SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

ROBERT PRODANCIUC [*]

ABSTRACT: *The paper approaches the concepts that are specific to the study of organizations from a systemic and actional perspective. When defining the organizations we have to start from the social actions system. The social actions also ensure the criterion for the organizations typology. Then the components of the organization are being analyzed. The roles of the organizational structures were treated next. The general characteristics of the organizational systems were presented afterwards. The transition from the theoretical aspects to the pragmatic ones was done through the presentation of the leadership. The efficiency of the social organizations is measured by the ability of the management to integrate them into the environment.*

KEY WORDS: *institution; organization; group; action; efficiency; environment.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *Z13*

Ion Tudosescu (1978, pp. 16-34) considers organizations to be organizational structures with formal character where people adhere freely, with no obligations, depending on their collective or individual interests. The most important characteristics of the social organizations are: the fact that people adhere freely to the organizations (but it also means that they comply compulsory with the norms that regulate the activity of organizations) and the members of the organizations obey the competence of the organizational management.

This author considers that the interests of the people that adhere to the organizations are connected to the types of actions that the organizations mediate and the criterion for making a typology of organizations is the same one as for the typology of institutions. As a result, reported to the mediated human action we can distinguish in between the next types of organizations: economical organizations, research and creation, cultural, educational, religious and political. The thing that is to be noticed is that Ion Tudosescu uses in this typology the label "… institutions and organizations". We tend to agree with him and the simple connection of the two terms – "institution"

[*] *Assist. Prof., Ph.D. Candidate, University of Petrosani, Romania,*
robertprodanciuc@yahoo.co.uk

and "organization" with the conjunction "and" must be overcome by using the concept of "institutional-organizational set" which constitutes a determinable existential unit. Another possible remark is that the dimensions of the organizations are the same as the ones of the institutions. The dimensions they can reach are from a functional unit up to the level of United Nations.

The role of the organizational structures composed of institutions and organizations, or of the institutional-organizational sets are to mediate:

1. the integration of the individuals into useful social action through:
   a. the organized part taking in the organized labor division;
   b. the cooperation and the activities exchange;
2. the correlation of the individual interests with the collective ones for achieving the common goal;
3. the promotion of the set members' interests in relation with:
   a. the members of other groups;
   b. some before others of the same group;
4. the amplification and deepening of the empowerment of individuals and groups in their relations with society and nature.

As a conclusion to the role of the organizational structures in the social life, the author states that through the socialization function of the individual actions in the actional system of a society we get a general measure of the efficiency degree of a certain society and furthermore a criterion for its progress.

In the same context, Cornel Popa (1978, pp. 35-52) has a logical-mathematical perspective over the subject and comes up with another definition. The organization is a relatively stabile number of agents that have a unique goal, a decision making department, execution departments, as well as a certain labour division, cooperation relations between agents, a formal structure and a norm system that is meant to increase the efficiency of their social actions. The author analyzes the considered definition and points out some important aspects. The organizations appear as instruments that rationalize the actions of the collective agent in order to achieve the given or intended goal. Any organization has a differentiation and a segregation between the conception activity and the implementing activity, expressed through the existence of hierarchical levels associated with different attributions and responsibilities. Organization imply professional variety and heterogeneity of the actional agents, which makes it necessary for several compartments to exist that require cooperation relations. The organization requires to have specific functioning structures expressed through different types of organizational charts that stipulate the attributions and responsibilities of the people involved in the activity. Each organization has a norms system that provides the tasks and the attributions of all the actional agents categories of the organization.

Starting from the work of Henri Fayol, the author shows that the organization must be organized and administrated. The organizing takes place at the beginning of the organization's existence and it means providing everything that is needed for its functioning. This initial action has three interlinked components. First of all it is necessary to ensure the financial component that allows having a suitable place for the work means. Secondly, the social component is needed made up of the organization's

personnel. It is organized in a formal structure, which means a set of hierarchical, functional and cooperation relations established as a framework of the organization. Generally, this formal structure is shaped as an organizational chart which states the place, statute and role of every compartment in the whole of the organization, as well as the competence and the responsibilities of their managers. The hierarchical, decision, command and control relations are also stated. The attributions and responsibilities are stated in operating laws, norms and regulations. The hierarchical levels are emphasized vertically through the organizational chart starting with the management and up to the last employees. The organizational chart expresses horizontally the functions performed in the organization. A special importance is paid to the position because it means a certain functional position occupied into a certain hierarchical level. Through the position, the supraordination and subordination of the holder are stated. These are associated with the command and subordination. Thirdly the informational circuit is taken into consideration. The commands and the confirmation of execution are being sent through these circuits. The retro information is imperative to the goals achievement of the organization.

After the organization starts to activate it must be administrated. It implies foreseeing, detailed organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling. Their aim is to rationalize conducts, to be economical about using the existing means and to reduce the required effort.

When defining the organization concept, Norman Goodman (undated, pp. 87-107) utilizes the group concept. This justifies according a special attention to this concept. According to him the group was defined as being two or more individuals that have a common identity feeling and influence each other in structured ways based on a common set of perspectives referring to their behaviour. The author describes the group typology as being composed of:

1. primary groups and secondary groups:
    *   primary groups are groups with a small number of members, that have mutual, personal, close, lasting relations;
    *   secondary groups are groups that have a larger number of members established for a precise purpose, where relations are impersonal and their duration is determined;
2. internal groups and external groups:
    *   internal groups are formed of members that have feelings of identity and loyalty
    *   external groups are perceived as not belonging to a person and doesn't imply loyalty feelings;
3. reference groups are used by every person to express, compare and evaluate their own behaviour.

As such, these groups have the following functions: the normative function by defining the adequate behaviour, the comparative function by establishing a behaviour standard, the public function by evaluating the behaviour acceptability.

According to Norman Goodman an individual can enter a group by chance or by his own will. The decision to enter a group may be facilitated by the proximity that allows for mutual personal relations and by the similarity that results from common

interests, ideas and values. The group's formation implies mutual activities, so as the interactions are agreed by the group's members. Thus, through a gradual and cumulative process of interactions adequate behaviours are enforced. This enforcement of adequate behaviours is obtained as a result of the conformation process. Behaviour conformation starts from statuses, that determine the persons' position in the group and, as a result of that position, the person is involved in specific activities. The way that the activities are carried out is what is called role. The statuses are not equal, they supply some people with more power, influence and respect. Through the interactions of the group members, they delimit themselves from the nonmembers and identify themselves with the group. The group exists as long as its members mutually communicate information, feelings and attitudes. Disagreements can appear during the interaction and communication of the group members, if they exacerbate they can become conflicts. Conflicts are positive when they help to clarify the goals and the borders as well as to increase group cohesion and participation. Cohesion is the degree to which the members feel bound to the other group members. The group stability can be increased through this, but also it can lead to a tolerance decrease regarding the difference of opinion. Stabile groups are relatively small, and allow for several different relations to exist. The author considers that the size that allows for stability and direct communication is 10 members, though he thinks that there is no optimal size. Regardless of the size of the group, there is always a person among the group that actively influences the group through his personality, achievements and position. Whether it is recognized or not as being so, that person is the group leader. He can lead democratically, authoritatively or laissez-faire. His leadership can be instrumental – centred on goal realization or expressive – centred on assuring the harmony and solidarity of the group. The group's action implies choosing a way to do it, which means decision, consensus and responsibility.

Norman Goodman passes on from the group to the organization defining the latter as being a type of group that was created for the accomplishment of a certain task and that has a formal structure, through which it tries to perform that task. It is obvious that the author considers the secondary group. We believe the "formal organization" term to be a redundancy because in the definition of the organization the formal structure of the group is mentioned. Searching for the similarities of the organizations, Norman Goodman finds the following general characteristics:

1. planning and rationality mainly refers to the relation between means and goals, but also the types of activities and the organizational structures;
2. formalization, meaning the structuring of relations between activities and organizational actors and a precise description of the individuals' duties and of the responsibilities of the departments;
3. bureaucracy, as part of the structure, is responsible of planning, overseeing and coordination of the work of different segments of the organization. Bureaucracy implies specialization and division of labour, hierarchy, rules and regulations, impersonality, files and written documents, technical competence, promotions, administrative personnel etc.;
4. the informal part of bureaucracy means the form of authority manifestation in the personal relations between the organization members which we

believe to be outside of the formal framework and so outside of bureaucracy. This part is breaking the rules, ads or replaces the organizational goals with personal ones. It supports the search for alternative forms of bureaucracy and organizational reforms.

Mircea Agabrian (2003, pp. 152-180) shows that we can talk about a group only when there is relationship between individuals, meaning interaction and communication. For him, a group is a collection of people that have some common interests and goals. For the author, the definition also refers to the small group considered as an objective fact of activities and relations. The status and the role are visible from and in the group. They must be seen in order to find out the aspects of the individuals' participation into the group as having a collective function and as an objective person. Based on M. Sherif's definition the author points out the following content notes of the group: it is a formation of people, its members are face to face interacting in mutual activities and it develops norms and values that regulate the behaviour of its members.

Talking about the groups dimensions, the quoted author analyses the dyad as the smallest possible group and the triad to show its complexity. Continuing, he establishes the limit of the small group at 7-12 members. Over this limit the formalization of the relations is required and so we end up with a formal organization. He approaches the group typology and finds: primary and secondary groups, formal and informal groups, interior and exterior groups and finally the reference group. The latter one is described as a social group whose perspective is adopted by a certain individual as a reference framework for his own behaviour and attitudes. For an individual the group represents support and security, but also control and constraint. Extreme pressure towards consensus and conformity can lead the group to dissolution.

Mircea Agabrian realizes the transition from group to organization by defining the formal organization as being a relatively large group that has norms, a number of goals, or official objectives, a structure of statuses and roles as well as a set of rules designed for promoting its objectives. Detailing the components of an organization, he defines them in an interesting way:

1. the social structure represents the product of the relation patterns that are between the organization members. It can be:
    *   formal – the positions and the relations are defined and specified explicitly;
    *   informal – social positions correspond to the characteristics and affinities of the organization members;
2. the participants/social actors are individuals that are organization members, who contribute to its existence in exchange for various incentives, especially money;
3. the objectives – define the wanted finalities;
4. the technology – the material combined with the intellectual or knowledge process through the materials in various shapes are turned into income;
5. the environment – the financial, political, technological, social and institutional context to which an organization has to adapt.

The presentation of the definition and the components of the organization allow Mircea Agabrian to point out its characteristics.

1. the organization is deliberately founded by one or mode people at a certain date;
2. the organization develops formally structured relations and interdependency reports between its members;
3. the organization has a set of objectives;
4. the organization is self-perpetuating;
5. the organization divides the work that has to be done and distributes it to several individuals;
6. the organization administrates resources;
7. the organization ensures the communication between individuals and groups;
8. the organization ensures the presence of one or more leaders.

Using multiple classification criteria, Mircea Agabrian refers to Etzioni's typology:

1. voluntary organizations in which the individuals enter being interested by its goals and activities;
2. utilitarian organizations that have precise objectives;
3. coercive organizations which admit people with relating problems.

The organization's characteristic to have one or more leaders or managers makes the author approach the leadership. The leadership refers to the ability to exert an influence over a group, so as the group's behaviour is directed toward specific objectives and results. There are two types of leaders. The first one is the instrumental leader that helps the group define the task and establishes what has to be done in order to accomplish it. The expressive leader is supporting the group's cohesion and tries to achieve the members' emotional wellbeing. The thing that differentiates the leaders from the rest of the organization members is mainly their personality, being, according to the author, more intelligent, extroverted, mentally balanced, dominant, confident in their own abilities, liberal and even physically attractive. The leadership style can be democratic, authoritarian or laissez-faire. Whatever the leadership style, it is a part of bureaucracy. Accepting bureaucracy is due to its rationality as well as its legality. However, it can become dysfunctional when it avoids decision taking, proves incapable of being trained, self perpetuates, replaces the goal of the organization with its own goals, tends to expand, engages in ritualism and alienates the workers.

Ioan Mihăilescu shows that the organization is an association of individuals, a social group with its own goal that acts in accordance with an appropriate norms and values system in order to achieve a certain objective. The author gives special attention to bureaucracy, as a type of social organization where power is exercised by an administrative department that is more or less rational. The elements of the ideal type of bureaucracy are: the prescriptions system, the rationality of goals pursuing, hierarchical organization, the impersonal character of functions exercising, the specialization and competence. It is obvious that the ideal type of bureaucracy cannot be found in reality, but it can have characteristics that make it as efficient as possible. The characteristics of bureaucracy are transferred to the organizational structures and so they become effective. These characteristics are: relative unity of the organizational

structures, flexibility of the social changes, litheness of the number of hierarchical levels, optimal sizing of the compartments, activities' rationality, effectiveness of the informational system, technical, economical, social and mental multidimensionality, inexpensive operation and effectiveness of the structure as a whole. Bureaucracy has some characteristics that make it possible to diagnose it as being pathological reported to the functioning of the efficient ideal type. This diagnosis can be motivated by four critical directions regarding this type of social organization:

1. it creates structures that can arouse resentments and animosity;
2. rigidity of task execution in unforeseen situations;
3. responsibilities division makes problem solving harder;
4. attachment splitting between clients and the rules of bureaucracy.

The critics above show that sometimes the rigidity of regulations can turn into an obstacle in goals achievement or can lead to rule breaking. Whatever the consequence, the reaction of the organization members is negative and has different forms. Inefficiency and discontent can be remedied only with radical reforms. The sociology of organizations can contribute decisively to the functionality adequacy of the social organizations and the general social dynamism.

Anthony Giddens (2000, pp. 311-332) considers that an organization is a large group of people structured impersonally and that has the purpose of ensuring certain objectives. It must be underlined that the author is including the large group and the impersonal structure into the definition. Because the organizations interact among themselves and with society, determine the fact that neither the citizens nor they can control things, so place them under the control of functionaries or experts on which there can be no influence. Thus, the organizations can subject the individual to some imperatives that he cannot stand against.

From the perspective of the theories about organizations we are not going to insist on purely theoretical aspects but we would rather examine aspects that are more or less pragmatically. First of all we point out the physical framework especially designed. It is characterized by specific features, relevant for the activity of the organization. Furthermore the layout mode of the rooms, halls and of the open spaces from an organization building can offer base clues regarding the operating system of its management. Like Michael Foucault, the author stops at supervising as the main element of the operating system of the management and that means activity overseeing. There are two supervising ways. On one hand there is the direct supervising of the employees' work by the superiors. On the other hand there is the indirect supervising, which is more subtle and it consists of having files, registers or sheets about the subordinates. In order for the organizations to be efficient it is required that the employees' work is done accordingly. This means that it must be coordinated in time and space equivalent to respecting a rigorous schedule or timetable. Continuous supervising is required for the work to be reasonable in the allocated time, but this causes resentment and adversity. This is the reason why the organizations from the modern societies are preoccupied with space and time reorganizing. Computerization is supporting this reorganization significantly.

Erhard Friedberg (1997, pp. 397-432) considers that he offers a simple definition when saying that organizations are formalized and hierarchical human sets

made to ensure cooperation and coordination of its members in order to achieve some given goals. For this author the first important problem posed is regarding the organization of the behaviours of a certain number of social actors whose cooperation is indispensable, but who keep a certain degree of autonomy and who pursue interests that are not necessarily convergent. The importance of studying the organization comes out of the fact that it ensures the survival of the organizations. For this purpose he presents a number of four central problems of the organizations' organization:

1. the problem of the social actor's status and his action;
2. the problem of organizational integration;
3. the problem of the organizational boundaries;
4. the problem of the organizational effects.

In order to realize this, the author utilizes the historical perspective of the scientific approaches. For this, two directions that evolved separately are taken into consideration. The first one refers to the widening of the motivational conceptions up to transforming every organization member into a complex and relatively unpredictable agent. The second one shows that the organizational difficulties and conflicts rise from an insufficient congruence between the values of the individuals and the opportunities and constraints enforced by the organizational structures. In this case, the actional agent's choices are determined by the incomplete information and the practical impossibility to optimize. As a result, the deciding agent turns to a convenient solution. To understand this behaviour the contextual, organizational and social conditions of decision taking must be known, as well as the conscious or unconscious preferences for the options taken. As the preferences are multiple, vague, ambiguous and contradictory they can be subject of manipulation and self manipulation conscious or unconscious. In conclusion, the behaviour of the deciding agent must be considered as an active and reasonable adaptation to the opportunities and constraints perceived at a certain time.

Regarding the integration problem, the author shows that the goal of the organization cannot constitute an integrator element. This situation is because it must be understood as the product of a compromise in a dominant coalition that can enforce its own preferences over the other participants and can obtain their cooperation. This way the organizational goals have the same rationality limitations as the whole human behaviour. Under these conditions, the organizational set's cohesion, coherence and integration are threatened by the power strategies of the participants. As a result, the organizations become vulnerable towards the members tendencies to take advantage of the information asymmetries to cover and protect themselves against the controls of the organization. The natural consequence is that the organizations become systems with weak links. However, the organizations are capable of imposing a minimum of order, visibility and regularity individual and collective power gaining strategies chaos that develop inside it. The order is realized especially because of the contract through the individual stabilizes his behaviour as long as the organization provide proper remuneration. However the individuals' behaviour is especially dependent on the opportunities that they notice in a certain situation and on their ability to profit on these opportunities. This means that everybody profits on the ambiguity, incoherence and contradictions of their role. As a reaction, the organization is required to make its

members not abuse on the liberty and opportunities they have at their disposal and even to produce rules and constraints through the interactions.

The problem of the environment of the organization refers to the main dimensions of the influence of different characteristics of the organizational context over the structures, the functioning and the performance of the organization. Thus, any organization manages its report with the environment. It is the result of the evaluation of organizational conditions and the operations of the structural changes accordingly. The evaluation appears as a result of all the members' perception over the external opportunities and constraints. At the same time, internal constraints structure the perception of the environment. As a result the boundaries of an organization and its opening degree are fluctuating depending on the circumstances, the challenges, the stakes and the ability of the organization members to cope.

The effects of the organization is seen best in the reflectance of the organizations confronted with pressures to adapt, changes and performance achievement. It is especially about the consolidation of the traditional functioning, which is connected to their autonomy. The set of integration and articulation mechanisms of the divergent behaviours of the organizational members becomes a cultural way of approaching the organizational structure – organizational culture. This type of culture allows the organization to function, but at the same time it is a barrier that prevents knowing and implementing other ways to function. In other words, society's cultural characteristics which are internalized by the individuals through the process of socialization represent a constraint, to the extent that they influence their choices. Organizational culture is a local phenomenon with specific problems. The important thing is that it can be modified, transformed and enriched through an active process.

In the conclusion of his study Erhard Friedberg finds that the organization is an artificial form of the collective action structures that produce order. As such, the qualitative knowledge of the organizations is especially necessary. This knowledge would allow the managers to think and apply learning and abilities development programs to change the behaviour of the participants in a more appropriate way that is different from the present one.

At the end of the considerations over the organizations we refer to the contributions of Viorel Cornescu and Sica Stanciu (2003, pp. 35-38; 60-78). It is considered that the objective element of the constitution of the organizations is the social character of work, determined by the fact that nobody can satisfy their needs unless the efforts are united in carrying on common activities, after which the results change. The organization has the following elements: people, relations and interactions, interactions structure, everybody participates to the group activities with their own objectives, the intertwining of the individual objectives into the final goal of the organization. With these considerations it can be appreciated that any organization is made up of a group of people between whom interpersonal or pluripersonal structural relations are established, in which the individuals are differentiated by authority, status, role and is constituted in order to achieve some proposed objectives or goals aiming at achieving a high efficiency. Through this definition the organization is presented as a complex, open and dynamic system that incorporates human, material,

financial etc. resources made up of a diversity of elements, by their combination the objective of the activity is obtained. The analysis of any organization must take into account the individual; formal autonomy of functions; informal structure; the behaviour resulted from the individuals' relation and the environment in which the organization exists. Regarding the environment we can say that it is represented by the forces external to the organization, it influences directly or indirectly the objectives, plans, procedures, activities and results. The analysis of the environment is done in four steps: continuous observation, monitoring, prognosis and analysis. The environment has two components. The internal environment reflects all the activities and conditions in which the activity takes place, as well as the relations between departments. The external environment is situated outside the organization; it cannot be controlled and determines its performances. The last component is also made of two parts. The microenvironment is represented by participants from the closest environment. The macro environment is made up of societal forces with long action range. The relation of the organization with its environment takes two forms. The first one is the market aspect through which the organization ensures its necessary resources for its normal activity. The second aspect is competitive, it signals a rivalry among the participants to the social activity and through which the best satisfaction of the needs and interests of all the beneficiaries is attempted. Education is no exception regarding the relation it has with its external environment and we consider it to be useful and necessary to promote the educational marketing.

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