



# Assessment Of The Education And Managerial Training Importance In Change Management - The Case Of Croatia

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## ABSTRACT

Management is the process of working with and through others to achieve organizational goals. This process requires certain managerial skills that are the basis of every manager's work and largely affect the organization's positioning on the market. Education and managerial training is extremely important in change management. The aim of this research was to assess the openness of Croatian managers towards change management and to assess the importance of education and managerial training in change management. The results of the research indicate that Croatian managers consider skill in change management important and that they are open to changes. For the best possible changes introduction, it is necessary to invest more knowledge, raise the level of awareness about changes and the need for their introduction in organizations.

**Index Terms**—change management, managerial skills, managerial training.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Change management is an integral part of the organization of the modern era. Changes are a condition for the organization to survive on the market. Change in the organization implies any modification that occurs on some element of the organization [1]. In order to be able to manage the changes in a quality way, the changes need to be implemented in an organized manner and in the best possible way. Managers of all levels in the organization must be educated on change management in order to be able to properly organize departments, units or even the entire organization depending on the level of management [2]. Through change management, managers face challenges of various kinds for which they must also be prepared and aware of the level of responsibility they assume when starting to introduce changes [3]. Change management, is defined as a systematic process of applying the knowledge, procedures and tools necessary to reflect the change on the people who will be influenced by it. The goal of change management is the successful implementation of the desired business solution in an organized and methodical manner, managing the impact of change on key people [4]. The development of management, leaders and managers led to the popularization of this profession and the opening of new roles for managers in modern business. With the expansion of management, the roles of managers have also expanded. From classic managers, and classic managerial roles and positions, managed organizations were created that expanded and with their expansion opened up new needs and new managerial roles. The main objective of this paper is to assess the openness of Croatian managers towards change management and to assess the importance of education and managerial training in change management. This paper is organized as follows: the second section provides a theoretical background on change management. The third section presents the role of management in change management. In fourth section managerial skills and business management styles are described. Surveyed sample and research methods are described in Section 5, and empirical results from the study in Section 6. Finally, data analysis and discussion of the results have been laid out in the last section.

## II. CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN THE ORGANIZATION

Changes are influenced by external and internal factors [5]. External factors arise from the organization's business environment and the organization itself has little influence on them. Internal factors refer to the company, departments, units or the organization as a whole. People are the main resource of change management. The human resource that the organization possesses is the main indicator of the success of

change management. A proper approach to change management is very important for the proper introduction of changes. The behavior of individuals is the main link in the introduction of changes, therefore it is important to properly approach human resources as well as all other resources important for the introduction of changes. The steps in approaching change management are [6]:

1. Mobilize commitment to change through joint analysis of the problem
2. To develop a common vision on ways of organizing and managing in order to achieve goals such as market competitiveness
3. To achieve agreement on the new vision, the competence that will legitimize it and the cohesion that will set everything in motion
4. To carry out revitalization in all departments without pressure from above, from the top. Don't force it, let each department find its own way to the new organization
5. Formalize the revitalization through the formal policy of the system and organization
6. Monitor and adapt the strategy to problems that arise in the process of introducing and implementing changes.

People who introduce change and approach change management must be visionaries, possess temperament, leadership skills and acceptance by the people over whom the change is being introduced. The risk of change is always manifested in the fact that it can cause success or failure. For this reason, it is important to approach with responsibility and respecting the recommendations and guidelines created over the years by more experienced managers. Change management in times of technology, pandemic, chaos and global competition has become a real challenge for managers. Change and change management implies the development and monitoring of a series of activities over a certain period of time. When managing change, it is very important to have evidence and data about the needs for introducing change. Change in each of its stages can damage and throw people who are part of the introduced change out of their comfort zone. The main characteristic of changes in modern development is their number and lack of consistency. The increased number of failed changes is also a characteristic of modern development. All in all, the changes that are taking place in modern development are due to the younger generation of managers who are more open to change, but often have not taken over the persistence of the older generations. A large amount of knowledge and opportunities in modern development is easily available, which gives greater openness to new knowledge and learning from the experience of people who are going through similar situations and periods in their own organizations.

### III. THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Changes in the organization start from the management. Managers at all levels are responsible for introducing changes. The operational level of the company will never go into the process of introducing change on its own initiative. The world in which organizations find themselves today is fast-paced. Because of this, change management is a bigger challenge, and the main reason for this is the time component. Organizations and society as a whole are in a period of sudden and turbulent changes, in this process some companies will fail and some will just develop [7]. Management at all levels must motivate, which is also one of the most important managerial skills as in general management as well as in the change management segment. Middle management is often the biggest obstacle in the way of introducing changes, most of them are convinced that they have things under control. Their main task is to ensure the normal functioning of the organization while at the same time implementing change. They must demand open and constant feedback from employees, thus giving them the right to evaluate their managerial performance [8]. Whether it's lower, middle or higher management, each of them presents its own risks and with its reduced agility towards change from an apparently positive situation that currently looks stable can lead the company or organization in the direction of a negative growth trend. How managers deal with the main factors that need to be considered when introducing changes in an organization greatly affects the success of the change itself. Whenever changes are considered, the following factors must be taken into account:

1. Agent of change
2. What should be changed
3. What kind of change should be introduced
4. Individuals affected by the change
5. Assessment of change

The wider the change, the more extensive change management is and requires more people. Likewise, change management contains teams of people who are needed to achieve the main goal, which is the successful implementation of change. Change management consists of a series of small steps necessary to achieve a given goal. Any change implementation process must be planned. Within the plan, there are phases of the change implementation process. For the needs of practice, numerous models of the execution of the change process have been developed, which basically differ in the number of stages. Some of the applied models are: Lewin's change model [9], Kotter's model [10], [11], McKinsey's 7S model [12], [13].

Resistance to change is a very common phenomenon. For people, a change in environment causes fear, discomfort and discomfort. Resistance is considered a natural reaction of people who are afraid of change and new unknown situations that change brings [14]. Employees express resistance in different ways, and the most common types of resistance are open, implicit, immediate and delayed. In open resistance, employees

immediately express negative attitudes towards the change that was mentioned, implicit and delayed are characterized by a subtler reaction, such as reduced motivation, absenteeism, more mistakes [15].

The organization must be a place where all employees participate in change either by initiating change or accepting change. Organizational learning can also influence the reduction of resistance in the process of introducing changes. The organization must educate and teach its employees in a high-quality manner and accustom them to change, to openness to change. Forms by which organizational culture can stimulate organizational learning and act as continuous change are [14]:

1. Education and communication - helps employees understand the change and build trust through discussion and communication
2. Participation - enables employees who are resisting to participate in the decision-making process for change
3. Helping and supporting - advising and teaching employees
4. Negotiation - used when resistance comes from powerful sources, so negotiation is an important factor
5. Manipulation and co-opting - distortion of facts with the help of false information
6. Coercion - original threats and forces, used when previous methods do not yield results.

#### **IV. MANAGERIAL SKILLS AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STYLES**

Management is usually defined as the process of working with and using others to achieve organizational goals in a changing environment with effective and efficient use of limited resources [1]. If management is viewed from the angle that it is a process of working with others and with the help of others, then it is clear that certain skills are necessary for this process. It is precisely from this need that managerial skills are created, which are the basis of the work of every manager. A manager is a person whose primary tasks derive from management. He plans and makes decisions, organizes business and work, engages and leads people and controls information, physical, financial and human resources. The manager's personality is unquestionable and it is always a good foundation for building a quality manager. In order to fulfill the duties of a manager at a satisfactory level, a manager must possess certain knowledge and skills. The role of managerial skills is very large and largely affects the positioning of the organization in the market in which it functions. Managerial skills consist of many small skills that are seemingly irrelevant and have minimal impact on managers. As the number of managerial skills increases, so does the division into segments within the category of managerial skills. The most general division of managerial skills is the division into: basic and special managerial skills [1]. Basic managerial skills consist of several subcategories: conceptual skills, people skills, technical skills, and design skills. Every skill listed here is essential for a manager and his professional development. Conceptual skills include the possibility and need for a manager to analyze, diagnose, understand complex tasks as well as their interrelationships and the causes and consequences that their connection causes. People skills is a particularly interesting category because change management is closely related to people skills. Technical skills contain knowledge and skills. They imply that the manager knows how things work at the functional level in the organization. Therefore, the manager must know the lowest and smallest parts of the organization in order to know its possibilities. Design skills contain the need for a manager to shape, to make order out of chaos, to make progress and to create within his competences. Generating possible solutions is the basis of design skills, as well as the fine line between abstraction and applicability and, ultimately, comprehensibility. Managerial skills are grouped into five skill categories, among which are: planning skills, organizing skills, human resources management skills, leadership skills, and controlling skills. In short, special managerial skills contain several segments of which it is not necessary to highlight any of them, but to see them as a whole that needs to be completed. By omitting any of the above-mentioned skills, a managerial flaw will arise and a space will be created that will result in the manager being deficient in certain aspects.

##### **A. The role and significance of managerial skills in change management**

In order to manage changes well, the manager must possess managerial skills related to change management and all those related to change management. Because of its influence, change management can largely define the direction and path of an organization in its competitive position and business path. Managerial skills related to change management, from those related to emotional intelligence to those related to motivation and communication skills, must be adopted and applied. With the modernization and accelerated development of both management and managers, it is very important to meet modern trends, which means to adhere to the latest research and practical examples that indicate that nowadays there are organizations whose specialty is change management and which deal with the service of introducing changes into the organization. The significance of managerial skills in change management has grown throughout history, but this does not mean stagnation, but only a potential greater need to develop managerial skills due to the fact that there is an increasing number of managers and the competition between them is increasing. The goal of every manager is to improve himself to the highest possible level, and the goal of the organization as a place where the manager will work is to hire a competent person who will manage changes in a quality way. Managerial skills will grow with their role and importance and will have an increasing influence in change management because quality change management requires a number of other factors that will only make a maximum contribution if they are all fulfilled. The absence of any factor for the introduction of change will lead to a situation where the change will be introduced but not implemented, partially accepted or accepted in full but not retained for a long period of time. Personal improvement presupposes the desire and motivation of the individual to invest

in his own improvement through his own efforts without the mediation of the organization in which he works. The role of personal development is based on the assumption that the organization wants to reach the highest possible standard. The procedures that need to be carried out for the implementation of continuous improvement are [6]:

1. Formulate and publicize the business strategy
2. Determine the key areas in which the continuous improvement policy must support the business strategy
3. Assign one member of the board to take care of it
4. Develop continuous training programs with an emphasis on the training process
5. To create conditions for recognition, review and development of ideas about continuous improvement
6. Provide training on developing and applying new ideas
7. Develop a benchmark for evaluating performance
8. Provide recognition for good ideas
9. Communicate the goals of continuous improvement to everyone
10. Try to simplify things

Personal training is of particular importance for a manager's life. Professional development, whether by the organization for which one works or of a personal nature, must be constant and must be understood, applied and used in the best possible way. The role of personal development is manifested in the need for progress. Without improvement, there is no advancement and it is not possible to build either a personal career or the life cycle of the organization. Personal education is one of the things that are not obvious or noticeable right away, but are things that come to light over the years and give their results. It is of crucial importance that there is a personal development plan and that it is made individually so that it is adapted in the best possible way to the person who goes through it. Just as managerial skills have increased in importance, personal development has an even greater impact on the organization in which the manager operates and on him personally. Mental models are part of management and managerial skills. Mental models are deep-rooted assumptions, generalizations, or even images or ideas about how the world works that influence how we perceive the world and how we act, and limit people to familiar ways of thinking and acting. Often mental models have an influence on the behavior of individuals, without them even being aware of it [16]. Mental models make it possible to act on change management. Given that mental models imply deep-rooted settings of the individual and the organization, they can be used to influence changes more easily and ultimately reduce resistance to change. Management, managerial skills, modernization of business and the era in which it is located and in which organizations operate necessarily entail issues of strategic thinking. Strategic thinking is a concept that has started to make drops in marketing. On the other hand, it is perfectly applicable to other fields, except commercial or professional domains. In fact, it is a useful approach in almost all sectors. An approach that looks at today with a future perspective is called strategic thinking. In other words, it refers to those who can predict the effect of actions, have a long-term vision, creative vision and directed towards the success of exact goals. As the name suggests, strategic thinking involves strategy. A coordinated action plan aimed at significant success. Strategic thinking includes strategy, which is defined as a plan aimed at success. Likewise, in modern times, strategic thinking has become the basis of competitive advantage.

#### B. Managing the vision, mission and goals of the company

Managing the vision, mission and goals is the basis of any organization's leadership. At the beginning of the work of each organization, the goals, vision and mission of the company must be defined. The vision of the company implies the mission of the company, that is, the reason for its existence. The vision represents what we want the company to become over a certain period. If the vision of the company is not defined, it is not possible to build a mission and goals. The mission of the company represents the desire and position from which we want to start and the path where we want to go. In order to go from the starting position to the destination, the company must set goals that must be well set and managed in order to give their maximum potential. When the vision, mission and goals are set, it is necessary to have a person who will manage all three items and maintain the degree of flexibility necessary for the vision, mission and goals of the company to be realized, but also to recognize the moments in which it is necessary to show the specified flexibility. Changing the vision, mission and goals depends on the orientation of the organization and its openness to change. If the organization is open to change, its vision, goal and mission are subject to change. Their change occurs due to the effect of the introduced changes in the organization. It is also necessary to manage changes because only in this way can the organization function. If changes are not managed, it is not possible to fulfill the goal, mission and vision of the organization.

## V. SAMPLE AND RESEARCH METHODS

Research data were collected using an online questionnaire. 252 Croatian managers participated in the research. The average age of the respondents was 35 years. There were slightly more women in the sample (52%). Most respondents work in small companies, 46% of them. 37% work in medium-sized companies, and the least in large companies. The largest number of companies comes from the service and production sector, followed by the public sector and trade. Most respondents are employed in middle management (52%), 30% are employed in lower management level, and the least in senior management level. Descriptive and inferential statistics methods were used in data analysis. Basic descriptive statistical indicators were



calculated to describe the basic features of the research data. Differences confirmed at the level  $p < 0.05$  were considered statistically significant.

## VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The conducted questionnaire sought to examine whether managers in Croatia are open to change. With this intention, the following variables are defined:

V1: I react positively to changes in the organization where I work

V2: I evaluate openness to change with a grade:

V3: I consider that changes are an indispensable part of the organization

V4: I consider that I have a sufficient level of knowledge in the area of change management skills

Respondents evaluated their attitudes on a five-point scale (1 – I do not agree at all to 5 – I completely agree).

Table 1 shows the basic indicators of descriptive statistics calculated for the above variables defined as the attitudes of Croatian managers towards changes.

Table 1. Attitudes of Croatian managers towards changes

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of variation
V1	4.06	0.72	17.66
V2	3.94	0.66	16.80
V3	4.45	0.65	14.63
V4	3.58	0.85	23.85

Source: authors

Considering the arithmetic mean, respondents expressed the highest degree of agreement with variable V3, i.e. they believe that changes are an indispensable part of organization and modern business, regardless of whether it is a business process redesign, introduction of new technology, improvement of quality or change of strategy. With the lowest average score, the respondents evaluated the sufficiency of the level of knowledge in the field of change management skills. The calculated coefficients of variation do not indicate a relatively large dispersion of the data. The analysis of selected descriptive statistical indicators related to the attitudes of Croatian managers towards change supports the hypothesis that managers are open to change. The above can be explained by the fact that organizational change must begin and end with a change in man, his behavior, a change in attitude, values and a way of thinking.

Furthermore, the conducted research sought to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the evaluation of education in change management between managers in Croatia. The following variables were analyzed:

W1: I believe that practical knowledge gathered through daily work is sufficient and no further education is necessary

W2: I have no need to expand existing knowledge about change management

W3: I believe that theoretical knowledge about the changes introduction is not necessary and that changes can be introduced instinctively.

Table 2. Assessment of managers' knowledge and education

Variable	p-value
W1	0.001
W2	0.000
W3	0.566

Source: authors

One sample t-test calculated for the analyzed variables defined as managers' knowledge and education are shown in Table 2. On the one hand, the respondents confirmed that the practical knowledge acquired through everyday work is no longer sufficient today and that they need further education. They are aware of the necessity of their own effort, investment of time in education in order to expand existing knowledge that will enable them to manage changes more easily. However, respondents partly believe that changes can be managed instinctively and that theoretical knowledge about the introduction of changes is not necessary. Based on the above, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the assessment of managers' knowledge and willingness to improve and acquire new knowledge, which do not refer exclusively to minor improvements in business processes, but to the perception of the importance of new knowledge that will enable them to control changes, greater responsibility and resourcefulness in decision-making. The

environment in which today's organizations operate is extremely dynamic. In such an environment, the only way of organizational survival is change and management's ability to adapt.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to determine which knowledge and competences of employees influence competitive advantage, what is the degree of development of education and investment in human capital in different companies and determine the differences between them in this matter. Education and investment in managers has the same importance as investment in employees, it is a guarantee of successful operation and functioning of every business entity and institution. Constant investment in the development of management personnel is aimed at qualification and training for successfully dealing with all the tasks that are presented to them they put them. Only with such professional managers will the organization or institution be able to achieve the success and competitive advantage it strives for from the very beginning of its existence and operations. Companies of different sizes do not have the same opportunities to invest in employees and managers. First of all, there are big differences in available funds between large and small companies. Constant investment in human capital today in Croatia can be linked exclusively to the big I medium enterprises of the private sector. For this reason, we find the best managerial staff in such companies. The goal that every business entity should strive for today is investing in employees and managers, because that is the only way to success and survival in today's world, knowledge market. An initial investment creates the basis for moving away from the competition, and not investing in people brings big losses in the long run. From all of the above, it can be concluded that the knowledge of managers and employees, reputation companies on the market, the ability to learn and develop, innovation and creativity, and motivation have a positive effect and achieve a competitive advantage on the market, and that is what the goal is of every company.

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