

Identification of Strategic Directions for Change Management in Social Services Sector

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Abstract. This study analyzed change management issues and identified strategic directions critical for institutions operating in social services. As the changes in social services are revealed in the new forms of interaction, to the broad sense, in the separate sectors of activity, the field of scientific analysis expands to provide new conceptual insights for change management, reflecting on the identification of the strategic directions in social services. Social services are encouraged to look for new ways and methods to improve the quality of their operations and services. It is to be noted that changes in social services require processivity and systematic management, so it is crucial to clarify the strategic directions of change management and adequately prepare for implementing the changes. There is a lack of interdisciplinarity in the relationship between two disciplines of management science: change and strategic management. Problematic areas encourage evaluation by conceptualizing the identification of strategic directions for change management in the public sector to manage changes effectively. This study aims to identify the strategic directions of change management in the social services sector. The following research methods were applied in this study: analysis of scientific literature, case analysis, and qualitative content analysis of in-depth interviews. There has been a scientific result achieved - the construction of recommendations of change management in social service institutions, which enables the implementation of strategic directions at the institutional level, which defines the strategic directions of the change management such as the availability of services, operational efficiency, and quality as well as the mutual benefit between the institution and employees. The recommendations create the possibility of perceiving change management as a cyclical process that requires proper preparation, monitoring, and control of organizational change.

Keywords: strategic management, change management, social services, case study.

1. Introduction

Changes in society are conditioned by the globalization of space and technological progress and manifest themselves in new forms of interaction and organizations providing social services. The field of analysis aims to assume new, conceptual insights into change management, enabling reflection on identifying strategic directions in organizations providing social services. The governments of the European Union's member states have defined national goals that would help to achieve the common goals of the European Union. It focuses on innovative, sustainable, and inclusive societal growth to address the structural weaknesses of the European economy, increase its competitiveness and productivity, and support a sustainable social market economy. In the Lithuanian progress strategy, "Lithuania 2030," the main planning document that guides strategic decisions, the necessity of change management in the social services sector is highlighted. Based on this strategic document, entities operating in the regions are empowered: self-government, non-governmental sector, organizations, communities, and people who ensure the effective implementation of changes in the social services sector.

Al-Hadad and Kotnour (2015) presented change through classified areas – types of change, factors of change, methods of change – and outcomes of change. Researchers (Lewin 1946, Judson 1991, Jick and Kanter, Stein, Luecke 2003, Kotler 1996, Hamel 2000) applied the developed models and methods to business areas. Scientists examined business valuation problems (Kaplan, Norton 1996, Adams, Neely 2000). Therefore, to effectively manage the changes in society's life and prepare to anticipate them, it is necessary to reflect on social services, considering the demands placed on this sector by society.

Scientific studies (Al-Hadad, Kotnour 2015, Carnall 1990, Chandler 1962, Dobs 2014, Coghlan, Rashford, de Figueirido 2016) provided significant information about change management in business organizations. However, researchers note that effective change management in globalization and dynamic market conditions is also vital in the social services sector. Therefore, the problem of organizational change management becomes one of the critical objects of research when the aim is to identify strategic directions of change in the social services sector, enabling the preparation of change plans and strategies. It is not enough for managers to organize the organization's activities, teach the employees new work methods, and expect economic success. Predicting the organization's long-term development, the main components of strategic management, business, public sector process efficiency, and organizational capital become much more critical. According to the researchers, the organization's success can only be guaranteed by an adequately selected and adapted organizational development strategy.

Researchers studying effective change management discuss aspects such as business continuity assurance and change strategy development. In the field of change management analysis, two paradigms are distinguished: supporters of the first direction describe changes that are carried out to improve or even fundamentally change one or other elements of the organization's behavior; such changes are determined by changes in the external environment or changes in the change processes taking place inside it. Change is vital, a natural response to internal and environmental conditions. Change is a constant feature of corporate life, a natural state encompassing the organization's operational and strategic levels. Most scholars and practitioners emphasize that change cannot be separated from corporate strategy; on the contrary, corporate strategy is created after assessing change.

However, research studies lack interdisciplinarity in linking change and strategic management aspects. The concept of strategic change directions is related to the planning function of the organization, more precisely, to one of the essential parts of the planning process - the formulation of the mission and vision (Kryger 2017, Fenton et al. 2011, G. Hamel 2012). Most of the literature places change management as "heroic leadership" in the private sector instead of the public sector (Conger, Spreitzer, and Lawler 1999, Kotter 1996). The literature focuses mainly on identifying directions for strategic

change in the private sector (Burnes, 1992; Kanter et al., 1992). Change management in the public sector is proposed as a complex and ambiguous process, indicating the importance of each critical point in a different organizational environment (Lutrin & Shani, 1998). Modern changes in the public sector are speedy, and it is necessary to focus on the competencies of leaders, which would lead to future strategic competencies in the public sector. Managing changes in the public sector and identifying strategic directions take place through the expressions of strategic competencies of civil service leaders. However, in the discussed literature, the authors emphasize strategic management as a field of expression of change management more in the sphere of production, so it can be underlined that there is a lack of research conducted in the public sector social service provision institutions.

In the public sector, strategic planning is a legally regulated and formalized process that consists of a complex chain of interconnected components, starting with strategic analysis and ending with action plan implementation monitoring (Vienožindienė & Kochanskaitė, 2016). It can be argued that there is a lack of information and wider research on providing social services in the public sector. In scientific literature, essential provisions are missing when conceptualizing and identifying strategic directions of change management in the public sector to manage changes effectively.

This study aims to identify the strategic directions of change management in the social services sector. The following research methods were applied in this study: analysis of scientific literature, case analysis, and qualitative content analysis of in-depth interviews.

2. Literature Review

The scientific literature presents change as the norm in an ever-growing global business environment where organizations can maintain their success and existence. Private and public sector organizations constantly strive to adapt the nature of their activities, operations, and service delivery to the changing environment (Ackoff, 2006; Burnes, 2004; Hailey & Balogun, 2002; Kotter, 1996; Mintzberg, 1979; Moran & Brightman, 2001). Understanding changes and their classification, the stages of the change process provide theoretical insights and practical examples for organizations that seek to cope with ongoing changes successfully. Efforts to identify strategic directions of activity that allow for modernization and responding to change management are considered particularly significant in the activities of organizations.

Change management was defined as a "process of continuous renewal" – an organization's direction, structure, and capabilities to serve ever-changing changes in meeting the needs of external and internal customers (Moran & Brightman, 2001). According to Burnes (2004), change is a constant feature of organizational nature – at the life and strategic level. Early approaches and theories to organizational change management assumed that organizational performance could not be effective or improved if change in the organization was constantly changing (Rieley & Clarkson, 2001). Unlike the author mentioned before, it is emphasized that people need routine and formed habits, resulting in their work becoming more efficient and their work productivity increasing (Luecke, 2003). However, some theories argue that people's ability to change continuously is much more important, as it determines the emergence of change (Burnes 2004; Rieley & Clarkson, 2001). Luecke (2003) stated that a constant state of change can become a routine. Leifer (1989) perceived change as a normal and natural response to internal and external environmental conditions.

Todnem (2005) states that successful change management is crucial for any organization to survive and succeed in the prevailing competition and continuously evolving business environment. However, theories and methods of change management are controversial among academics and practitioners, usually lacking empirical evidence and the validity of unchallenged hypotheses related to change management in modern organizations. Changes in society are presupposed by changes induced by globalization, structural regional, state, religious, political, economic, and social conflicts (Raipa, 2009). The concept of change has been analyzed by authors of scientific literature of the last century, such as

Quinn (1980), Giddens (1995), Hurst (1995), Hopkins, Ainskow, West (1998), Fullan (1998), Jankūnaitė (1998), Želvys (1998), Hall (1999). According to Raipa (2009), the theories and practices of change management come from different social science disciplines and traditions, so it is challenging to trace their origins (Macredie, Paul, Anketell, Lehaney, Warwick, 2001). Changes in the social sciences are presented more broadly, so it is quite challenging to precisely determine the theoretical basis of organizational changes (Isong, 2015).

According to Videikienė and Šimanskienė (2013), organizational changes and their management have become inseparable from the modern business world. However, despite the awareness of the need for change management, many changes are implemented unsuccessfully. Burnes (1996, 2003), Todnem (2005), Higgs, Rowland (2005), Moran, and Brightman (2001) analyze the inevitability of changes in organizations, their concepts, and change management. Nelson (2003), Creasey (2009), Graetz (2000), Hurn (2012), Rothwell, Stavros, et al. (2009), Vanagas (2007), Valackienė (2015). Generally, the concept of change can be perceived as a certain change in any field resulting from the change (Videikienė, Šimanskienė, 2013).

By summarizing the theoretical definition of change management, it is possible to single out the components of the analysis dimension of change management: explaining the transformations of the internal and external environment and the emerging need for change; a learning and change-oriented organization that emphasizes development and technology and can quickly adapt to a changing environment; change as a process that unites the entire course of events, motivates the transition from the current situation to the desired state, which is provided for in the set goals, is indicated in the vision.

The specificity of change management also determines the specific purposefulness of the concept of strategic change (Išoraitė, 2012). The content of this concept is generally described as follows: strategic changes are changes whose proactive management in the organization is aimed at the implementation of clearly defined strategic goals (Laumenskaitė and Vasiliauskas, 2006). Most of the reasons for strategic changes are related to the necessity of organizational restructuring. The necessity of restructuring (Kottler, 2003) is usually caused by changes in the changing environment (changes in the legal base, customer expectations, reactions of interested parties), changes in political power in the institution itself (unequal distribution of powers), changes in cooperation (teamwork, separation or merger of organizations, liquidation), rapid changes in the technological environment, human resources.

Researchers identified factors that increase the likelihood of success for organizational change and arguably imply that there is no one-size-fits-all framework for organizational change (Todnem, 2005; Rafferty et al., 2013). Reasons have been singled out as insufficient change, leading to limited attention (Buchanan et al., 2005). Dunphy and Stace (1993) argued that managers and consultants must change how they use a largely 'situational' or 'contingency' approach to change strategies to achieve 'optimal fit.' By reviewing the available relevance and validity of the method, the research literature finds various opinions regarding the most appropriate method in organizations (Bamford and Forrester, 2003). With high variation comes a change approach or method unsuitable for all situations, as change methods should depend on the organizational context (Michel et al., 2013; Nyström et al., 2005). Burnes and Jackson (2011) state that researchers who have studied the main reasons for the failure of change initiatives recognize that the main reason is the inadequate planning of change commitments: the main reason is the fusion of values between the organization and the accepted approach to changes and their nature. Conner (1998) stated that organizations need to realize that the drivers of change are all interconnected and act one after the other; any change has a chain reaction throughout the organization.

According to Lodiene (2005), no matter how successful or unsuccessful changes are, changes should not be made just for the sake of changes - it is a strategy to realize a common goal. Organizational change is usually triggered by some of the biggest external drivers, for example, major inventory cuts, entering new markets or attracting new customers, and the need for dramatic increases in productivity/service. Generally, organizations adopt organizational-level changes in order to grow at

their life cycle level. No matter how complicated the process of implementing change may be, organizational members must believe that the change will benefit them and the organization. This is more likely to happen when organizational members participate alongside managers in decision-making and when the issues that arise are seriously considered when planning and implementing change.

Organizations seeking effective implementation of changes must assess the necessary time costs. A clear plan, many engaged employees, and removing resistance are necessary to implement institutional changes as quickly as possible (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). According to Ruškaus, Mažeikienė, Najanienė, Motiečienė, and Dvarionis (2013), the structural concept of power predicts that there must be a collective action, the mobilization of many people's efforts against domination, a certain protest of the oppressed, which acquires a sufficient scale and weight to "move" the structures. Foucault's (1979) analysis of ideas about power raises several questions for social work and social services. First, what are the possible differentiations? What are the differences between employees and customers, healthy and unhealthy, rich and poor? Secondly, what goals, aspirations, and expectations do different participants have, and what are their functions? The third question concerns implementation by asking how leadership and obedience manifest. Is it threatened or punished? How is it controlled, monitored, and evaluated? Is the monitoring daily and personal? Are the rules clear and expressed, or implied, vague? At the level of institutionalization, four criteria are analyzed (Rojek, 1986; Sada, 2004): individualization of private space, coding of activities, routinization of activities, and synchronization of activities. Here, M. Foucault (1979), it was important how power works and how it is possible to resist it. According to the scientist, this challenge to power is possible precisely at the individual level (Ruškus et al., 2013).

The changes being made may vary in level of complexity. Changes that have strategic significance for the organization and are related to the organization's strategic goals are called strategic. Such changes are a never-ending learning process for organizational members (Sokol, 2001). According to Forson (2004) and Išoraitė (2012), strategic organizational changes are distinguished as one of the most important directions of organizational changes. Išoraitė (2012) claims that changes encourage organizational staff members to change their standard actions, values, and beliefs. At this point, Farson (2004) states that implementing change is not easy because organizational leaders are not inclined to change themselves.

According to Burke (2017), it is necessary to use an organizational model to help categorize the defined components of work, which are constantly changing. In organizations providing social services, management models are changing, with which activities are made more efficient; when government institutions are no longer the leading entity, the paradigm of cooperation with other sectors is gradually being shifted, and partnership and work on various platforms are encouraged. Another element of change is deinstitutionalization, which is related not only to the redistribution of services from institutions to the community but also to creating a new culture of social work, forming a new attitude of "front-line workers" to clients (CEDEFOP, 2010). Adomaitytė – Subačienė (2015) emphasized that it is possible to successfully implement changes and modernize public sector organizations by applying common organizational management methods and adapting modern change management models in their activities (Dube & Danescu, 2011).

3. Methodology

The research aims to construct new paradigms of change management, based more often not on evolutionary theoretical insights based on systemic change management models but on constructivist approaches, to highlight a scientific problem that requires substantiating the field of identification of strategic directions in the public sector and to identify and empirically verify dimensions that reflect strategic directions in the public sector in a social service organization.

Based on the discussed theoretical constructs and the conducted empirical research, a model for

identifying the strategic directions of change management in the organization is prepared in the work, reflecting the solution's applicability to the analyzed phenomenon.

The study was based on three theoretical insights. The first insight explains the field of change management and its emergence in organizations, emphasizing that the changes taking place in the organization, regardless of their type, nature, and size, are the processes of change taking place in the external or internal environment and are carried out in order to improve or change the elements of the organization's activities, which, if established, would become the organization's activities part of It is based on theoretical observations that explain the necessity of strategic directions, when changes can be planned, initiated and procedurally managed (Burnes & Jackson, 2011; Carnall, 1990; Zappala, et al., 2019). Changes can be unexpected, which the organization cannot predict and control (Burnes, 1996, 2004; Todnem, 2007; Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015).

The second insight reveals the interdisciplinarity of effective management as a social phenomenon, which seeks to enable the analysis of the interaction between management science and the public sector by studying the identification of strategic directions for change management in the field of social service organizations (Raipa, 2011, 2012; Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Coram & Burnes, 2001). This theoretical insight was presented based on theoretical knowledge responding to identifiable change management processes in a public social service organization. To achieve an integrated approach in the organization, it is necessary to identify strategic directions to implement changes in the organization itself when the changes themselves become systematic and constructive and enable the reduction of destructive obstacles to changes and the solution of their consequences. It was noted that different definitions and methods were used to manage changes when implementing changes.

The third insight was based on theoretical constructs that reveal the psychological aspects of change, directly impacting the identification of strategic directions for change management. Influence can manifest as resistance to forms of power, which include physical, structural, symbolic, and discursive dominance at a certain structural level (Ruškus et al., 2013; Michel et al., 2002). The authors distinguish that certain psychological factors that lead to constant stress, anxiety, and lack of awareness of the need for change among employees cause resistance and the emergence (identification) of new strategic directions in the organization. Empowerment has no beginning or end point; it is an ongoing effort. As a result, empowerment occurs when people better understand their abilities and alternatives to experiences of powerlessness and thus create new directions (Ruškus et al., 2013). An essential aspect of the change implementation process is the coherence of change, management, and the institution's community, which forms the prerequisites for the success of change implementation (Fonda & Moriceau, 2008; Lussier, 2008; Kotter, 2008; Self, 2009). The institution's management must decide how to reduce or eliminate employees' resistance so that the process of implementing changes goes as smoothly as possible (Valackienė, 2015).

In the case of the family center for the identification of strategic directions of change management, in the implementation of changes, a combined study using quantitative and qualitative research strategies was chosen to conduct the research and substantiate the theoretical insights. According to Valackienė and Mikienė (2008), a quantitative study can be defined as an empirical study whose data is presented in numbers (quantitative expression) and processed by statistical methods. The essence of such a study is always a positivist study. Quantitative studies aim to confirm or disconfirm a hypothetical fact (Valackienė & Mikienė, 2008). Quantitative research is aimed at empirically measuring specific aspects of a phenomenon, using individual samples that would construct a general concept of the phenomenon or verify the causes of the phenomenon with the help of hypotheses (Ryan, Bernard, 2003). According to Šaparnio and Merkis (2000), quantitative content analysis methodology is characterized by objectivity, systematicity, and quantification. The classical quantitative text analysis technique is frequency analysis or classification analysis. The frequencies of directly perceived

(manifest) text units are counted and compared with others, thus determining the quantitative degree of expression of the feature (Šaparnis & Merkys, 2000). Quantitative content analysis is only possible when it is limited to the text content's directly understandable (manifest) part. Principled quantification, which must produce good results, is criticized as a positivist limitation.

By applying a qualitative research strategy, the research uses the following methods: case studies and in-depth interview methods. Data from in-depth interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. By applying the paradigms of the direction of qualitative research, qualitative research reveals internal and external signs of the analyzed phenomenon and qualitatively measurable indicators (Walker, 2010). Therefore, in-depth interviewing is one of the most common methods used in qualitative research (Roulston, 2003). According to Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė (2016), qualitative in-depth interviews make it possible to collect in-depth, context-related responses from open research participants expressing their views, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and experience. The qualitative interview process is a continuous interaction between the planned research strategy and the actual field of research, that is, between what can be planned and what happens in natural circumstances and contexts, communicating with different research participants, dealing with their reactions and emotions, solving many arising practical and organizational issues.

A case study is a qualitative research strategy designed to investigate one or more cases in detail, based on social information and applying the widest possible range of social research methods (Ilgevičienė, 2018). In other research strategies, specific theoretical and methodological justification is essential, observation or interview methods are the priority, and when it comes to a case study, the most crucial thing is concentrated attention to a specific case (Valackienė, 2015). The case study method is a qualitative research method that involves an in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon process (Blatter, 2008).

In justifying the applicability of the in-depth interview method, it was stated that such a method was chosen purposefully in the research being carried out in order to explain in more detail the identification of strategic directions of change management on the example of a selected institution in the field of public sector social services, analyzing changes in the current context, i.e., responding to strategic directions in the institution where change is treated as a key component that is necessary for the continuous improvement of the services provided by the institution.

The attitude of the managers and people responsible for the changes taking place in the institution, their importance and frequency, and preparation are disclosed. The investigation will be conducted with the leading persons of the institutions in order to provide a broader explanation and naming of solutions, how and why the changes took place, what the monitoring was, and the effect.

The period of 2016-2019 was selected in the current research, which was based on the life period of the selected analyzed institution, i.e., from inception to the analyzed period in 2019. The case study method was applied to discuss the situations that have arisen in the family center of social services: when the institution has to initiate changes to manage the situations that have arisen to identify the strategic directions of change management. When analyzing the changing attitude of the public sector to the attitude of this sector's organizations to changes, it is most appropriate to use an instrumental case analysis, which provides knowledge for the identification of strategic directions of change management, their conceptualization, and the construction of research criteria. Internal documents of the institution and secondary sources of information were analyzed.

An in-depth interview was used in this study to expand and deepen the findings obtained during the case studies.

To successfully implement the research, the analysis of the selected research phenomenon includes three essential, interrelated stages of the research. The research plan made it possible to organize and methodologically justify the research being conducted.

In the first stage, after analyzing the scientific literature and conducting research, the theoretical concept of change management was revealed, highlighting the identification of strategic directions of change management in the public sector and discussing the aspects of identifying strategic directions of change management in social service institutions.

The dimensions of change management were revealed in the second stage, reflecting the strategic directions in the public sector social service institution family center. A combined study was conducted using qualitative and quantitative strategies. Qualitative research methods were applied, such as case study and in-depth interview, and quantitative research method - comparative analysis of secondary statistical data – was used.

The third stage includes the analysis and interpretation of the received data, when, after theoretical foundations and empirical verification, a model of change management in social service institutions is constructed, verifying its structural parts and enabling the implementation of strategic directions at the institutional level.

A detailed research instrument was prepared for the study. The research instrument was compiled based on three theoretical insights constructed by the author, according to which the research criteria are distinguished.

The components of the research instrument were distinguished research dimensions, justified research criteria, research indicators grouped, and the application of the methods was justified.

The study aims to identify the strategic directions of change management after analyzing the selected case of the family center during the defined period (2016-2019).

The analytical questions of the study were as follows: what presupposes the inevitability of change management strategic directions in public sector organizations? What is the need for change management strategic directions in social service institutions? How does identifying strategic directions determine decision-making processes to implement changes in public sector institutions? How is the cycle of change management ensured in the research institution?

Non-probability targeted sampling was chosen for the research sample, with the purposeful selection of respondents for the analysis related to identifying strategic directions of change management in the social services sector. Selection justification components were purposefully chosen institution - family center. The informants' answers were analyzed by applying the in-depth interview method (N=7).

4. Research Results

To analyze what presupposes the inevitability of change management strategic directions in public sector organizations related to the implementation of changes, the case study method, which best reflects the institution's internal processes without separating them from the context itself, was chosen. In the conducted research, the case study method is applied to discuss the situations that have arisen in the public social service sector. To manage situations, the institution must initiate changes in the institution to clarify the strategic directions of change management.

After analyzing the institution's internal documents (2016-2019 activity report of the family center), it was found that the family center has implemented significant changes in three years. The institution presents itself as a reliable partner in the implementation of the European Union's structural projects in the social services field. Failing to implement all ideas related to health policy in the country, the institution during 2016-2019. In order to ensure high-quality and wide-ranging service provision, it was necessary to implement changes due to high competition in the field of related social services. Therefore, during the analyzed period, it implemented changes that helped to expand the range of services and aimed to ensure their quality.

After the case analysis, the direction of the strategic changes of the family center became clear - further development of the service process and quality improvement, forming the family policy at the inter-institutional level. This direction of change allows for the further development of the research.

In-depth interviewing was used in this study to extend and deepen the findings from the case studies. The interview questions were arranged gradually when the informant started with the essence and importance of changes in the institution's activities, gradually moving to the implementation and connection of changes to identify the strategic directions of change management. An in-depth interview was conducted with the help of the institution's top managers (N=7). The in-depth interview questions were grouped based on the phases of the change process identified in the change management theory: change initiation, change implementation, change institutionalization, and monitoring of the obtained results. Based on the research criteria and indicators, the in-depth interview included 16 questions. By personally communicating with the informants and presenting them with pre-thought-out and prepared questions that were transformed during the interview, the features of change management were highlighted, allowing for identifying strategic directions in the public social services sector institution.

In personal communication with the informants, identifying strategic directions of change management in the social services sector, in the case of a specific institution, was emphasized. Analysis and interpretation of the received data using data analysis methods were document analysis, checking theoretical insights according to the established system of research criteria and defining measurement dimensions, in-depth interview transcription, and in-depth interview analysis using qualitative content analysis. According to the research criteria, two separate storylines were distinguished in the interview responses. The data obtained during the research were transcribed, providing coding for the order of questions and informants. Interview questions were coded K1, K2, and other (K1 stands for question 1), and the in-depth interview participants were named by coding R1, R2, and other (R1 stands for First Informant).

Qualitative research using the in-depth interview method was based on three theoretical insights: the first theoretical insight helped to reveal the essence of change and the necessity of strategic directions to assess how change can be planned, initiated, and processually managed (Burnes and Jackson, 2011; Carnall, 1990; Zappala, Toscano and Licciardello, 2019); the second theoretical insight included the identification of strategic directions of change management in the field of social service organizations (Raipa, 2011, 2012; Al-Haddad, Kotnour, 2015; Coram and Burnes, 2001); the third theoretical insight helped reveal the psychological aspects of change management, which directly influence the identification of strategic directions of change management (Ruškus, Mažeikienė, Naujanienė, Motiečienė, Dvarionis, 2013; Michel, Todnem By & Burnes, 2013, 2002).

The first group of questions in the in-depth interview, which includes questions 1-6, is related to the changes taking place in the institution, their causes, and management. These in-depth interview questions are based on the criterion "Peculiarities of the field of change management, highlighting the peculiarities of change initiation and implementation." The criterion was studied with the following indicators: identification of institutional changes, identification and analysis of causes, and factors determining change.

The second group of questions in the in-depth interview, which includes questions 7-14, reflects the second plot line and responds to the criterion: "Identified changes taking place in the institution of the public social services sector when the strategic direction of change management becomes clear." The criterion was studied with the following indicators: change management by identifying strategic direction in a public social service institution field of analysis; the possibilities and difficulties of applying the stages of change management in the institution; employee empowerment and involvement in change management, initiation.

The third group of questions in the in-depth interview, which includes 15-16 questions, relates to the institution's readiness to implement changes. This group of questions was based on the criterion

"Development of a change management model that enables the systematic and successful implementation of strategic directions at the institutional level in the selected institution." The criterion was checked by the following indicators: the institution's readiness to implement changes and the application of change management methods and principles, which will help construct a management model.

An analysis of the informants' reflections on the in-depth interview and its content was carried out. The first group of questions helped reveal how often and what kind of changes take place in the family center, the decisive reasons for the changes to occur, and highlighted the factors that determine the necessity and implementation of changes. According to the interviewees, "changes happen constantly" (R1, R2, R3), but sometimes the institution experiences unplanned changes: "an unforeseen problem occurs, which requires an urgent solution to initiate change" (R5, R6, R7). The reasons for the changes are "legal acts and decisions of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania" (R3, R4), as well as "implemented new systems at the state level" (R1, R4, R6). The need for changes and their necessity are determined both by the internal environment of the institution ("opinion of employees and suggestions for improving operations" (R1)) and the external environment ("suggestions and demands of customers" (R5, R7), "search for innovations" (R1-R7)).

When questions were asked about the initiation and execution of changes in the institution, the informants emphasized these possible/existing change initiators, "project teams," "working groups, and commissions," which are usually "approved for the period of implementation of a certain change, providing responsibility for the control of the implementation phase of the change" (R1, R3, R7). Regarding the involvement of employees in the change process, the informants state that the institution prepares for changes by foreseeing the empowerment of employees in advance: "in order to achieve the goals, everything must be planned taking into account the opinion of the team," "a strategic map is drawn up," "strategic plans for 3 years are drawn up, targeted indicators and if necessary in a commission or working group, changes are approved", "human resources and their attitude are important in planning and implementing changes" (R1-R6).

In response to the question about possible difficulties in planning and implementing changes in the institution, the informants emphasized: "resolutions of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania," "too little funding," and "changing political power does not delve into the activities and programs of the institution" (R1, R2, R5). When discussing with the responsible heads of departments and managers, based on their experience in recent years, they unanimously agreed to the statement that the institution implements changes together with other institutions to achieve a common goal for the district in inter-institutional cooperation. It became clear that changes in the institution were caused by certain reasons, which can be divided into both external and internal ones. External reasons include competition, legal regulation, changing government regulations, and meeting customers' needs in the area. The internal reasons are saving budget funds and proportional allocation of costs, operational efficiency, increase of indirect profit, and redistribution.

The second storyline helped to distinguish the second phase of the change process - the implementation of change by drawing strategic directions for change. During the in-depth interview, the reasons that led to the adoption of the psychosocial-educational services model of the family center in the district were analyzed, as well as the influence of the employees on the initiation of this change. It can be stated that there is currently a very prominent process of initiating changes in the institution.

It was established that external and internal reasons determine the initiation of changes in the research institution. All ongoing changes depend both on laws and state strategy, as well as on managers and employees. The head of the institution tries to involve as many employees as possible in the stage of change management, thus aiming to reduce the latter's resistance to changes and increase their power in decision-making.

A change plan was created at the center of the family. Before its implementation, the institution

considers the employees' opinions or, if there is one, a working group or a commission. During the interview, it became clear that to ensure the initiation process's success, the employees usually have to contribute to the new strategic guidelines and action plans being created. The reasons most often mentioned by the informants: "all employees initiate changes" (R1, R4, R7), "<...> in order to achieve a common goal and results, everyone must be an initiator of change because we all try to make a change together" (R1, R5), "ambition - provision of services closer to the client's place of residence or provision of a service in the district, when the institution's employees 'bring' the service <...>" (R2), "a new budget is submitted to the district municipal council, it includes an activity plan, new strategic guidelines and changes" (R1, R5, R7), "decisions of management and local government" (R4-R6), "surveys conducted by employees of the institution regarding the need for services, as well as work tools and goods in order to make operations more efficient" (R5, R7).

During the interview, it was found that changes in the institution affect the implementation of its operational plan and program. When discussing the factors determining the successful/unsuccessful course of change management, two subcategories are distinguished: external support and involvement of the institution's employees. When the institution needs to make major changes, the institution does not shy away from hiring professionals who can provide external advice. Most often, professional consultants are hired, and a person in the institution with the necessary competence and skills is appointed.

To implement small-scale changes that do not require professional intervention, the institution appoints its own employees to be responsible for implementing the change. In this case, the number of responsible people varies depending on the situation. There are opportunities to create new jobs and to search for new human resources with the necessary competence. The institution tries to involve more and more human resources in the process of change management.

During the interview, it was found that the family center relied on the opinion of professional consultants, i.e., consulted with the departments responsible for forming social policy in the district, the investment department, and the coordinator of inter-institutional cooperation. New employees, lecturers, and specialists were hired to implement the model to help the institution implement changes.

The in-depth interviews aimed to determine what factors can lead to successful or unsuccessful change management. So, summarizing the data, it can be stated that various factors influence the success of change management. The involvement of employees determines successful change management and their internal motivation towards the institution when the aim is to ensure change management. In addition, it was determined by the philanthropic involvement of the head of the institution during the change management process. The success factors that also influence successful change management are the appropriate organization of work, the distribution of work tasks, responsible persons, a communicated activity plan, and deadlines.

Strategic changes in the institution can be implemented through situational management. The institution can initiate changes by implementing situation management, performing a detailed analysis of the situation, and assessing internal and external factors that could affect the organization. When implementing changes, it is important for the institution to ensure clear leadership and effective communication with all stakeholders - employees, managers, and other parties at the inter-institutional level. Overall, situation management allows an organization to be flexible, efficient, and adaptable to changing environmental conditions, ensuring long-term potential for success and growth.

The informants also presented the factors determining the unsuccessful implementation of change management. In summary, it can be stated that these employees do not understand the institution's vision, mission, and goals, have a lack of motivation to work in a team, are non-compliant with the institution's program and plan, reacting too late to new obstacles, and not managing risks. Also, one of the factors of failure is failure to fulfill the assigned task due to lack of competence, ignorance, and too little experience in the implemented change. Another factor is the lack of human resources in the institution.

During the in-depth interview, it became clear that the research organization pays much attention to how the employees would be prepared to implement the changes. When answering the questions, the majority of the informants emphasized that certain actions require control to avoid failure in implementing changes. However, they also emphasized that too much control, pressure, and excessive leadership can manifest in employees' resistance to change. Clearer cooperation between managers and founders is missing; "not all founders are deeply involved in the institution's activities; they are not competent enough to propose or approve changes" (R1, R5, R6). Perceived competition with other institutions, according to the manager, encourages continuous initiation of changes, "social institutions providing similar services are our competitors, as a result of which our institution is constantly in the process of initiating and implementing changes" (R1).

To meet customer expectations, the institution pays much attention to the quality and variety of services, "trying to attract more and more new lecturers and to ensure that the services available in the big cities of Lithuania are also provided in the region" (R1, R6, R7). The informants also note the shortcomings and obstacles that make it challenging to implement the desired changes "by missing a broader approach at the political level, when a political decision is needed to implement the change" (R1, R5, R6), "there is no communication between ministries" (R1, R5). The institution's employees try to participate in training related to improving competence. During the introduction of the personal data protection procedure in the institution, all employees were trained and assigned tasks for further work by the general data protection regulation.

All interview participants spoke unanimously and responded to the basic premise that implementing changes and having strategic directions guarantees the continuity of the institution's activities. It has been observed that achieving the set goals faster by initiating changes and successfully managing them with precise strategic guidelines is possible. It is necessary to adapt to the changing conditions of the external environment, which also influence the institution's changes, namely, customer needs, laws, personnel changes, and training. After implementing changes and their systematic initiation and implementation, the institution's competitiveness in the public sector increases, its image improves, and awareness increases among direct clients and partners.

By interpreting the data obtained during the in-depth interview, it can be underlined that the attitude of the institution's employees, managers, and founders towards changes is one of the essential factors for the success of the changes. The knowledge and readiness of the team to implement changes and the communication relationship with the participants of the change process are integral to the success of the entire institution.

Summing up the in-depth interview, after performing the qualitative content analysis of all storylines, it can be stated that the family center is initiating and implementing changes, improving, and constantly implementing them. The causes of the most common changes, success/failure factors, types of changes, and management processes and their characteristics are also determined. It can be noticed that the institution is intensively carrying out changes in two areas, which are related to mutual communication to improve operational processes: inter-institutional cooperation and satisfaction of customer needs. According to the informants, during the implementation of the model of psychosocial-educational services in the institution, employees are prepared for changes by involving all team members (from the highest-level managers to the lowest-level employees of the institution). For the team members to be ready to implement changes in the institution, the institution actively participates in training or organizes them within the institution. Due to the small human resources in the institution, it is often necessary to use the services of professional consultants. Upon joining the changes related to project activities, new employees are given a 3-month adaptation period, during which they have the full right to consult and learn. The head of the institution noted that sometimes one has to face not only the employees' resistance to the changes but, more often, the founder's resistance to the change is encountered; the resistance to the change occurs due to the lack of time to understand the change.

Effective change management is essential in reducing the risk of resistance to change. Such management should include various levels of employees, managers, and government representatives, considering their opinions and understanding their concerns about the change. However, a fundamental problem remains when the institution does not have a properly defined change expression field; the constructed change management model would facilitate and enable the implementation of strategic directions at the institutional level.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of scientific literature helped reveal the significance and need for change management in the public sector, which determines further organizational decisions and behavior. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to how to successfully implement and manage conflict of interest in public sector organizations within existing frameworks. The manager's role in change management is singled out as one of the most critical and complex since successful leadership, ensuring effective internal communication and clear delegation of tasks facilitate the complex process of implementing changes. The problem of organizational change management remains one of the essential objects of analysis when the aim is to identify strategic directions of change in the social services sector, enabling the development of change plans and a change strategy. Because of this, it is not enough for the heads of institutions to organize the company's or organization's activities well, to teach employees new work methods, and to expect economic success. The analysis of the scientific literature revealed that to implement successful changes; there must be collective action, the mobilization of many people's efforts against domination, and a particular protest of the oppressed, which would gain sufficient scale and weight to "move" the structures in the public social service sector.

The scientific discussion discussing the identification of strategic directions of change management in the public sector equates it to the process of systemic change. It was established that the model of strategic directions of change management in public sector organizations could include three strategic directions: restructuring, reorganization, and reconceptualization. It was revealed that in order to implement changes in public sector organizations successfully, it is necessary to construct a strategic direction of reconceptualization since it is a dualistic process that includes intellectual activity in generating a new organizational concept, mission, and image creation technology, methods and processes of concept realization and practical realization of concepts, which combines both restructuring and reorganization strategies as a mechanism for implementing conceptual ideas. In order to develop a new pragmatic change management system, the nature of change management should be further investigated.

The identification of strategic directions of change management in the social service sector - family center, based on theoretical insights and evaluated by research. The research results revealed that the head of the institution is usually the initiator of changes in the institution. It was established that the institution is currently implementing changes, and changes in the social services institution are ongoing. It was established that the institution lacks a model that would facilitate the process of change management and preparation, enabling strategic directions to implement changes at the institutional level.

After evaluating the results of the study, the family center was recommended to ensure strategic continuity in the change management process in the identified directions of strategic changes, which would enable cooperation at the inter-institutional level, in the public social service sector, and at the institutional level, when the implementation of changes depends on the decisions of the political environment, from the institution's general attitude, commitment and ability to adapt to new conditions and circumstances. For change management to become meaningful, it is necessary to focus attention on the freedom and autonomy of individuals, group work, and managerial control, which would allow for

the efficiency and quality of the activities of the family center, the availability of services and mutual benefits for both the institution and its employees.

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