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CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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Abstract:

What can Romanian Armed Forces commanders do to prepare for successfully implement the organizational change? First of all the commanders must understand in detail how the military organizations run and how the organizational change influences the military culture. The paper is an exercise which try to explain how a military organizational change depend on a continued leadership commitment and efforts at all levels.

Any imbalance occurred during organizational change phases will have effect in the outcome of the process.

Key words: Organizational Change, Military Culture, Hierarchy, Artifacts, Reinforcement mechanisms, Edgar Schein,

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is the examination of the interdependency between change management and organizational culture. To make this analysis the author tries to link some concepts and models of organizational change and cultural change with a real event. The author issues a general thesis regarding the subject and makes particular even fictionally assumptions about a specific organizational change in Romanian Armed Forces. The key event selected for the demonstration of the thesis affirmed is the development process of a new capability in the Romanian Armed Forces, the EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) capability. This paper is not intended to make an accurate analysis of the capability development process or the defense planning process in Romanian Armed Forces. The implementation of EOD capability at the low levels of organization is the subject of the analysis.

2. Organizational culture. Military culture

The concept of culture is recently added to the list of possible factors contributing to the effectiveness of the military organization. Besides the technology, leadership, personnel and training the *CULTURE*, known as Military Culture, is a key factor for organizational success during peace times or war times.

In a worldwide military context the most common conceptualization is the competing values framework designed by Lim Cameron and Robert Quinn. In my opinion this framework is also applicable to Romanian Armed Forces. The four quadrants represent four types of culture: the Hierarchy, Clan, Market, and Adhocracy.

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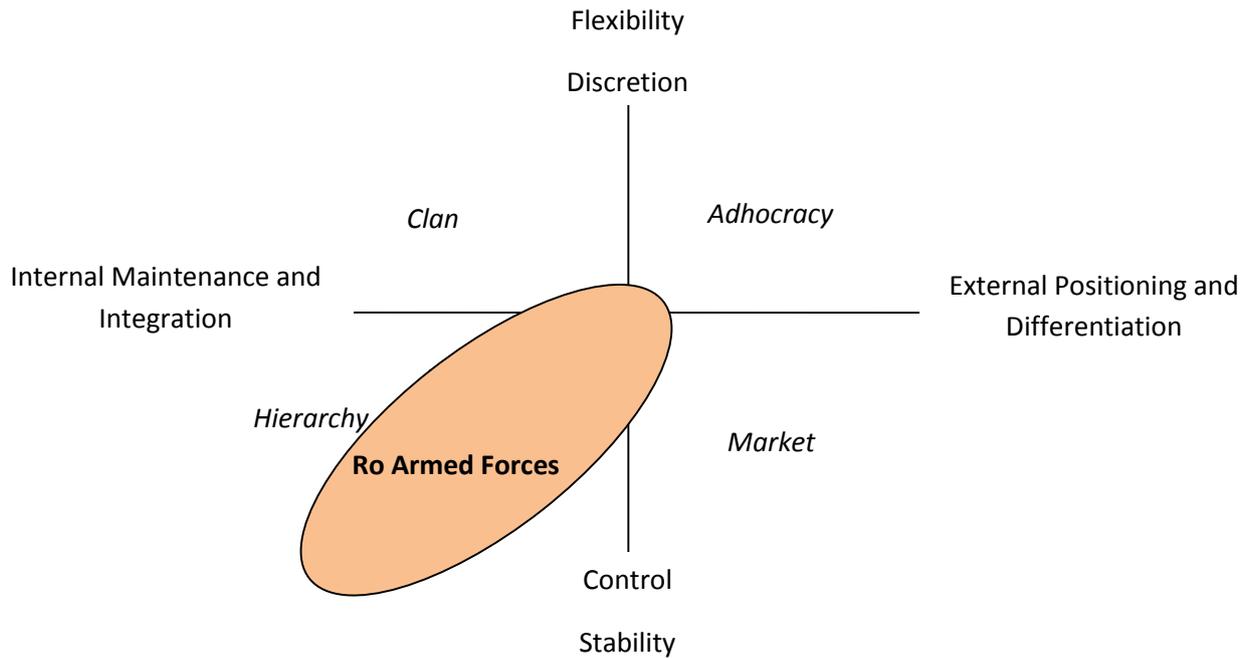


Fig.1 the Competing Values Adjusted Model [1]

The hierarchy culture has a traditional approach to military organization. Romanian Armed Forces focus on a chain of command and strictly defined procedures. Romanian Military culture fits with this type of organizational culture. *The clan* culture focuses more on flexibility. It fits only partial with a Romanian Military Culture due to the fact that the system doesn't encourage the leading through vision, shared goals and outcomes. *The market* culture is driven by result and is very competitive. Romanian Military Culture meets partially these requirements due to the conservative growth strategy. *The adhocracy* culture is distinguished by independence, creative and flexibility. Our Military Culture meets the least this type of culture. Fig.1 shows us that even if Military Culture is predominately located in one quadrant the practical experience it will overlap into the others.

Edgar Schein gave us another perspective over the organizational culture that can be applied to Romanian Military Culture. He said that there are three levels of culture [1]: *artifacts, norms and values, and underlying assumptions.*

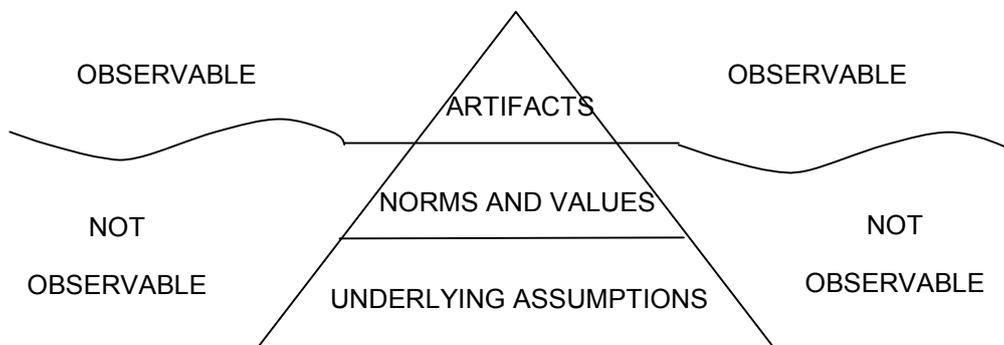


Fig.2 Schein's Organizational Culture Model [1]

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Artifacts represent the first level of culture. It can be observed by anyone. For instance military dress code, appearance, ceremonies, reward, punishments and the way the military personnel talk each other, are examples of artifacts. An important artifact for Romanian Military Culture is represented by the profile of military personnel issued during rescue operations or peace support operations. *Norms and values* cannot be observed and represent a deeper level of culture. Norms allow military personnel to know what is expected of them in some situations. Norms are unwritten rules and can produce surface-level artifacts. *Underlying assumptions* are situated at the lowest part of organizational culture and is also the trigger which produces norms especially in a military organization. For instance in Romanian Military Culture we have an underlying assumption that soldiers don't comply with the daily schedule. This generates the norm that military personnel cannot leave without permission or to be present at least five minutes prior any meeting or activity start. As a consequences it can be produced the artifact of disciplinary profile of the military personnel.

3. Military culture change

In a mature and successful organization the culture change is very difficult. We can say that in Romanian Armed Forces, an old and traditional organization, the culture change is even more difficult to be done. Edgar Schein warns that during attempts to change a culture, *“even if the assumptions are brought to consciousness, the members of the organization are likely to want to hold on to them because they justify the past and are the source of their pride and self-esteem”*[1]. Schein provided a model based on what he call them *“embedded and reinforcement mechanism”*. As a summary of the embedded mechanism described by Edgar Schein, the successful culture change depend on the following assumptions [1]:

- *what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis;*
- *how leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises;*
- *how leaders allocate resources;*
- *leader's use of deliberate role-modeling, teaching, coaching, and allocate rewards;*
- *how leaders recruit, select, and promote the personnel.*

4. A new capability in the Romanian Armed Forces

In 2002, at the Prague Summit, NATO Heads of States and Government adopted a package of measures to strengthen the Alliance. These measures included a new capability, the creation of a NATO Response Forces (NRF). The creation of NRF structures was to ensure the optimization of the Alliance's ability to respond quickly to new challenges and threats. This decision also influenced the partner countries, which have become members of Alliance later, including Romania. As a consequences Romania had to establish and prepare structures that can face the NRF challenges. One of the capabilities established as a Force Goal was the EOD capability.

5. Military organizational change model and the impact on the military culture

The beginning of the EOD capability in Romanian Armed Forces was modest. The first step was done in 1997 by creating a Training Center for EOD, for Land Forces. After Romania became member of NATO the developing plan for the EOD capability almost followed the Lewin's model.

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UNFREEZE STAGE. This phase was short, about one year starting with 2004. During this stage the first EOD structures have been created at Land, Air Force and Naval Forces mostly as part of other combatant units. The key personnel have been sent abroad for training in order to meet the minimum standards of performances in EOD field. There were issued the first orders from General Staff giving the guidance and establishing the Goals. Tremendous changes in the training process occurred. The English proficiency became mandatory for EOD personnel. Using world best equipments and following NATO procedures the EOD operators and their leaders became open-minded to the new challenges. Due to the fact that the personnel are inclined to embrace the changes more easily when their organizational culture is align with the main goal of the organization, the EOD units from Land forces and Air Forces have been created from engineering units. The military culture reflected through the engineering branch had a flexible component. The participations of this branch in many multinational operations made the engineer personnel more permissive to organizational change and their military culture change. In this way the overall process was smoothly. At the HQs level a change in management occurred defining in a clear way the chain of command for the new capability. There were implemented almost all embedded mechanisms, as there were described by Edgar Schein, in order to support related military culture change.

Bottom line is as follows:

A good interdependency between the organizational change and the military culture change in terms of mutual support was created.

CHANGE STAGE. This phase was longer than needed due to the inappropriate allocation of the resources to this process. In the first year the existed EOD units became distinctive units, and EOD a distinctive specialty of engineer branch. The final structure of the EOD capability has been created for Armed Forces. During this stage some elements of EOD capability were near the Final Operational Capability (FOC) and were engaged in EOD support operations. But after three more years the economic crisis affected the overall implementation of EOD capability in terms of sustainability of the capability. Without an appropriate logistic sustainment this stage lost the TEMPO of implementation. The personnel was less financial motivated and some of the high trained EOD operators left the branch affecting de motivation and cohesion of their teams. Leaders try to implement *embedded and reinforcement mechanisms* in order to support the culture change during this stage but not all of them had success. Some mechanism has been implemented by chance through the opportunity of many EOD personnel to participate into abroad ongoing operations.

Bottom line of this stage is

The organizational changes are incomplete implemented and the military culture doesn't meet the level of expected artifacts.

FREEZE STAGE. This phase appeared without the finish of the previously one. It's a result of the necessity to close the change process and to clearly define the outcome. In my opinion Fig.3 shows an imbalanced long-term change process. The sustainability of the process is not enough developed and is not entirely supported by military culture. The leaders cannot emplace Schein mechanism any more. Bottom line of this stage is:

In order to end the process a new cycle of organizational change should occur. This new cycle has to take place after the leaders make a detailed analysis of the correction measures and after a reasonable "waiting time".

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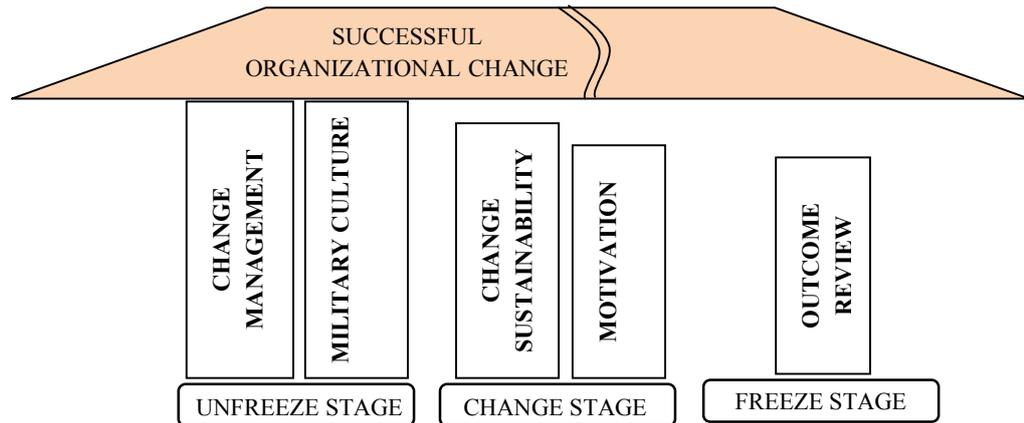


Fig.3 Imbalanced organizational change process

6. Conclusion

In my opinion a successful military organizational change imply a continued leadership commitment and efforts at all levels in order to maintain the appropriate interdependency between organizational change and organizational culture. It is very important to keep the TEMPO of this process. The longer change process occurs the most difficult is to maintain the sustainability of the change (organizational and culture) and the personnel motivation. In the case described below the *embedded and reinforcement mechanisms*, as they were called by Edgar Schein, had some good influence in the change stage but couldn't balanced the outcome. In order to finish this organizational change the leaders need to clear assess the outcome, to plan and start a new circle change process.

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