçlü (2003), organization in its broadest sense is a management function in which people's efforts are coordinated toward specific goals; it is a system in which the dimensions of purpose, people, and technology interact; it has its own unique culture; and it shows the jobs, positions, employees, and the relationships of authority and communication among them (p.148).

Change, which is a necessity of human nature and life, refers to the entirety of alterations within a period of time or the separate values that a quantity takes on or the distinction between two such values. In organizations, this concept of change holds a significant position because making adjustments to the aim or structure in response to changing conditions is inevitable. Changes can be planned or unplanned, gradual or radical, predictable or unpredictable. The areas where organizations may undergo change or be subject to change inputs can be listed as follows:

Dimensions of change and development in the organizations

Subsystems of the organization

Elements of the organization

Relationships between the organization and its environment

Any combination of the above.

If we elaborate on the dimensions of change and development in the organization:

A. Human Dimension of the organization

- Individual attitudes and behaviors
- Group attitudes and behaviors
- Management philosophy
- Value judgments of organization members
- Organizational culture.

B. Structural dimension of the organization

- Various formal and natural rules (division of labor, authority, responsibility, etc.)
- Formal and natural relationships within the organization (workflow, role, communication, decision-making, status, etc.)

C. Technological dimension of the organization

- All methods, work procedures, workflows that are currently used in the organization and show how work is done
- All machines, materials, tools, etc., currently used in the organization.

D. Elements of organizational goals

- Formal goals of the organization: These are the goals that are officially determined and documented by the organization. They represent the specific objectives and targets that the organization aims to achieve.
- Informal (Natural) goals developed by organization members: These are the goals that are not formally specified but rather emerge naturally within the organization through the interactions and mutual support among its units and members. Informal goals are often interconnected and closely related to each other.
- Organizations exist within an ever-changing and rapidly evolving environment. To achieve high efficiency and effectiveness within such an environment, organizations must:
 - Monitor changes in their surroundings closely.
 - Embrace innovation and creativity.
 - Import inputs from their environment, process these inputs, and export the processed outputs back to their environment.
 - Have a feedback system to understand reactions in their environment, gather necessary information, and reorganize the import, production process, and outputs accordingly.
 - Establish an effective control system to achieve positive outcomes during the change process.

Organizations are social systems established to achieve specific goals. These goals give organizations their real essence. Organizational goals can be formal, set on paper, or informal, developed and accepted among the organization's members (Aydemir, 2003, p. 102).

According to İnce (2005), from the perspective of human resources, there is a need for new applications that can provide motivation, work relationships, ambition for production, and the desire to work within a human-based organizational culture. In a constantly evolving and changing world order, the adaptability of organizations to this process of development and transformation determines their efficiency and lifespan. The disruption of the existing order and the allocation of a new order can be a painful process for organizations and may face various resistances and they can be big or small. Change can bring solutions to existing problems, but it can also add new ones and even create entirely new problems. From a broader perspective, in a change process, the main actors are the employees. The success of the change process is directly related to how well individuals, especially managers, manage this process (p. 323).

Change and Renewal

In the conceptual distinction made about change and renewal, change is generally considered to refer to a neutral (unspecific direction) differentiation, whereas renewal is seen as intentional, planned, and desired differentiations (Shermerhorn, 2011). Renewal is defined as the process of creating new ideas as a normal part of the organization's routine work and implementing them. As emphasized in these statements, renewal involves putting newly discovered ideas into practice as a normal part of the organization's operation, and it is essentially a search for better ways of doing things (Aksoy, 2011). According to Shermerhorn (2011), change is seen as part of creativity and renewal in organizations. Thus, change always takes place under the control of managers in organizations. Unplanned changes may occur spontaneously or without the influence of change agents, while planned changes are the result of the efforts of change agents, special endeavors. Planned change is a direct reaction to the perception of a performance gap that shows the difference between the real situation and the desired situation. Performance gaps also reflect the problems that need to be solved or the opportunities that need to be discovered. In each case, managers, as change agents, should review performance gaps and initiate planned change to close them (Tuncer, 2013, p. 378)

Change Management Processes

Change is the transition from one state to another, either in a planned or unplanned manner, of a system, a process, or an environment, as expressed in previous sections. It is necessary to make an addition at this point: every change process may not yield the same results in every organization. While some organizations may succeed through the change process, others may experience a more negative outcome. A positive change process enables the organization to develop, reduce existing problems, and establish a more efficient and effective organizational structure. On the other hand, a negative change will lead to a decrease in efficiency, moving the organization further away from its goals and objectives.

Organizational change refers to any type of change that may occur in an organization with its various subsystems and elements and the relationships between them. In this sense, organizational change encompasses a wide range of events and phenomena such as creativity, innovation, growth, and development. Change requires not only acquiring new habits but also getting rid of old ones, and this detachment from old habits can be more challenging than forming new ones. In change theory, this process includes disengagement, change, and institutionalization. In other words, employees disengage from old attitudes and practices, learn new ones, and integrate them into a habit. When all three stages of the process are not successfully completed, employees may fail to benefit effectively from the change by awkwardly mixing new practices with old habits (Tuncer, 2013, p. 382).

Kurt Lewin, a famous psychologist, suggests that any planned change effort can be seen as a three-stage process. These three stages are unfreezing, changing, and refreezing (Aksoy, 2011). In the unfreezing stage, the situation is prepared for change. This requires the manager to establish good relationships with those involved in the change and develop a sense of the need for change. When properly controlled, conflict can be a significant unfreezing force in organizations. In the changing stage, the change is actually initiated. This stage involves managers starting change in organizational goals and efforts, people, culture, technology, and structure. At Refreezing stage, the organization becomes ready to refreeze after changes take shape and people have embraced the new ways of working. Organizations usually fail at the changing stage. Changing stage can ideally be overcome with good problem identification and reviewing alternatives. However, Lewin believes that many change agents enter the changing stage prematurely, that they are sometimes hasty in changing things and as a result, they face resistance to change. To successfully carry out a large or small change, a planned change management is required. An effective change management program provides a smooth transition to the new environment. Organizations cannot avoid change; the crucial point is to decide when and how the change will be implemented. Rapid and inevitable change is a whole and covers all aspects of life. To respond effectively to change, it is necessary to know the factors that affect change and to answer how to start the change. The speed of change not only causes conflicts and disruptions in organizations but also puts employees under considerable stress (Tuncer, 2013, p. 382).

If there is no dynamism, flexibility, and adaptability in the organization, change brings danger and stagnation. Most members tend to resist change openly or secretly. Laxity, non-acceptance of work, and active resistance are the results. If there is no moderate and patient approach for members to adapt to the new situation, this resistance will continue with instability. As soon as employees perceive the change, they feel a sense of uncertainty. Even if the change is

positive, it will still create uncertainty, so it is essential to inform the staff about this new situation as soon as possible and dispel any doubts (Töremen, 2002, p.190).

When change and renewal are not managed effectively, employees cannot fully benefit from the new applications, even if they are positive. Therefore, in an organizational change operation, the concerns that individuals exposed to are entirely natural. The reduction of these concerns, especially during the change process, can be achieved through the competencies of the actors managing the change process and internal communication, task-sharing, and good planning within the organization.

Dimensions of Change and Areas of Transformation

According to Bay and Akpınar (2016), organizational change studies are categorized into four groups, namely:

- **Change in Objectives:** For an organization's long-term survival, management should periodically evaluate and modify its goals in accordance with internal and external changes.
- **Structural Change:** Structural changes involve alterations in authority-responsibility relationships, coordination, integration, division of labor, organizational hierarchy, and degree of centralization.
- **Technological and Task-Related Change:** This pertains to changes in work methods, programs, introduction of new tools and methods, work standards, and new work arrangements.
- **Personnel-Related Change:** This encompasses changes in the behavior, attitudes, and skills of organizational personnel

While these change groups may appear to be independent of each other, engaging in change efforts in one area may inadvertently lead to certain changes in other areas. In social systems, Ada and Küçükali (2016), discusses three types of change:

- **Procedural Change:** Refers to alterations in how work is done, including changes in the sequence, speed, and rules determining how tasks are performed.
- **Technological Change:** Involves the modification of tools and equipment used in performing tasks. Examples include replacing textbooks, using photocopiers instead of typewriters for teachers, and connecting schools to the internet.
- **Systemic Change:** Involves the transformation of the nature of work and the redefinition of focal points for objectives and actions. Systemic change represents a comprehensive transformation at the system level. This type of change encompasses alterations in the structure and relationships of rules and roles within the organization, as well as changes in beliefs, values, and acceptance, which constitute the culture. In other words, systemic change refers to the transformation of an organization's structure and culture.

Reasons for resistance to organizational change and individuals' reactions:

Organizational change is an inevitable process. There are various reasons that drive organizations to change, which can be grouped under four main headings:

- **Economic Reasons:** Resistance to technological changes is quite common due to fears that it will destroy job security. Employees may fear losing their jobs and economic security. Additionally, changes that limit promotion and career advancement opportunities also encounter resistance. People tend to protect their working conditions and interests they believe are preserved in the status quo. Within the organization, groups that control the distribution of resources and power may perceive change as a threat directed at them. Especially, individuals or groups who have the largest share of resource distribution within the organization exhibit the most significant reaction due to fear of losing their resources.
- **Sociological Reasons:** If change conflicts with the social values of individuals or groups, resistance may arise. Fear of losing career, status, prestige, authority, and other social benefits can naturally lead employees to resist change. Furthermore, group loyalty can be a reason for resisting change, as employees may believe that social ties will be severed by change and re-establishing them would be very difficult. Additionally, negative attitudes toward change by the group to which one belongs can lead to individual resistance to change. The group's structure may compel the individual to think within certain patterns and to behave in accordance with group norms. Moreover, the management's lack of emphasis on communication, participation, style, and values can initiate or increase resistance to change.
- **Psychological Reasons:** The most significant source of resistance to change is psychological. Most human behaviors are based on habits acquired in the past. Therefore, performing familiar tasks provides individuals with psychological comfort and a sense of security. Changing these habits can upset the balance for employees, leading to resistance. The reasons for psychological resistance can be listed as uncertainty and lack of information, alienation, habits, distrust, indifference, prejudice, perception style, personal animosity, belief that change is wrong, different evaluations and goals, dissatisfaction with the imposed change, and anger towards the new rules and increased control brought by the change.

- **Rational Reasons:** If the cost of change to an individual exceeds its benefits, rational resistance to change may occur. If an individual believes that change will require additional physical and mental effort to learn and adapt, disrupting their comfort, they may resist the change. Sometimes individuals or groups resist organizational change by thinking that those managing the change do not consider or value them and only prioritize the interests of the organization. Organizational change can render individual expertise suddenly unused or ineffective. In such cases, resistance emerges. Employees may resist change by foreseeing the dangers that change will bring. They may believe that such a change could lead to job loss and act accordingly based on this prediction (Tuncer, 2013).

The basis of change lies in ideas, and these ideas may not always be accepted. Even if they are accepted, individuals' concerns and self-interests can create intentional or unintentional resistance to change. Individuals' reactions to change can be categorized under four main headings:

- **Acceptance:** Individuals who can accept change are willing to assist in the change process, either voluntarily or under managerial pressure.
- **Indifference:** Some individuals may remain indifferent, showing no interest in the change and merely doing what is asked of them without putting in effort to learn.
- **Passive Resistance:** This type of resistance is smaller in scale, where individuals slow down their work deliberately and willingly make mistakes to oppose the changed order.
- **Active Resistance:** The active resistance dimension represents the extreme level of resistance to change, where individuals may sabotage the work related to the change and eventually leave their jobs.

Strategies to Overcome Resistance to Change in Organizations

- **Education and Communication Strategy:** Both education and communication strategies share the common challenge of incorrect information or lack of analysis and information. The advantage of these strategies is that once people are convinced, they often support the implementation of the change. However, the disadvantage is that if a large number of people are involved, it can be time-consuming.
- **Participation and Involvement Strategy:** In the participation and involvement strategy, those initiating the change do not have all the information and need input from others due to the strength of resistance. The advantage of this strategy is that some participants may actively want the change and integrate relevant information into the change plan. On the other hand, the disadvantage is that if participants design inappropriate changes, it can lead to time wastage.
- **Facilitation and Support Strategy:** In the facilitation and support strategy, people resist change due to problems they face. This process involves providing training, technical education, emotional support, or interventions to address these problems. The advantage is that when problems are addressed, other approaches may become irrelevant. However, the disadvantage is that it can be costly, time-consuming, and may fail.
- **Negotiation and Agreement Strategy:** In the negotiation and agreement strategy, individuals or groups with strong resistance explain what they gain from the change. The advantage is that sometimes this approach may be the easiest way to avoid significant resistance. However, if the approach involves negotiation with others to change for complexity, it can be expensive.
- **Manipulation and Co-option Strategy:** In the manipulation and co-option strategy, other tactics may not work or may be too expensive. However, the approach is relatively quick and provides a cost-effective solution to resistance problems. The negative side is that individuals may feel used, leading to future problems.
- **Explicit and Direct Coercion (Mandatory) Strategy:** The explicit and direct coercion strategy is based on speed, and those initiating the change must have the necessary power; otherwise, the strategy may fail. The advantage is that the approach is fast and can overcome various units of resistance. On the other hand, the disadvantage is that if there is anger or tension between the change initiators and employees, it can be risky (İlhan, 2017).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The theory of culture introduces a new way of thinking about organizations. It demonstrates that creating new forms of organization and management largely means cultural change. Organizations in the process of renewal and development need to change their cultures along with growth and innovation. In a process that can be called a transition from one position to another, the education system, management style and philosophy, social structure, attitudes of employees, predictions, and expectations will be affected by the change. Principles, values, and fundamental views deeply rooted and habitual in the organization will undergo change. Creating a certain organizational culture means not just finding new slogans or having a new leader but creating a new lifestyle.

The fundamental variable to consider during periods of change is always the human factor. Because in a competitive environment, an organization with a strong organizational culture that allows free thinking and action can survive. The issue of employee resistance is vital in terms of social unity and organizational structures. If employees' resistance to change is not eliminated;

- The organizational system, climate, and environment will be disrupted.
- Stress in the organization will increase.
- Conflicts among individuals or groups will intensify.
- A significant portion of organizational energy will be lost in internal conflicts.
- Harmony, solidarity, and cooperation among employees will be lost, leading to inefficient use of organizational resources, resulting in waste of these resources.

Thus, organizational change management will end in failure. Therefore, employee resistance to change should be eliminated as quickly as possible and with appropriate methods. Some of these methods should include:

- Effectively applying communication and education methods in the change management process.
- Involving individuals affected by the change in the planning and implementation phases of the change.
- Planned change should be introduced at the most appropriate time to minimize resistance.
- Negotiating with people affected by the change about the purpose, scope, method, and duration of the change and being flexible in negotiations.
- Minimizing resistance by using economic incentive measures.
- If no other methods are applicable, especially in cases where change is urgent, managers may attempt to impose change using their power and authority.

1.7 Reflections on Educational institutions

It is quite challenging to establish a culture of change in the field of education. This is because change not only involves adopting new habits institutionally and individually but also requires getting rid of old habits. This detachment from established routines can be even more difficult than forming new ones, especially when these habits have become ingrained as a daily routine and a part of the culture within the educational system. For successful changes in schools, it is necessary to replace certain values that hinder change with values that support it.

The reasons for resistance to change in educational institutions are mostly psychological or sociological. If the change contradicts the social values of the country, the institution, or the individuals involved, it will face serious resistance. Moreover, if the prevailing tendency within the educational institution is to resist change, the norms of the institution will push others to behave in certain patterns as well. Scientific experiments in the field of social psychology, such as the Asch experiments, support these findings. For this reason, the attitudes of those leading or managing education towards embracing or resisting change are of utmost importance. Certainly, as with many systems, change is inevitable and necessary for progress and advancement in education. It should be considered normal that existing teachers may not fully participate in this change or even resist it. Often, change brings some degree of uncertainty and introduces new roles and responsibilities for those in the system. In such cases, what needs to be done is to effectively educate the teachers in service about the change and the new educational approaches based on it. As change is heavily dependent on a change in mindset, this education should have a persuasive and emotional dimension alongside informative content.

The success of the desired changes in the field of education largely falls upon school leaders. Treating the school and teachers as any other organization and employees can lead to failures. Change in education should be implemented by considering the differences and specificities of the field. Improving teachers' working conditions and reducing economic concerns will contribute to reducing resistance to change.

Higher education institutions responsible for training teachers also bear significant responsibility in the implementation of new approaches in education. The level of innovation in these institutions should be measured, and the existing curriculum should be updated in line with contemporary changes and developments in education. This way, teacher candidates can be better equipped to embrace new educational approaches.

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