K Betriebliche Weiterbildung

K.1   Leading Digital Change – Management of Hybridity and Change in Education and Social Service Institutions

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1   Introduction

Since the 1990s, change management has received considerable attention as the new paradigm for the management of organisational transformations as well as behavioural and motivational changes within both for-profit and non-profit organisations. As such, constant changes have also become the new "normality" in education and social service organisations. It is inherent to organisations to be confronted permanently and simultaneously with different 'rationalities' of their stakeholders. As hybrid organisations, they have to mediate between the logics of governmental, market-based, and societal structures (Brandsen et al., 2005). This is also crucial in the light of the various challenges related to the integration of digital technologies into almost all areas of education and social services and the development of new virtual business cultures within those organisations.

Against this background, this paper will discuss the questions of how the process of digital change management must be designed, implemented, and sustainably developed in educational and social service organisations, of what principles of leading such changes could be relied on, and of what leadership the change agents in such a process require specific qualities and competencies. Digital change and innovation continuously include organisational learning, the re-placement of old management practices with more human-centred management activities, the development of new digital literacy skills and leadership competencies, the facilitation of personnel development to mobilise the staff to enact changes in their behaviour, values, and attitudes in volatile environments and uncertain times (Arnold, 2019). Eventually, the paper leads to a discussion and reflection of a sustainable framework for digital change management at the level of the individual change agents, change programs and initiatives, and the organisation itself.

2   Hybridity in Educational and Social Service Institutions

As 'hybrid organizations' (Denis et al., 2015), education and social service institutions form enterprises across sector boundaries in which different, mutually dependent values, logics, and action orientations of the respective stakeholders have a significant influence on organizational control.

In Germany, they are confronted with various other competitors in a generally limited 'social/education market,' the so-called 'third sector' beyond the state, society, and market (Arnold et al., 2017, p. 46): "Hybridity is not, therefore, any mixture of features from different sectors, but according to this view, is about fundamental and distinctly different governance and operational principles in each sector" (Billis, 2010, p. 3).

According to Heinze, Schneiders, and Grohs (2011), the evolution of hybrid organizations can be attributed in particular to changes in the 1990s, when the welfare state that traditionally adheres to the dominant principles of social security, decentralized benefits, and corporate participation structures in decision-making processes had to adapt to the New Model of Governance (NSM). The perception, recognition, and implementation of different (sector) logics became decisive for the control of educational, social and non-profit organizations: "different orientations (e.g. state and association-related orientations), creating unity while maintaining diversity (e.g. organizational unity and diversity of stakeholders), the balancing of different control logics (…) and the creation and maintenance of community or the emancipation from their ties" (Eurich, 2013, p. 242, transl. MA). According to Evers and Ewert (2010, pp. 112ff.), four dimensions are particularly crucial for the control of hybrid organizations: (1) The availability of a multitude of different financial sources (e.g. fees, government grants, donations, fundraising, etc.); (2) organizational control that allows for the participation of stakeholders and interest groups at state and federal level (e.g. charities); (3) formal goals (e.g. cost-covering principle) are subordinated to the objectives of the social enterprise; (4) corporate identity emphasizes aspects of the change in the organizational environment in addition to the service to the customers. Eurich (2013, 251ff.) adds that the management of multiple identities lies at heart in such institutions, e.g. the simultaneity of different self-identities and external attribution, interprofessional cooperation, links to the local community, the inclusion of different stakeholders, and interest groups as well as volunteers.[1]

3 Digitisation in Education and Social Services

Digitisation can be understood as an apparent change in all areas of life and in society as a whole, which is caused by the advancing technical revolution in information technology as well as by disruptive and innovative business models that increase automation, flexibility, and individualization. Brennen and Kreiss (2016, p. 1f.) define "digitization as the material process of converting analogue streams of information into digital bits," and "digitalization as the way many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures."

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[1] In addition to organisational hybridity, we can also view the development of new virtual business cultures and teams within and between those organisations (e.g. Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017; Shekhar, 2006).

In contrast, digital business transformation (DBT) refers to a "process of reinventing a business to digitise operations and formulate extended supply chain relationships. The DBT leadership challenge is about reenergizing businesses that may already be successful to capture the full potential of information technology across the total supply chain" (Bowersox et al., 2005, p. 22f.). Due to the lack of space, we can only summarise here different aspects related to digitisation: (1) changes happen in all parts of society through digital technologies; (2) it refers to new challenges to collect, analyse and implement actions; (3) it is linked to the digital economy; (4) digitization takes place in processes, strategies across the entire value chain.

Education and social service institutions are increasingly being challenged by digital transformation. These challenges are related to the integration of digital technologies, concepts, and strategies into almost all areas of education and social services (Douse & Uys, 2018; Khalid et al., 2018; Kreidenweiß, 2018): (1) The continuous digitisation includes changes in structures, processes, strategies of organizations, and the entire value chain: new business models for digital platforms in all industries to enable smart networking, secure exchange of data, contract management between provider and customer, and intelligent analysis of data (digital economy); (2) Service robotics and artificial intelligence, robots and aids in elderly care to support people with limited opportunities, e.g. assisted living technologies, intelligent speech recognition and dialogue systems, blockchain technologies in the context of data exchange between state welfare and service providers in the organization of economic aid; development, implementation and evaluation of concepts for virtual youth work (so-called cyberstreetwork or virtual youth work 2.0); (3) Digital participation has become an elementary prerequisite for integration in society, while economical, demographical factors and the needs of disadvantaged communities can increase the digital divide; (4) Further training, coaching and other support offered for pedagogues to develop digital literacy and leadership skills not only for specialists and managers that go beyond classic mindsets. Digital literacy involves skills "to utilise technology to enhance and transform classroom practices and to enrich their professional development and identity" (Hall, Atkins, & Fraser, 2014, p. 5).

Digital leadership as "a strategic mindset that leverages available resources to improve what we do while anticipating the changes needed to cultivate a school culture focused on efficacy" (Sheninger, 2019, p. xix) are necessary for all organisations and all staff (not only CEOs). Many education and social service institutions have to develop and enhance digital leadership at various levels (ibid., p. XXI): student engagement, learning, and outcomes (technology-enhanced learning); innovative learning environments (development of learning and workspaces); professionalisation of learning processes (personalised learning pathways); communication (using various types of communication strategies and technology); public relations (sharing narratives); branding (e.g. positive use of social media); use of professional learning opportunities.

In a more general sense, education and social service institutions have to develop their digital business leadership in a long-term perspective, which "can only be achieved if a common digital competence base exists and future viable organizational concepts are applied (104)" and five fields of work and subjects are to be covered (Kreutzer et al., 2018, p. 105): (1) product ownership (e.g. connect digitisation to a clear business strategy); (2) customer-centric design (focus on customer relevance, usability, and experience); (3) communication (gain sponsorship and traction internally and attract the best candidates externally); (4) digital governance (enable adaptive strategic planning and identify opportunities); (5) data science (transform analytics into actionable insight).

4   Leading Digital Change

Leading digital transformation requires knowledge that helps to distinguish various types of organisational change processes (Porras & Silvers, 1991). On the one hand, the term organisational development (OD) (synonymous to planned change of first order) can be characterised as follows: it aims for partially changing work conditions, often with references to scientific concepts, to provoke changes in behaviour and attitudes of the personnel. It can also be understood as a reaction to the internal needs of developmental and environmental demands for adaptation due to changing market conditions. OD leads to a new developmental status quo of an organisation. On the other hand, organisational transformation (OT) (synonymous to change of second order) is regarded as a paradigmatic change of the whole organisation, for example, its vision, structures, processes, and work conditions concerning scientific concepts. It aims at behavioural and attitudinal changes of the personnel to shape desired future relations to the organisational environment. As Porras and Silvers (1991) have pointed out, each type of change will depend on different variables on at least two levels that moderate the change process: the organisational level (e.g. corporate philosophy, work conditions, and leadership principles) or the individual level (e.g. personal development of required skills or the introduction of new quality standards).

According to Weick and Quinn (1999), we can also distinguish various forms of intervention. Firstly, episodic change is a constant, less systematic change that happens if internal structures and demands from the environment are disproportionate. Such organisational change can be characterised with, for example, Kurt Lewin's model of organisational development. Episodic changes address short-term adaptations. The change agent is responsible for the introduction of new issues, step by step. Critically speaking, episodic changes do not permit long-term developments because it assumes a stable environment and involves mostly normative approaches or assumes rational, linear, and not circular processes of change (Burnes, 2004). Secondly, 'continuous change' (Orlikowski, 1996) refers to permanent modifications on the level of organisational processes and structures (e.g. adjustments of the product line, according to the demand of market or welfare services).

It is characterised by cyclical and long-term process orientation. The change agents need to be sense-makers and translators of change. Thirdly, planned change underlies the concept of 'think to act,' and it assumes a stable context, while processes need to be structured clearly. Planned change is a popular concept in the field of change management. Fourthly, improvised change is closely related to the concept of 'act to think', where changes are anticipated: If a problem emerges, the change agent is responsible for the exploitation of opportunities for successful changes. Improvised changes happen in typical phases or sequences: the anticipation of problems, the emergence of problems, exploit the opportunity, and so forth.

In education and social service organisations, change management needs to be equipped by different factors that support the initiation of a change process. Especially, Wilfried Krüger's (2009) '3W-Model' includes the following components: a demand for change ('Wandlungsbedarf' for example, in the form of an internal or external situational analysis), a willingness to change ('Wandlungsbereitschaft' based on values like participation and commitment) and the ability to change ('Wandlungsfähigkeit' based on values like flexibility and adaptation). These three intermediating factors of the change process are embedded in the sustainable framework for the digital change management developed in the following chapter.

5   Towards a Sustainable Digital Change Management Framework

The framework consists of four interrelated phases that are part of an interactive feedback-loop: (1) Pre-Phase: the initiation and identification of the demand for changes; (2) Digital Strategy Development (i.e. conceptualisation and setting objectives); (3) Process of Transformation (i.e. mobilisation of staff, realisation via project and quality management, personal development, implementation of results); (4) Monitoring and Optimization (see figure 1).
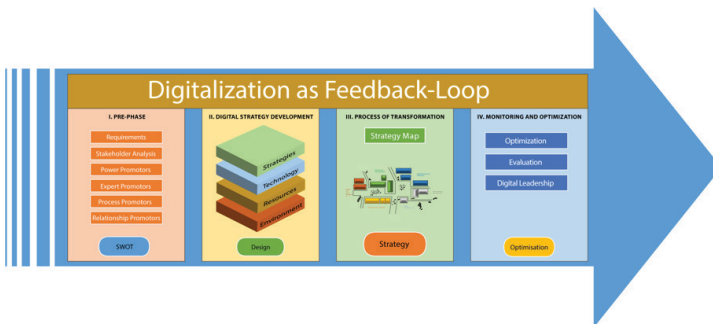

Figure 1: Digital Transformation Framework (author's illustration)

I. Pre-Phase: Innovation in Education and Social Service Institutions

Change Management is regarded as a goal-oriented action that aims at the realisation of organisational changes, development, and transformation, for example, of strategies, processes, structures, organisational culture, and relations to externals. As finances, time, and personnel are limited or insufficient in most institutions; its success is dependent on cooperative behaviour and attitudes of personnel and the innovation climate within the organisation. In the pre-phase, we need to analyse and define the requirements for the planned transformation process, such as objectives, organisational context, resources and barriers for the innovation, and the digital literacy and leadership skills. Furthermore, stakeholder analysis helps to identify and group people to be involved in the process according to their levels of participation, expertise, interest, and influence.

In the change process, individuals or groups actively support innovations in different roles as promotors. They have to cope with the ignorance, unwillingness, and resistance of their opponents who can prevent or delay innovation processes (Rost, Hölzle & Gemünden 2007, p. 342f.): (1) Power promotors who foster innovation through hierarchical power and their connection to the owner of the company; (2) Expert promotors who encourage innovation due to their specific expertise, ideas, and knowledge; (3) Process promotors who possess technological and organisational knowledge, are 'translators' within the organization, and can bring both of the abovementioned promotors together. As technological gatekeepers and due to their expert knowledge, they provide interpretation of subject-specific information and opinion leadership; (4) Relationship promotors who support the innovation process through their networking competence. They are essential for the coordinative tasks, information exchange, connecting the organisation to external partners to improve relationships, and overcoming distrust and regulating conflicts. All promotors are key persons for the development of innovations and have to play their specific roles in successful change processes.

II. Digital Strategy Development

The second phase of the change process deals with the strategic process. Euler and Seufert (2005) developed a sustainable framework for innovations in educational institutions that assumes an organisation as a social system of professionals and clients in which teachers act autonomously and in which self-organisation is required, such as self-regulated team-oriented learning which is situated in a continuously changing organisational culture. The model integrates the context and conditions ('Gestaltungsbedingungen' didactic concepts, structures, the tradition of the institution, personality and knowledge of the participants, competition, laws), the dimensions and variables of the organisation ('Gestaltungsvariablen' sustainability dimensions and factors; see below), and strategies ('Gestaltungsziele' different levels of sustainability, e.g. in the form of projects, system-oriented and potentials for innovation):

„Concerning the design conditions, the environment of the university (e.g. the political system, competitive situation, legal independence), that of the university itself (e.g. size of the university, tradition, university culture), as well as the characteristics, belong to the participants (lecturers, students) become" (ibid., p. 8; transl. M.A.). Against the background of this study, we summarize and group the five implementation variables developed by Euler and Seufert (2005) into four dimensions: (1) Change Strategies: What are the outcomes, objectives to be achieved in the process? (2) Technology: What problem-oriented infrastructure and digital learning environment do exist within the organisation? (2) Resources: What support structures, processes, knowledge, communication, finances, personnel do exist within the organisation? (3) Socio-cultural Environment: What changes apply to individuals? Does the change process fit the socio-cultural environment? What cultural differences and health conditions should be taken into consideration?

III. Process of Transformation: The Change Working Environment

Phase three integrates the work system theory (Alter, 2013, p. 75). This theory was developed to serve as a map-like system in which participants (e.g. teachers, admin staff, principal) perform processes and activities (e.g., pedagogics, social work, counselling, mentoring), using information (history of the organisation, job descriptions, schedules), technology (e.g. teaching concepts, digital equipment), and other resources (internal) to produce or provide products/services (study programmes, pre-school activities, counselling work) for specific customers (internal/external; clients pupils, learners, benefit recipients) and are dependent on the environment (e.g. organisational, socio-cultural, competitive, technological, regulatory, demographic), infrastructure (e.g. technical infrastructure, cloud systems shared with other work systems), and strategies (e.g. departmental, enterprise strategies). As shown in figure 2, all those factors should be in alignment with the work system.

IV. Monitoring and Optimization

The fourth phase includes different modes of monitoring and further development of organisational changes: Optimization means evolutionary and incremental changes of only parts and within an organization as a kind of fine-tuning. Evaluation is the systematic, criteria-oriented, and methodologically driven process to assess the efficiency and effectiveness, quality, benefits, and costs of programs and products provided by the organisation. Digital leadership as a long-term perspective that leverages available resources to improve and implement anticipating changes within an organisations' culture aims at a common digital competence based on which future concepts can be applied and developed.
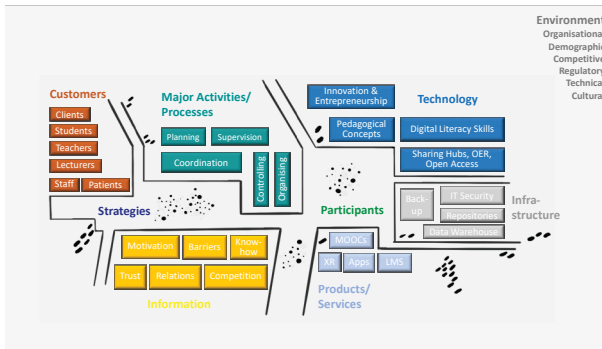
Figure 2: Road Map for the Digital Change (author's illustration)

6 Conclusions

Digital transformation is part and parcel of all areas in our life, which is true also for education and social service institutions. As hybrid organisations, they have to mediate not only between the logics of governmental, market-based, and societal structures but also take into consideration the different rationalities, values, and interests of the stakeholders. Leading digital change in such organisations requires a sustainable transformation framework that consists of four interrelated phases: (1) identification of the demand for change; (2) development of a digital change strategy; (3) implementation of the transformation; (4) monitoring and optimisation. This framework can be applied at the level of the individual change agents (e.g. the different promotors), change programs and initiatives (e.g. changes in the working environment), and to the organisation itself. Future research needs to discuss the drawbacks to organisational changes and possible implementation problems (e.g. resistance, barriers of the workforce).

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