Come Agevolare il Cambiamento Organizzativo
Un Intervento sui Processi e sulla Struttura nella Pubblica Amministrazione Italiana

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Sommario

L'articolo descrive una ricerca/intervento condotta utilizzando un approccio personalizzato e bottom-up al fine di migliorare i processi amministrativi e comunicativi che interessano alcune delle Unità Organizzative (U.O.) universitarie coinvolte in una ristrutturazione organizzativa. Gli autori hanno condotto una diagnosi preliminare, utilizzando la metodologia della mappatura dei ruoli, successivamente i risultati sono stati condivisi con i partecipanti, al fine di sviluppare interventi organizzativi e formativi basati sulle esigenze del contesto e infine è seguita una fase di valutazione e monitoraggio dell'intero processo attraverso la stima, da parte dei partecipanti, dell'efficacia dei cambiamenti emersi. L'intervento ha prodotto un impatto positivo in termini di efficacia dei processi organizzativi, contribuendo a valorizzare i ruoli, a migliorare i processi condivisi e la comunicazione sia intra che intergruppo di lavoro. La ricerca/intervento ha inoltre contribuito all'identificazione di una serie di *best practices* da implementare nell'ambito della gestione delle risorse umane. Sia la pianificazione dell'intervento che coinvolgimento dei diversi livelli organizzativi ha permesso di agevolare il processo di innovazione mantenendo l'organizzazione focalizzata su una visione chiara degli obiettivi al fine di aumentare l'efficacia e garantire il successo a lungo termine.

Parole chiave

Pubblica amministrazione, Cambiamento organizzativo, Mappatura dei ruoli, Cambiamento culturale, Cultura organizzativa, Leadership, Intervento organizzativo, Approccio bottom-up.

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Supporting Organizational Change

An Intervention on Processes and Structure in Italian Public Administration

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Abstract

The authors used a tailored and bottom-up approach to design and implement an intervention aimed to improve the administrative and communicational processes of some University Organizational Units (OUs) involved in an organizational restructuring. Work started with a preliminary diagnosis, using role mapping methodology to deepen knowledge of the technical and administrative roles of the area; the next phase consisted in sharing the results with supervisors and participants, in order to develop organizational and training interventions based on the context needs; finally the intervention was evaluated, through an extensive assessment of the changes generated over time, which allowed the overall effectiveness of the process to be monitored. The intervention produced a positive impact in terms of effectiveness of the organizational processes, contributing to role enhancement, to improvements in collaborative processes, to better communication (both intra and inter group) and importantly to help identify a series of implementable Human Resources best practices. The authors adopted careful intervention planning, based on Kotter's process for organizational change and involved different organizational levels in order to increase the possibilities to turn the desired change into reality and ensure long-term success.

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Introduction

Every day organizations have to face many challenges arising from a constantly changing work world. Some examples are work market competitiveness and the ambiguity and uncertainty of job contexts, which affect both private and public companies.

The challenges that involve employees of the public sector, for example, could concern technological and regulatory updating, adaptation to changes in procedures or the use of new tools that frequently involve shared workflows between different departments, organizational units and teams. Italian public administrations, in particular, often have to make a cultural change, working on their flexibility and plasticity in order to face rapid and continuous changes, renewing processes and updating their structure (Ongaro & Valotti, 2008).

Therefore, in this article the authors will cover the issue of managing a change in the public administration (PA), presenting a case study that describes an intervention of organizational support conducted on administrative and technical staff in a northern-central Italian University. The paper intends to deepen the understanding of how organizational changes impact on human resources and underline the importance of strategic human resource management and enhancement.

Theoretical background

Literature on the topic agrees that most public administrations share a specific type of organizational culture defined as «bureaucratic», characterized by a managerial management style based on control and maintenance of stability, through adherence to rules and procedures and a system of centralized decision-making that elicits a high degree of compliance among members (Claver et al., 1999). On the one hand, this helps maintain stability and develop shared norms among colleagues (Olsen, 2006), but on the other hand it seems to limit personal initiative and hinder changes and efforts aimed at renewing or innovating the existing situation (Claver et al., 1999).

Even in the Italian public sector, one of the biggest challenges concerns the achievement of organizational efficiency and effectiveness by integrating process modernization and tool innovation in order to simplify procedures and improve services offered to citizens (Ongaro & Valotti, 2008).

Since bureaucratic culture doesn't encourage knowledge sharing behaviours among employees and has a negative impact on affective commitment (Hendryadi et al., 2019), it's important to understand how different features, like organizational role structure and leadership style, could support the transition from a

hierarchical to a human-related culture, helping maximize knowledge sharing by employees (Cleveland & Ellis, 2015).

Organizational change: the importance of role structure, organizational culture and leadership style as organizational resources

The structure is a main element and concerns decisions on fundamental topics like roles, lines of report, group formation and relations. Four key aspects to identify the type of structure are the degree of formality (Hempel et al., 2012), the level of centralization (Schminke et al., 2000), the organization of its departments and the span of control (Gumusluoglu et al., 2013). These aspects are highly interrelated and their different combination defines the positioning along a continuum between organic structures, characterized by higher flexibility and adaptability, and mechanistic ones, focused on rules and norms (Dust et al., 2014).

Modern organizations usually combine elements of different structures, to improve flexibility and reconcile speed with stability. A few examples are the matrix structure, which joins functional and project-based elements, to better answer the needs of a specific product or market, enhancing collaboration and communication among functions (Lee et al., 2015); the 'natural' approach, where the traditional vertical hierarchy is replaced by one-to-one communication and lack of formal managers, switching from authority to persuasion power (Manz et al., 2009); and virtual organizations, where different companies put together people, expertise and other resources to grab a market opportunity or reach a specific objective.

No structure has downright more positives than any other: on the contrary, a wide variety of different structures can ensure a significant success according to the particular situation, the different moment, the given objectives and the culture of a specific organization. A structure is simply an instrument, a way to channel the complex work that has to be done to reach objectives, and it obviously has a great impact on the attitudes and behaviours of human resources.

Another key element is organizational culture, defined as the shared assumptions, often taken for granted by employees, that influence their way of acting, thinking and perceiving the internal and external environment (Schein, 1996). Most cultural elements are not formalized in written documents, nevertheless they strongly influence employee behaviours and constitute an important control mechanism in organizational life. Strictly connected to culture is organizational climate, i.e. the shared perceptions on work politics and practices, as well as on expected and appreciated behaviours (Schneider et al., 2013).

A well-known model is the Competing Values Framework (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983)but from the ordering, through multivariate techniques, of criteria

that organizational theorists and researchers use to evaluate the performance of organizations.\n In a two-stage study, organizational theorists and researchers were impaneled to make judgments about the similarity of commonly used effectiveness criteria. The model derived from the second group closely replicated the first, and in convergence suggested that three value dimensions (control-flexibility, internal-external, and means-ends, identifying four key organizational cultures: the «Adhocratic», focused on innovation and entrepreneurship; the «Market», favouring competitiveness and customer focus; the «Clan», which privileges collaboration and teamwork; and the «Hierarchy», emphasizing control and efficiency.

A strong and consistent culture is usually a source of competitive advantage; but, as for the structure, there are often cross contaminations, since no cultural type is objectively superior to any other (Hartnell et al., 2011). The culture is influenced by the stage of development of the industry, the history of the company, the degree of competition, the innovation cycle, etc. A key role is played by the person-organization fit, formed and maintained over time by attracting and selecting resources with similar values, on-boarding, rewarding and promoting the most consistent ones and replacing those no longer fitting with the organizational culture.

In addition, the leadership style of the managers inspires and shapes the organizational culture, with daily behaviours made up of encouragements, rewards, punishments and other actions with relevant impact on performance (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000).

Many researchers have studied leadership over time, with different theories focusing on three key areas, namely trait, behaviours and contingency (Furnham, 2001). Trait theories have attempted to identify the characteristics needed to define a leader, overlooking the environmental or situational elements and leading to the idea of a «great man» (Stratt, 1994), i.e. a person born in a certain way.

Behavioural theories, whilst not denying the possible role of specific traits, have based leadership assessment on the display of certain behaviours, like those studied by Lewin at Iowa University, the four leadership styles theorized by Stogdill or the managerial grid by Blake and Mouton (Blake & Mouton, 1985) and its subsequent evolution by McKee and Carlson. Contingency theories have recombined the two previous ones, stating that leadership depends on individual differences, however strongly influenced by the context.

A few examples of these theories are the task or people orientation choice according to the situation (Fiedler, 1971); the path-goal theory, emphasizing the need for different leadership styles according to the context (House, 1996); and the five leadership behaviours (from democratic to autocratic) theorized by Vroom and Yetton. More recently, leadership has been defined as a key motiva-

tor for people to work together and obtain great results (Vroom & Jago, 2007), better clarifying its process nature, bringing genetic elements to life according to the specific context.

An organization's identity is made up of a specific combination of the different elements described, but organizational life is never static: on the contrary, it is characterized by constant renewal, the key to ensuring long-term success. This evolution can sometimes be radical (like a new structure or a drastic change of leadership, often coupled with a complex cultural renovation), but in most cases it arises in a more gradual way (e.g. when implementing a new technology or revamping a commercial strategy). Both types of change can be highly successful, depending on the specific situation, which greatly influences the appropriate disruption needed. A real discriminator is the impact the change produces on the people exposed to it (Bartunek et al., 2006a).

Therefore, a fundamental element of a good organizational change must take into account people's reactions, foreseeing the drivers of potential resistance and putting in place the right countermeasures to avoid it. There can be several reasons for higher individual resistance to change: personality, often showing a negative correlation between self-efficacy, internal control and resistance to change (Oreg et al., 2011)out of which 79 met the criteria of being quantitative studies of change recipients' reactions to an organizational change.

Through an inductive review, the authors unravel a model of (a; consolidated habits, which lead people to fight change, since this would increase their job cognitive effort; lack of trust in the organization and its leaders, which may lead to misinterpreting the change as a potential risk of obtaining poorer working conditions; or specific elements that may cause a personal decrease of status, power, autonomy, salary, equity, etc. (Oreg et al., 2011)out of which 79 met the criteria of being quantitative studies of change recipients' reactions to an organizational change. Through an inductive review, the authors unravel a model of (a.

Several attempts were made over time to describe organizational change and to help design and evaluate successful changes, starting from the simple and powerful model developed by Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1951). Many others took inspiration from this model and developed it further, adding steps and trying to better describe the detailed process of organizational change.

One of the most appreciated developments was introduced by Kotte and based on the extensive observation of more than 100 companies that tried to reinvent themselves in many different industries (Kotter, 1995). Only a few of the cases Kotter studied had been really successful, since at some point of the process somebody had made at least one big mistake; therefore, he thoroughly analysed all the wrong actions and behaviours, writing a list of the eight right steps to successfully transforming an organization (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
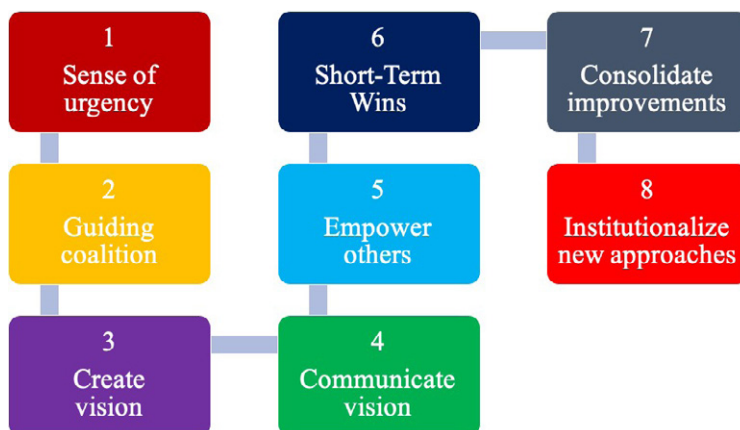
Kotter's 8-steps process for organizational change (adapted by Kotter, 1995).

The first priority is to establish a sense of urgency, recognizing the outstanding opportunity and clearly communicating it to all people involved. Many companies fail at this stage, so leaders play a key role in convincing others that keeping a «business-as-usual» approach is totally unacceptable. Subsequently, it's important to form a powerful guiding coalition, containing several influential people (senior managers, board members, key customers and union leaders) that «come together and develop a shared commitment to excellent performance through renewal» (Kotter, 1995), to bring the change forward and prevent internal opposers from stopping it. Another key step is creating a vision, a picture of the future, which is easy to communicate and appealing to key stakeholders. This normally starts as a draft, then it's expanded, finetuned and reconciled within a unique and meaningful framework. «If you can't communicate the vision in 5 minutes or less, and get understanding and interest, you are not yet done» (Kotter, 1995). This vision needs then to be shared, using all channels, especially those usually wasted with non-essential information, to deliver the transformation message; even more importantly, leaders have to «walk the talk», since the worst danger for change success is represented by inconsistent behaviours of important individuals. Empowering others to act on the vision implies removing obstacles, in some cases convincing people that no real issue exists, in others overcoming very real blockers, like structures, performance systems, or people who refuse to change. «In the first half of a transformation, no organization has the momentum, power or time to get rid of all obstacles; but the big ones must be confronted and removed» (Kotter, 1995). Planning for and creating short-term wins means looking for ways to obtain performance improvements, achieve objectives and reward the people involved. Without tangible results, too many people would give up or begin

to resist change, while commitment to producing short-term wins helps keep the urgency level up. Consolidating improvements and producing still more change is fundamental, to avoid the risk of leaving initial progress to its physiological regression, which could prove catastrophic. «Leaders of successful efforts use the credibility afforded by short-term wins to tackle even bigger problems. They understand that renewal efforts take not months, but years» (Kotter, 1995). And finally institutionalizing new approaches allows the spotlight on the change to be maintained until it penetrates the essence of the company and becomes the new habit. To do this, it's important to show people how innovation helped improve performance, insisting with the right communication; and to ensure that the new generation of top management really personifies the new approach.

Moving to the consideration of the organizational levels of involvement, it's fundamental to mention the contribution of Karina Nielsen, a great scholar of organizational interventions that support change, with a key focus on participatory interventions and a very empirical approach. In particular, she proposed evaluation methods for helping researchers and organizations understand what works for whom, and in which specific circumstances. Organizational restructurings influence employees' well-being, which is often negatively impacted by such important changes: that's why Nielsen focused her attention on how a restructuring can be implemented in a way that allows it to achieve its objectives, whilst at the same time not having detrimental effects on well-being. According to Nielsen, a key lever is what she calls «good leadership», which helps create a good environment for employees, giving them the opportunity to develop and thrive in their jobs (Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017).

The author points out that interventions are usually effective when they give participants the opportunity to make different choices about their «agency», since making and sustaining such changes in behaviour also requires a mental shift, as well as the right resources (Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017). Moreover, interventions' effects can vary a lot for different recipients, depending on the specific context they find themselves in, analysed at four levels: individual (values, roles, etc.); group (communication, collaboration and networks); leadership (including formal and informal rules, as well as organizational culture); and organization levels. These points constitute the key pillars of the IGLO model, which has a number of interesting implications for organizational interventions. Above all, the necessity to offer multi-level participatory opportunities in order to create healthy workplaces and ensure that employees can prosper and grow within their roles (Nielsen & Christensen, 2021).

We are presenting a case that applied the indications of the models presented so far in the Italian public administration, in order to evaluate the key areas of inefficiencies of some important Organizational Units and implement the most appropriate next steps to improve the situation.

Case Study

The context

The case study described was developed during an organizational restructuring of a northern-central Italian University, where top management decided to redefine the organizational charts of certain central management areas, moving some Organizational Units (OUs) to different business areas. The governance identified a number of inefficiencies, particularly concerning role definition, communication and more generally leadership style, in a specific managerial area (the one dedicated to 'Buildings and Construction'). This area is very strategic for the organization, since it deals with the maintenance of the entire University real estate, including all special projects and new building construction, so it was decided to exploit the occasion to develop a diagnostic intervention, in order to understand the possible causes behind the inefficiencies and recommend the appropriate actions to fix them.

Methodology

Following the guidelines of the first two steps of Kotter's Process for Organizational Change, top management established a sense of urgency towards the outstanding opportunity, then formed a strong guiding coalition for the initiative, comprising some of the key managerial figures of the university, to conduct the project, starting from the definition of the expected goals to be reached in the involved administrative area. This area was chosen since it was a complex department that had gone through many internal reorganizations over the years: this had resulted in continuous difficulties and complaints by internal stakeholders (OU employees), since the area was slow and inefficient in accommodating their needs; moreover, at the time of the intervention, the Area Manager role was vacant, which created significant coordination problems among the different OUs that needed to collaborate on common workflows and operational interventions.

The next task was to create and share the vision of the desired future and to empower people to act on the planned direction, according to steps 3, 4 and 5 of Kotter's Process for Organizational Change (Kotter, 1995). One of the first needs that top management identified was to urgently redefine the technical and administrative roles of the area and to review the workflows that affect the organizational processes, with the aim of improving efficiency and strengthening collaboration between the OUs operating in the same work chain, promoting employees' wellbeing as well. For all these reasons, it was decided to design a tailored, bottom-up intervention, starting from the area roles diagnosis.

First step: Organizational analysis

Once the target area had been defined, it was decided that Nielsen's preparatory phase (Nielsen et al., 2014) would be followed, in order to develop common guidelines to promote the project at all organizational levels, through the use of adequate institutional communication. We followed Nielsen's second phase, screening, to define the organizational diagnosis.

Participants

Six members of the board received exploratory interviews. Following these, twenty-five role interviews were administered, meeting the Managers of all OUs of the Building and Construction area, as well as seventeen collaborators and three staff members (see Table 1). Most interviews lasted about one hour and they were all audio-recorded, in agreement with the participants.

Table 1
Participants

	Participants	
Board members (exploratory interviews)	6	
Area Manager Staff	3	
OUs	OU Manager	Collaborators
Contract, Works and Technical Services (Contrattualistica, Lavori e Servizi Tecnici)	1	4
Construction and Urban Architecture (Edile e Architettonico Urbano)	1	4
Facilities (Impianti)	1	2
Monitoring of Production Procedures and Coordination of Territorial Plan OU (Monitoraggio delle Procedure Produttive e Coordinamento Piano Triennale)	1	3
Maintenance Scheduling (Programmazione della manutenzione)	1	4

Instruments

Exploratory interviews were aimed at understanding the vision of the board members (as users) and the aspects on which a better focus should be placed. On

the basis of these, we identified critical aspects on organizational roles, communications and coordination among OUs. This led us to conduct the semi-structured interviews, focused on organizational roles, workflows, communicational aspects and interactions within and between the OUs of the area.

Specifically, for the diagnosis of organizational roles, we used a role mapping instrument, an 'organizational check-up', aimed at defining behavioural expectations and possible overlaps related to each different organizational position, activity, and workflow (Levati & Saraò, 2015). We adopted role interviews to identify expectations on mutual behaviours; it was instrumental to understanding and defining workflow activities that involve different roles. The goal of this instrument is to evidence potential gaps between acted and ideal behaviours, comparing the actual situation with the desired one, to spot eventual differences between the implemented behaviours and those requested by the organization. Moreover, it enables potential risk to be evidenced, but also protective factors and resources to be exploited.

Procedure

The assumption that guided the authors was that individual factors, as well as group interactions, relationships with leaders and actions taken at institutional level, influence intervention participation and outcomes and require different types of intervention (Nielsen et al., 2021). Therefore, we conducted a preliminary analysis on each of these levels, following a bottom-up approach, with a qualitative methodology that could ensure a wide and thorough recollection of indications from people within the organization. Specifically, the first involvement was towards the organization's governance, as described above, to encourage participation in the project; then the focus was put on all OU leaders and their collaborators, planning ad-hoc meetings to work together on the details of the organizational diagnosis, maximizing its effectiveness.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed and analysed using specific grids, created for thematic content analysis; role activities of participants were reported for each OU, while individual expectations were divided and categorized, according to the subject matter of the interview (e.g. expectations towards the Area Manager, expectations towards the OU Manager, expectations towards co-workers, etc.).

Results

The diagnosis revealed some critical issues, such as: the increase in time to complete most processes, due to the fragmentation of the workflow across dif-

ferent offices; the high level of bureaucracy and administrative tasks perceived by technicians; a lack of communication between the OUs of the area and difficulties of coordination, which limited information sharing and affected process efficiency.

Each office takes a considerable number of steps in order to accomplish bureaucratic tasks and this increases time frames and potential risk of error; in fact, the lack of inter-OU communication contributes to increasing difficulty for the individual person to control pieces of work done by other OUs and monitor the entire process.

Respondents perceived difficult collaboration among OUs and required a better circulation of information in order to cope with work process fragmentation successfully. Insufficient information sharing at the area level led to poor knowledge of activities carried out by other roles and potential overlap of activities between different OUs. In some OUs, participants also reported a lack of informal knowledge sharing between colleagues, which might compensate the limited use of formal communication channels.

Expressed participant expectations were linked to the resolution of these problems and concerned a simplification of the process, an improvement in communication (especially among different offices), and a better planning of activities and interventions, in order to reduce the constant perception of working in an emergency. In addition, they aimed to enhance the sense of belonging to their OU and area by improving the ability to team up despite having to carry out activities independently.

We also investigated available resources, discovering that in some units the internal organizational climate was good, had a more autonomous and motivated staff, better information sharing and a stronger legitimation of their leader. Roles were well-defined, and flexible and there was a strong adherence to procedures and common goals.

Second step: Organizational interventions

Procedure and Instruments

Once the analysis was completed, the first of the following steps was to provide feedback on key outcomes, starting with the new Area Manager and the OU Managers. At a later stage, the feedback was rolled out as well to all collaborators, and this was followed by a discussion session, to expand the results presented.

Based on the role diagnosis and feedback received, all organizational levels were involved in planning appropriate changes. At the institutional level, the General Manager and the board proposed the creation of an office to support

and train specific technical and administrative roles. At the organizational area level, the new Area Manager started to organize collegial meetings and also the OU Managers promoted weekly meetings, drastically improving scheduled and planned coordination among their collaborators. The organizational chart of the area was revised and updated, and the work procedures and flows redefined. Researchers helped create a training plan for the staff of the area, in order, above all, to improve communication between different OUs, optimize communication flows in general and achieve uniformity across OUs in the area.

To publicize short-term wins and consolidate improvements, in line with steps 6 and 7 of Kotter's process (Kotter, 1995), employees were involved in sessions organized to reflect on the magnitude of change that had occurred, first individually and then in a group SWOT-analysis exercise, based on key learnings defined and implemented from the qualitative results. Finally, they presented a case study that contained their diagnosis of the problem and a shared solution, with a final debriefing to all other participants: this allowed them to reflect positively on resources and opportunities to improve internal communication and collaboration.

Intervention results

At the end of the process, the authors conducted a final reflection on the organizational diagnosis and on the development of the training plan. This brainstorming allowed them to create an evaluation checklist of the organizational context, divided into several items that explored different aspects: operational features coming up from the diagnosis, professional integration and internal management of area processes, intra/inter-OU collaboration, perceptions of the Area Manager and of the OU Managers, organizational identification and well-being of the area staff.

The OU Managers provided an evaluation on the current degree of importance and complexity of each aspect and, in order to understand their perception of change, they were asked to attribute a score (on a Likert scale, from 0 to 5), to express their perception of presence and effectiveness before and after the intervention, indicating the relative changes occurring.

To evaluate the intervention effectiveness, the next activity was to share the results obtained both from the training sessions and from the change-evaluation checklists with supervisors, OUs and the Area Manager. This revealed that, regarding operational aspects, most respondents identified improvements in different aspects, driven by the area analysis and the intervention: for example, they observed an increase in inter-professional integration and collaboration in the internal area processes, as well as a better understanding of the roles and the related activities by the area's employees; moreover, the circulation of information and

the coordination among the OUs of the area was considered improved, although some aspects of workflow fragmentations had not yet changed. Finally, we also collected leaders' assessment about the training needs, in order to develop new interventions, monitoring and consolidating the improvements already achieved.

Discussion

In the context of the Italian public administration, for several years we have been trying to support changes from a bureaucratized to a goal-oriented and process optimization-oriented culture. This implies a change in the point of view, deviating from tasks, procedures and rules to deepen organizational role knowledge and their interconnection.

However, change is very often seen as the application of models in a top-down process and attributed to specific actions carried out by the governance. On the contrary, the literature, especially that linked to organizational development, suggests that the success of a change is the result of how the beneficiaries of the change perceive it. Successful change requires therefore a clear understanding, through a bottom-up approach, of how and why employees resist and how to design the push with this resistance in mind (Bartunek et al., 2006a).

In this sense, the intervention process described in this study represents a path based on the involvement and participation of all top roles and human resources involved in the organizational change. Following Kotter's Model (Kotter, 1995), a strong guiding coalition, made up of general management and top management, was formed in order to communicate the aims and path of the intervention related to the organizational change to all human resources of the area. In fact, public sector studies have highlighted the critical role that public managers play in bringing about organizational change (e.g. Abramson & Lawrence, 2001). Top-management support and commitment to change play an especially crucial role in success (Burke, 2002) and employees who feel they have received high-quality communication about the changes also report high levels of readiness for change (Haqq & Natsir, 2019; Lewis, 1999).

After this first step, all human resources were involved in the preliminary diagnosis, using role mapping, which allowed the behavioural expectation of each role in relationship to all the other roles to be identified in order to build a shared system of expectations that was aligned with the new objectives and the new strategy defined by the reorganization.

A role defines not only required attitudes, but also expected behaviours in term of integration in the organizational pattern, thus allowing significant and successful actions to be defined in order to achieve goals in line with values and mission in a given working environment. If a *job* defines tasks and responsibili-

ties, a *role* defines activities which are effectively expected (Panari et al., 2016). This approach can overcome the rigid segmentation and division of activities typical of a bureaucratic organizational culture, to promote coordination and communication between different roles affected by the same flows, in a logic of a process optimization-oriented culture.

Through this analysis, critical points were identified. In particular, the results highlighted a fragmentation of the workflows across different Organizational Units, with the risk of a notable number of bureaucratic steps and overlap of activities between different OUs, ambiguous roles, insufficient information sharing, uneven distribution of workloads and perception of poor valorisation of human resources.

Starting from this bottom-up analysis, which created the involvement of all the staff in the area, Area Managers agreed on the need to redefine some workflows. Subsequently, a non-frontal but participatory training course was implemented with the aim of helping the staff of the Organizational Units to experiment on cases linked to real work situations and to better understand the new workflows designed by the governance. This phase allowed employees to be involved in experiencing the first short-term wins of organizational change (Kotter, 1995).

However, to make change enduring, members of the organization must incorporate the innovations into their daily routines. Employees must learn and routinize these behaviours in the short term, and leaders must institutionalize them over the long haul, so that new patterns of behaviour displace old ones (Edmondson et al., 2001).

In this sense, the next phase of follow up, through change-evaluation checklists, could be an instrument used to monitor new behaviours, coordination and communication between OUs, to see alignment with the new organizational structure and processes, and to help employees improve performance, institutionalizing the new approaches implemented.

This intervention also had an impact on the evolution of organizational culture from a hierarchical orientation, which tends to emphasize rule-based control of employees, to a more participatory and human-relations orientation. This culture becomes a prerequisite for the motivation to change (Zhang & Feeney, 2020) and for employees' confidence to face the challenge of new work role identities in the context of changeable organizational priorities (Jacobsson et al., 2020).

Conclusions

The case study described was based on the specific needs of the organizational context, and it used a bottom-up approach to facilitate and support an important cultural change, which implied rethinking the organizational structure as a set

of strong, interrelated roles that have to work in full synergy to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

The organizational diagnosis was the key starting point for the identification of the appropriate actions, which proved significant in the specific context and in sight of the expected outputs. Thanks to the role-mapping system, it was possible to identify which figures had to interact and coordinate their effort in the same workflows, helping them to reach shared goals and to identify the presence of role ambiguities, conflicts or communication gaps that could interfere with the common objectives and decrease employees' motivation and wellbeing.

While the involvement of the different levels (individual, group, leaders and organizational) and the depth of instruments used for the diagnosis proved essential in preparing training interventions, aimed at improving intra/inter-group communication and collaboration for OUs working in the same supply chain communication.

Limitations and future research

Several limitations of this research should be noted. The intervention-evaluation checklist was submitted only to OU supervisors and not to their collaborators, and this quantitative evaluation was only done during the evaluation phase, so there are no pre-intervention benchmarks. Moreover, some variables could not be isolated, like those related to changes driven by the reorganization of the OUs.

The authors' intention is to proceed by working on the training needs identified, especially regarding the key themes which emerged: teamwork interaction, newcomers' organizational socialization, communication and interprofessional collaboration, and continuing the medium-long term monitoring phase.

The indications are numerous and all very clear, so they will be implemented to improve the process during the next stage of analysis, which is extending the model to other management areas. In order to enrich the learnings with some robust figures concerning all main performance indicators, a quantitative pre-screening phase will be submitted to all personnel of the managerial areas involved. Moreover, diagnosis instruments will be further improved, based on the specific areas' needs, in continuity with the tailorized approach applied so far.

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