The 4th Edition of the International Conference:
Paradigms of the Ideological Discourse 2012

Didactic and Managerial Paradigms – Tendencies and Evolutions
in the 3rd Millennium

Simona Mioara Marin

*Associate professor, PhD, “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania

Abstract

The issue of a new legislation in the Romanian education system generated the institutional and operational reorganisation of structures, forms and also practices applied in the field of training human resources in the education system. The challenge fits the changes; the immediate necessity experienced in the school reality imposes the rethinking of the didactic approach, the adjustment of methodologies, regulations and specific procedures to the new requirements and directions within the field of education. The article proposes the analysis of the new didactic and managerial paradigms and their circumstances for success within the context of humanity’s entrance in the 3rd millennium. One presupposition accompanies the entire paper: no matter the types of changes implemented in the education system, they will be successful and will have long lasting results if a few general conditions are respected, conditions based on the educational and moral-axiological specificity of the school.

© 2012 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.
Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of Dunarea de Jos University of Galati.
Open access under CC BY-NC-ND license.

Keywords: educational changes, didactic and managerial paradigms, principles, circumstances for success

1. Introduction

Educational changes and the mechanisms for generating these changes represent one of the present-day themes of the research aiming to analyse the systems of education. Regardless of the perspective adopted, such an issue of the evolutions and didactic and managerial tendencies necessarily presupposes the settlement within the general frame of the transformations that took place at the level of the society. The specialized literature on these changes presents the characteristics of the knowledge-based society as well as the inevitable conditionings between the school organisation and present phenomena such as: globalisation, economic crisis, the innovation of communication and information technologies, the increasing competition in a changeable environment, etc.

* Simona Mioara Marin
E-mail address: simonamarin.2011@yahoo.com
Educational institutions everywhere function in a rather unstable socio-economical environment, fluctuating even in the least decades in terms of values and efficiency, which is differentially concretized in each nation’s level of civilisation. In Romania, processes are much more intensive and, therefore, more controversial; all systems experienced the effects of globalisation which lead to changes in the environment and to an increase in competitiveness at the social level on a background of “increased turbulences” – as they were called by A. Toffler (1980) in his work “The Third Wave” – that will lead to social crises and pressures generated by competition and quick decision-making. Such a context generates multiple changes in school organisations, both at the administrative-managerial level and the didactic one, so that managers and teachers have to permanently explore more alternative models, strategies, structures, methods, technologies and practices for organising and performing educational activities.

2. Principles and conditions for achieving success in the development of the school organisation in the 3rd millennium

The article proposes the analysis of the new didactic and managerial paradigms and their circumstances for success within the context of humanity’s entrance in the 3rd millennium. A presupposition accompanies the entire paper: no matter the types of changes implemented in the education system, they will be successful and have long lasting results if a few general conditions are respected, conditions that are based on the educational and moral-axiological school specificity. Increasing the efficiency of school organisations firstly presupposes the optimisation of the learning environment for students and teachers, which is the premise for quality in education. The subject remains open for further investigations as we cannot clarify the entire issue of educational changes, such a complex matter which is permanently subjected to an intense dynamics. Alternatively, we can synthesise a few action principles and recommendations for management teams in schools, which we decoded by studying the specialized literature and processing the empirical data collected from case studies of school organisations and from the information provided by members of school organisations who were involved in a qualitative investigation achieved by means of structured interviews.

The analysis of evolutions in the last period displays a first characteristic: an increase in competition and the intensification of changes in both educational components – didactic and managerial. The impact of the two phenomena is easily observed both in individual action and, even more so, in their interdependency. The causal relation is nominated in all interviews with teachers and managers and it is found in strategic school documents in over 90% of the school organisations that were included in the investigation.

“The educational market” is the second characteristic that leaves its mark on the didactic and managerial-administrative activities, being an effect of the dominance of competitiveness both at the individual, organisational level and between the learning levels – pre-school, primary, middle and secondary. Teachers, students, managers and the administrative staff declared in their interviews that they feel the pressure and the turmoil of present times, mentioning as solutions for survival attitudes such as: dynamism, flexibility, openness to innovation, promptitude in assimilating and implementing the new instructive-educational strategies and technologies.

“Learning organisations” continue to be, even at the beginning of this century, one of the successful orientations that allow teachers and managers to adjust to more and more complex sets of changes. One of the promoters for this solution, Peter Senge (1990, p.3) claims that in such an organisation people continuously develop their capacity to create results they truly desire, the collective aspiration is freely agreed upon and people continuously learn how to learn. Thus, schools can embrace the spirit of the future era which will be given by action, movement, experimentation, reaction speed and adjustment in terms of optimising the organisation and designing new functioning means.

Technological innovations and changes clearly represent another characteristic that leaves its mark on education. The progress registered on their level allows a great number of teachers, managers and school organisations to discover one another’s activities, successes, problems and to offer flexible variants of education
forms - such as the open distance learning or the educational alternatives – or, perhaps, even the daring “virtual” educational activities.

In this permanently new context, always in search for better, more efficient means, it is natural to have many question marks regarding both the teaching and the managerial activity: Which is the appropriate strategy for changing and developing the school organisations? Which are the principles, guidelines that any teacher and manager could apply in order to generate performance and quality education? The process of studying the school organisations and the way in which the educational reforms are created and implemented allows us to state that changes in the didactic and managerial field and the development of education can be successful by following some general principles:

- Aligning the schools to the changes in the socio-economic and cultural environment entails an efficient administration and a specific management maintained primarily at the level of the work teams. This means promoting the members of the school organisation, by acknowledging and encouraging the positive resources they possess, by making visible each person’s success and contribution, by ensuring a positive organisational atmosphere. Efficient administration presupposes, then, decision making and involving the teams in this activity, but also a clear designation of responsibilities for each member in this regard (Alecu, S, 2007, pp. 250).

- The commitment to school development is more probable when the people involved in running the institutional projects are consulted and involved in making decisions. Strategies such as the distribution of power, the expansion of the leading positions, rewarding the staff, opening and inclusion, tact, calm and, why not, even patience are necessary in a dynamic process of change and development.

- Teachers and school managers must be motivated and interested in making a change; they must have the willingness to turn the institutional projects and, implicitly, the development of the school organisation into a success. This will is generated by a empowerment or an increased delegation which is promoted by means of a participative-democratic management. The commitment and optimism of teachers, their hope and dedication are associated with their working conditions; their involvement in the development of institutional projects creates this type of delegation or professional empowerment.

- In order for school development to be genuine, institutional projects must consider the involvement of the pupil and of the other educational partners in making decisions, in the organization and the achievement of the planned activities.

- The objectives of an institutional development project must be correlated with the general purposes of education, with educational policy, the objectives of school reform, in order to avoid the discrepancies and dysfunctions. Likewise, a compromise must be achieved between the objectives and the possibilities of attaining them, so that the project can have a realistic and achievable character.

- The adjustment of the management structures to the current dynamism and social conditions, the decisional and acting involvement of the school organization members, monitoring the progress of the institutional projects are elements as important as measuring the results.

- The barriers in the way of development must be regarded as challenges, so that solving the problems and finding the solutions to become a constant and interesting activity. Moreover, a good circulation of information is required between the teams and the partners in the project, ensuring transparency for the entire project and its activity.

- Institutional projects for developing the school organization particularly value human creativity; creative, open schools have an important advantage in the context of quick changes, over the rigid, conservative schools, suspended in routine and conventionality, which enter a demotivating state of inertia.
• The appropriate frame for change is generated by the institutional projects of development which favour the development of common values, a culture of cooperation, openness and communication, the creation of a stimulating organizational climate, all these being decisive elements for the longevity of the project’s positive effects.

• Changes are successful only in the context of a “rich” school culture – where collaboration between teachers is achieved for the development of the school – therefore, any successful project can become a practical model for all schools to build cultures based on collaboration and development.

• One of the conditions for success and endurance over time is for the people making changes to come from the educational system in order to consolidate the initiatives for change and, thus, to obtain the institutionalisation of change.

• Not without importance are the existence, recognition and granting freedom of expression to some counterpower groups or counter-projects of change. They must be taken into consideration at all the stages of implementation since the analysis of all expressed viewpoints can guarantee an increase in the realistic character and the relevance of the development strategy adopted.

3. Conclusions

Didactic and administrative-managerial activities, school organisations on the whole and their members are, thus, under the sign of permanent challenges that demand rapid changes, adjustments and sometimes even radical transformations. Knowledge society led to a greater appreciation for human resources and the intellectual capital rather than for the material resources, which represents an advantage of the learning institutions as the main sources for providing value and knowledge.

Various authors tried to find constructive solutions for schools and teachers to develop their adjustment, change, innovation or relational abilities in order to achieve success in the social environment, a target that is more difficult to reach because of the unpredictable, dynamic present conditions and the organisations that become more and more flexible and with people who are increasingly active and independent. Nevertheless, school organizations, by the specificity of their educational activity, have a dominant in the degree of development in terms of human resources and, implicitly, the moral–axiological dimension. “The education of the 3rd Millennium has on the one hand the chance to be performed in an extremely diverse environment, contextualized, under circumstances characterized by both stimulating and conflicting forces, which may favour the capitalization of creativity, initiative, human cooperation and communication; on the other hand, all these aspects of the environment in which educational institutions operate often become a disadvantage become it can not be established a clear cut distinction in the relationship between factor and effect which reduces the chances of scientific researches to provide generally valid models for developing and implementing educational policies. As the complexity scale increases in our post-modern society, it has been registered a souring increase in the request for the ability to synthesize the opposite forces where possible and work with their coexistence where necessary in order to achieve success. The development of the educational system requires changes and action. But still, it is difficult to create strategies of development for schools that are located in a social context that is also in continuous change” (Marin, S.M., Nicolae Ioana, 2012).

Nevertheless, in the way to success in education and knowledge there is a fundamental condition, that of learning, which is valid for both people and organisations which have to permanently learn and translate learning into action. On the other hand, we must not forget that learning is a process that depends on our personal experience, on the set of personal values, beliefs and also on values, beliefs and practices that compose the culture of school organization to which we belong. Acquiring the status of member in a school organisation represents an influence on our way of perception and the interpretation of organisational life through the lens of the values and beliefs promoted at its level.

As a conclusion, we emphasize that one of the general problems of change is the fact that there are more forms of change and more reasons that determine individuals and systems to reconsider their usual ways of undertaking the educational activities. In this article, the problem concentrated on those types of change that enter
the category of “purposive changes”, the educational change being deliberate and intentional, at least for a category of people who are close to the process of change. This means that we will not analyse those efforts to change which are based only on the managers’ intuition or instinct for “managing” in an internal and external environment in crisis. The distinction between the two categories of change actually provides the premise for the success of the educational intervention, since the planned change requires the elaboration of a plan which predicts all the implications of the new actions over the other components of the educational system, while the other changes are individual reactions to the elements of the system, with unexpected effects, sometimes positive, but mostly without a promising impact over the development strategy.

Acknowledgements
This paper was written within the “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania.

References