

HOW DO MANAGEMENT STYLES INFLUENCE THE WORK BEHAVIOUR. A STUDY CASE OF TEACHERS FACING ECONOMIC CRISIS AND REFORM IN EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Since managers are considered to have a great influence over organizational productivity and also over employees' performance, in the present research we aim to identify how managers influence the work satisfaction and how they manage to help their workforce to reduce the resistance to change generated by both the education reform elements and economical crisis. We investigated a number of 51 teachers enrolled in pre-primary and primary education system, by using a survey based questionnaire of 72 items disposed on 5 dimensions. The results show that managers with simulative leading styles use more often the negotiation techniques when coming to change compared with autocratic managers, who are more likely to impose changes. Also participative leading style seems to have a positive influence over the employees work satisfaction and to lower the personal risk and effort perception.

Keywords: *work satisfaction, managementl style, strategies for reducing resistance to change, personal effort perception, personal risk perception*

Introduction

The present research arises from the need to identify how teachers from pre-primary education respond to continuous change process in the work field. Change is seen as a process highlighted in particular by the education reform started in 90's. We are talking about legislative improvements, about a new curriculum for pre-primary education and about system decentralization. Not once we asked ourselves what really motivates teachers to work in a system with so many flaws?! Another question mark leads to their preparation for change. How do they manage to adept so easy to novelty and to also obtain great results in work?!

1. Literature Review

Our major concern was to analyse what really generates work satisfaction and to identify which leading styles are more often used by kindergarten managers and how they manage to implement change. Change is considered a highly abstract process that can't be stimulated nor modified (Jex, 2002) in laboratory conditions that allows transition from a present state to a desired one. W. Bridges and S Michel define organizational change as an extern and transparent process, which shapes into new politics and managerial practices (Nicolescu; Nicolescu, 2006). Lewin sees change as having 3 distinct stages: *unfreezing* is the first stage characterised by equilibrium and alteration regarding the states and behaviours, now the organization is capable to recognise the need for a change and starts preparations for it; in the same time there can be identified mechanisms and persons opposing to change. Next follows *change* stage its' self; now there are found new information. The last step is *defrosting*, a moment where the changes are implemented and are developed strategies meant to reduce resistance to change.

In the following lines there will be described few factors that generated change in the educational system, especially in the pre-primary one like educational reform, legislation in Romania, system decentralization and demography. *Reform of educational system* started at the beginning of 90's. In 1997 there were created 3 directions of reform: reform through extension, reform through innovation and structural and system reform that resulted in new curriculum, new study plans, alternative student books; actually the most important outcomes were: the transition from the knowledge centred education to education based on competence or student centred education, new educational networks between educational institutions, partnerships development with both organization and local communities, relaunching research, reformation of educational management by implementation of decentralization through project writing and partnerships initiation, both on national and international level (Chiş, 2009). In 2011 Law of education 54/1995 was changed with Law of National Education 1/2011. Maybe the biggest problem of pre-primary and primary teachers is year 0, which became a mandatory educational grade, meaning that children will enrol into mandatory educational system from 6 years old, even from 5 years old (MECTS, 2011). The new regulation generated logistic and managerial problem into schools. Some issues refer to insufficient space inside schools, inappropriate furniture and toilet spaces. 2008 was the year when a new curriculum for pre-primary education was introduced as a measure to reduce

cycle repeating, school dropouts and social inequities at early stages, with the help of early education (Mects, 2008).

To facilitate be complex changes teachers must feel prepared for change, meaning they should have a high level of satisfaction in work and also perceive a low personal risk and little personal effort involved. Some specialists define work satisfaction only as attitude towards professional satisfaction: a collection of positive attitudes when compared to individual work (Johns, 1996). Others see it as positive emotions resulted in work assessment (P.D.Tieger, B.Barron-Tiger,1998). Later the researches about professional satisfaction describe the satisfaction generation factors and their ranking, concluding that psycho-social factors along with economic and professional ones have high scores when compared with other aspects.

Each change program must include an indebt assessment of both individuals and organizations change capacities. State (1999) analysis 5 important sources of work satisfaction: facilities (technological, economical social and human ones), elementary physical conditions, work itself, human relations in working environment (management, leading styles, inter departmental relation and information flow). According to Popescu Neveanu (1978) satisfaction has major 2 sources of causal and determinates factors: proactively towards work and personal psychological and economic gains. If the employees are satisfied with the present situation and they perceive a high personal risk, then the preparation for change is relatively low. Another essential variable in the preparation for change is represented by employees' expectancy for the personal effort when coming to change implementation. If they expect minor changes no matter the real time spent, nor real personal effort involved, their believes can work as a "self fulfilling prophecy". On the other hand the employees' expectancies for change can be positive but objective.

When talking about change we mustn't neglect the resistance to change mechanism which is an act of maintaining a known behaviour undertaken by a person or a group seen as threatening, and generating fear and anxiety (Jex, 2002); it cannot be avoided and most of the times their effects affect productivity. Resistance to change determinants' have a both logical and emotional background: personal comfort, habits, fear of unknown, own interest, lack of trust in change process or in its' implementers, involved risks, power losing or low popularity, incapacity to develop new relations, relational system perturbation, different perceptions over change, a conservatory personality, the insufficient force of change, lacking leadership, undeveloped organizational culture (Nicolescu, Nicolescu, 2006). No matter the sources generating resistance to change, all the time it slows the implementation process and involves a great consumption of organizational

and individual resources. To reduce the resistance to change managers implement 2 different strategies leading to work algorithms elimination, needed to be able to learn new elements: imposing change and negotiating it.

2. Purpose of study

Furthermore, to find out whether teachers from pre-primary education are ready or not for change we identify the level of satisfaction in work, personal risk perception and personal effort towards change.

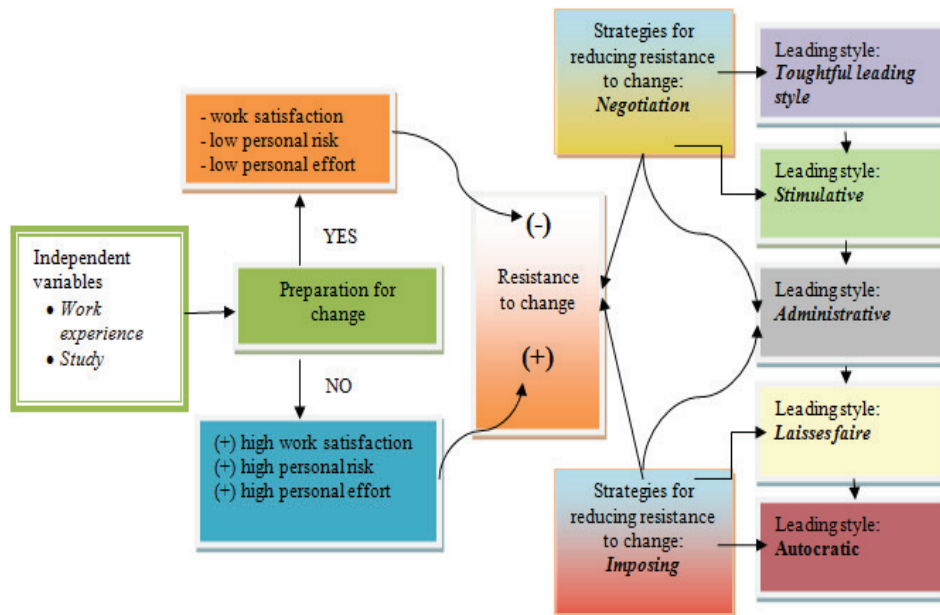


Fig.1. Explanatory model of research

We will also take into consideration the managerial styles which influence the resistance to change of teachers. In order to reduce resistance to change each manager, depending on his own style, implements strategies meant to reduce resistance to change by negotiation or by enforcement. It is interesting to analyze the correlation and its' significance between managerial styles (autocratic, laissez faire, administrative or stimulative) and strategies for reducing resistance to change. Do employees perception over those factors depends on the study level or on they work experience?

3. Methods

When managers negotiate the change this means they encourage employees to be actively involved into change process, most of the time

managers debates with their colleagues and assigns clear roles to each by using negotiation techniques. On contrary managers who use *enforcement strategies* only inform the employees about his decisions, they monitor and assess drastically rules violation, make uses of force and of their personal influence to ensure the process success. Concerning the leading style we included 2 criteria: human centred managerial activity and work centred leaders which resulted into a classification with 5 managerial styles: *Autocratic style* is rigid, task centred, not involving other in decision process and don't listen to their subordinates. *Laissez – faire leaders*: aren't centred on human resource nor or tasks needed to be done, they postpone activities, and never do more than it is required. Their only major concern is to be well seen by their superiors. *Administrative managers*: they have a clear set of politics and respect them; they also enjoy routine and develop just official relations with others. *Thoughtful style*: is human orientated, despites tasks, and sometimes it manages to make employees less motivated to work. *Participatory style*: combine human and task orientation, managing to establish clear roles and objective, treating employees as equals, solving conflicts and creating a perfect environment for work.

We used the survey based questionnaire with Likert scales for dependent variables and an ordinal one for independent variables (age, education and work experience), split into 5 dimensions: *Firs section – A* has a number of 11 items where we asked the respondents for a series of factual data as: age, gender, experience, preparation and their didactic position. *In second – B* we introduced Works satisfaction inventory of Ticu, C. which has a number of 32 items and 4 factors: remuneration and promotion, leadership and interpersonal relations, organizing and communication and general satisfaction. *Third section – C* has 20 items and 2 factors: risk perception (alfa cronbach for all 10 items is 0,70); and personal effort with an alfa cronbach of 0,61. *Forth section – D* assesses the managerial strategies for reducing resistance to change. There are 5 items referring to negotiation (alfa cronbach 0,86) and 6 item for enforcement strategies (alfa cronbach 0,68). *Fifth section – E* was designed to evaluate 5 leading stiles and has a number of 40 items. The internal consistency for each managerial styles has values between 0,61 and 0,78. If in the first section we have both objective and subjective items, in the following four we have only objective items. The respondents had to tick the correct answer on a Likert scale with 5 classes: class 1- never, class 2 – very rare, and class 3 – sometimes, class 4 – often and class 5 – always.

4. Findings and results

The data analysis and interpretation was made in SPSS and in Excel. We begun with a descriptive analysis followed by elements of advanced

statics: correlations, regressions and independent t test. The research lot consists of 51 teachers in pre-primary education from Brasov area. Most of the interviewed persons are women, only one man, with ages between 23 and 49 years old. Our subjects have a variable work experience: 23,5% have only 5 years in the work field, 7,8% have a experience ranked from 5 to 10 years, 35,3% work in kindergartens from 10 to 15 years and 33,3% have more than 15 years of experience. The investigated teachers answered questions regarding their participation within national and international projects. The results show that all MA graduates in education (19,6%) have participated in national and international projects or at different trainings, when compared with college graduates of whom 84% participated in the national projects and 0 in international ones. Bachelor graduates seem to participate more in national projects. For a better understanding of the characteristics of researched population we realised 2 portraits: teachers' portraits in **Table 1** and managers' portrait in **Table 2**.

Portrait of pre-primary school teachers, as it results from collected data, has the following factors:

- ✓ Work satisfaction:
 - Remuneration and advancement
 - Coordination and interpersonal relation
 - Organization and communication
 - General satisfaction factor
- ✓ Personal risk perception towards change
- ✓ Personal effort perception when coming to change;

As seen in *Table 1*, the level of satisfaction of teachers has medium values. The smallest values are for remuneration and advancement, with an average of 2,67 and a standard deviation of 8.72. The highest values are for coordination and quality of interpersonal relations factor with an average of 3,93 and a standard deviation of 6,8. We can explain that low scores for satisfaction generated by salaries exist because Romanian teachers have among the smallest wages in Europe. In the same time the recession in Romania forced the government to cut off salaries from the budgetary system for a period of time and to grow up the TAV with 5%. Today the salaries are back to normal but the TAV is still higher with 5 %.

Low level	Clase					High level
	Never 1	Rare 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5	
Remuneration and advancement		AVERAGE 2,67				Remuneration and advancement
Coordination and interpersonal relations			AVERAGE 3,92			Coordination and interpersonal relations
Organization and communication			AVERAGE 3,87			Organization and communication
Total satisfaction			AVERAGE 3,71			Total satisfaction
Personal effort			AVERAGE 3,28			Personal effort
Personal risk			AVERAGE 3,38			Personal risk
Legend: — Teachers' work satisfaction						

Table 1. Teachers' profile for work satisfaction and preparation for change

The results for personal effort and risk perception when speaking about change have similar averages: 3,28 (with a 5,39 standard deviation) and 3,38 (and a standard deviation of 4,53).

Kindergarten managers' profile seen by teachers and from their own perspective is shaped according the next factors:

- ✓ Strategies for reducing resistance to change:
 - negotiation techniques
 - enforcement strategies
- ✓ Managerial styles:
 - Autocratic
 - Laissez faire – passive
 - Thoughtful
 - Administrative;

We consider the managers' profile is an objective construct since we took into consideration 2 perspectives: their own and their subalterns' point of view and we found similarities for all involved data. The only significant difference was found for negotiation strategies used to reduce resistance to change: teachers' average is 4.05, while managers have an average of 5; managers consider they always use this technique to approach new events. With all that not even a result is higher than 1 point, which allows us to rank the results in the same classes. According to *Table 2* the dominant leading style used in kindergartens is participative one with a average of 4,09 from teachers' perspective and 4,50 from kindergarten managers one. At less than one class distance we have the thoughtful leading style with averages of 3,20

and 3,60. Last 2 places are occupied by the autocratic styles (with averages of 2,45 and 2,50) and passive style: 2,50 and 2,60 averages.

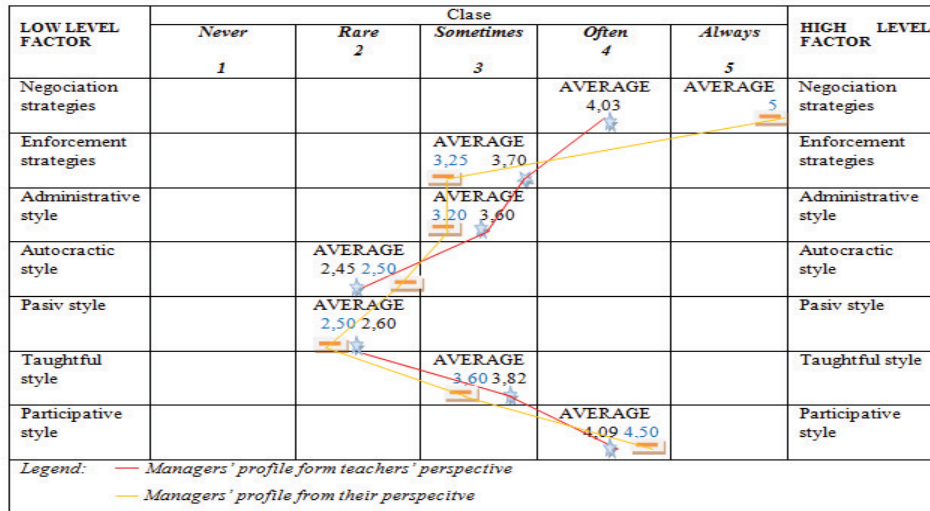


Table 2 Kindergarten managers' profile from personal and teachers' perspective

The results show managers from kindergarten education most of the time use participative leading styles and adopt negotiation techniques when approaching change; they encourage teachers to become more receptive and to be actively involved in the accomplishment of professional tasks. After a comparative analyze we fund there are significant differences $p < 0,05$, $F = 4,728$ and $p < 0,005$, $F = 4,809$ for the coordination and interpersonal relations and organization and communication factors, when having age criteria included. We conclude that art of having good relation inside the organization is learned with time, as life experience occurs. There were found no other significant differences for age criteria. We also identified significant differences between employees with much work experiences and those with little work experience ($p < 0,05$, $F = 3,717$). From the comparative analyze of averages (Table 3) results show teachers ranked in the first 3 classes have a growing satisfaction, while in the 4th class we can see a significant drop when coming to seniority.

Seniority	under 1 year	1 to 3 years	3 to 5 years	Over 5 years
Average for satisfaction	120,0	127,15	122,28	119,41

Table 3. Average of general satisfaction for work after seniority criteria

Study level doesn't seem to have significant influence when analyzed with dependent variables. Our researched teachers are enrolled as pre-primary and primary education teachers (bachelor graduates and MA graduates) or as educators (college graduates). We wanted to see if there are any differences found between those 2 groups but it appears to be only one:

the participation at international projects at the managers' suggestion compared with their own initiative ($p < 0,05$, $t(45,35) = 2.02$). It seems teachers in pre-primary and primary education do participate more at those projects compared with educators. There are 2 possible explanations: whether they are more encouraged by management or they lack initiative. There were found significant difference for the participation in national project and events ($p < 0.05$, $t(49) = 2,63$); this time educators are more involved than teachers in pre-primary education. To identify the percent of managerial styles regarding the use of negotiation vs. enforcement strategies for reducing resistance to change we made 2 liner regression analyses. It is seen that 62% of negotiation strategies variation is owned to 5 managerial style ($R^2 = 0,62$ iar $F = 14,83$, $p < 0,01$). From the significance analyze of coefficients we found a very significant correlation for participative leading style, where $p < 0,01$; from this we understand that a real positive correlation is only between participative leading style and participative managerial style. For the second regression aiming to identify the relation between the enforcement strategies and managerial styles we found no significant correlation for the variation of all 5 leading styles. But by recalculating it only with the autocratic managerial style we found $R^2 = 0,106$, $F = 5,89$, $p < 0,05$. Further on we identified $B = 0,340$, $Beta = 0,326$, $t = 2.41$ and $p < 0,05$. Still we can say there is a clear link between autocratic style and the use of enforcement strategies.

5. Conclusions

Specialists form pre-primary and primary education have a medium to high motivation for work; lower scores (medium to low) were registered only for the remuneration and advancement. Teachers' work satisfaction lowers with seniority, after accumulating more than 3 years in the same position. Pre-primary teachers are more likely to involve in international projects, even if they are stimulated by managers, while educators prefer to national trainings and project. We conclude that teachers with superior studies are opened to international experiences, better documented and probably have more courage to engage in international activities compared with educators. A possible explanation is represented by the present curriculum in undergraduate and postgraduate education, where we often find Project management as study subject. Students are educated to participate, to write and coordinate such projects. With all that autocratic style is not often used by kindergarten managers, we found a positive relation between it and enforcement strategies for reducing resistance to change. Teachers have a strong motivation for their work, are opened to new tasks, and enjoy communication no matter the hierarchy. The research has a series of limitations too. First one is represented by the impossibility to make general statements, because of the small number of subjects. A second limitation is

owned to the little number of change generating factors; we only used satisfaction, perception of personal risk and effort. A last limit put us in the impossibility to calculate student T test with the teachers visions compared to managers' one, because we had a small number of subjects with managerial role.

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