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THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT TASKS IN RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGINGS

Management tasks and change management are intricately linked in modern organizations. Managers should lead their team in a stable environment where they must adapt to changes in the external environment. Without the application of change management strategies, it is difficult for managers to perform well with rapidly changing market demands. Nowadays, the existence of general management tasks is becoming increasingly important. In this article, through organizational case studies, we examine how management tasks appear during successful organizational changes, and what role a manager has in leading team effectively under permanent changes. In our results, we point out to what extent management tasks drafted by Fayol (1916) are necessary for organizational adaptation.

Introduction

During the last centuries, corporate management has continuously developed and changed, as the business environment has also transformed. Henry Fayol (1916) is linked with the development of modern management theories. The close interaction of management tasks and organizational changes became a fundamental part of the business world. Successful managers can react to changing environmental conditions flexibly and help their organization maintain efficiency and competitiveness with their management.

With respect to accelerated decision-making situations, it is evident that due to permanent changes, a flexible and dynamic response to changes in environmental conditions has become a basic managerial requirement. A major transformation in this fast-paced world for organizations encounters difficulties therefore the role of a manager is inevitable.

In our article, we intend to reveal how management tasks appear during large-scale, so-called radical changes affecting the entire organization. We examine the issue through self-made case studies through the example of organizations in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, where the results of radical changes that have taken place in the last 3-5 years can be evaluated.

Literature

In this chapter, we discuss the interpretation of management tasks and relevant grouping of organizational changes.

The definition of management tasks is one of the basic issues in management science. This field of science goes back to a long historical past, which provides a sufficient basis for defining management tasks. Leadership is a concept that can be linked to social activities and work, the

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condition of which is the planning of coordinated processes, the distribution and organization of tasks and, finally, their control (Berde, 2015).

There were numerous theories and approaches in the 1900s to define leadership. Taylor, Fayol, and Weber drafted the foundations of classical management schools at the beginning of the 20th century, which was the starting point for the development of the field (Sari, 2023).

Fayol (1916) highlighted five principal areas of management tasks, including planning, organization, management, coordination, and control. These tasks determine daily activities and responsibilities of managers. Planning is important in defining goals, organization in dividing tasks and creating structure, management in overseeing work processes, coordination in ensuring the cooperation of different departments, while control has a key role in monitoring performance. In the period that followed, more approaches appeared in management science. Several new tasks were defined among the management tasks including communication, gaining information, change management, motivation, team building (Véry, 2009). Conger-Ready (2004) defines managerial tasks such as result-oriented thinking, capacity building, coaching, which are close to managerial competencies. Nowadays, we face several new management tasks due to electronic communication and globalization, it is the so-called e-leadership (Farkas, & Nagy, 2020). The existence of agile management and leadership theories are also important to mention. Agile management carries dynamism and flexibility, which is one of the most important characteristics of today's managers (Greber, & Freisler, 2018). In agile management, corporate culture and values have greater role these days, and flexible response is on the focus (Ackerson et al., 2021). Leadership theories define the expectations of the leader in the usual framework in a much more permissive way: personal characteristics and behaviour set an example for the employees (Wren, 1994). These are factors that influence effectiveness in the performance of management activities (Valdiserri, & Wilson, 2010).

It is indisputable that after the turn of the millennium, personal relationships became increasingly important in management science (Gulati et al., 2017), however, general management tasks drafted by Fayol (1916) (organization, planning, management, coordination, and control) are becoming increasingly important amid permanent changes (Robinson, 2020).

To interpret organizational changings, we need to understand what change is. In a simple definition, change is an effect in the environmental conditions, a coercive force that encourages the organization to behave differently (produce differently, create new work processes) (Gál et al., 2023). Accordingly, change is the response of organizations to the changing environment. It is important to note that by organizational changing we mean controlled, planned activity in all cases (Berde et al., 2003). However, several authors agree that the coercive force of organizational changes comes from the external environment in most cases (Ujhelyi, & Kun, 2016; Sing, & Ramdeo, 2020; Hodges, 2021).

In connection with the objectives set in the article, possibilities of grouping organizational changings are worth mentioning. Several solutions have been created related to this topic in recent years, and the accelerated changes have induced even more novel approaches. Some of these theories are described below.

Farkas (2013) distinguishes between proactive and reactive changings depending on whether the organization can prepare for changings in environmental conditions. Kotter (2008) defines fast and slow changings. Want, Quinn (1993) (in: Farkas, 2013) distinguishes between radical and incremental, this differentiation is the basis of the evaluation of my article. Dobák (2012) distinguishes changings based on the extent, purpose, direction, level, speed, and control of the changing. Changes in both environments can have a significant impact on the operation of the business and can make it react (Huang, 2020). The most significant difference comes from

how much of the organization is affected by the changing. If each or almost each organizational characteristics change, the organizational characteristics change to a considerable extent and the change takes place quickly, 'in leaps and bounds', we can speak of radical changings. During the evaluation of the case studies, we took these factors into account to establish the fact of radical organizational change.

Changes in organizations are often related to leadership. Innovation, technological development, and market changes are challenges that leaders must respond to. Creating agile organizations, increasing flexibility, and applying change management strategies are all methods that enable organizations to successfully adapt to the changing environment. The connection between Fayol's principles and organizational changes is still decisive in management practice today.

Method

To conduct the study and answer the research questions, we compiled our own case studies. The essence of the case study is that it processes and analyses real events, from which results drawing conclusions are obtained. Case studies are usually applied in conjunction with a more structured examination of management. Its content depends primarily on the chosen topic; therefore, it is not characterized by a mandatory structural form (Berde et al., 2003).

In this evaluation, we included 10 organizational case studies according to the following filter parameters:

- headquarter: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county;
- extent of changing: radical;
- changing completed: yes.

The studies were prepared in 2023-2024, based on a predetermined set of questions. The currently relevant parts of the question list are as follows: organizational identification data, description of the change, identification of individual phases, presentation of institutionalization efforts, evaluation of the role played by the manager. After the completion of the studies, we compared the organizational case studies using keyword analysis as follows:

- the degree of change was divided into radical or incremental change,
- we determined the nature of the change according to the main purpose of the organizational transformation,
- we identified the emergence of management tasks
 - management tasks defined by Fayol (1916) (organization, planning, management, coordination, control),
 - other management tasks (decision-making, gaining information, communication, group management, motivation, delegation, authorization, and perception).

The evaluation of the case studies was conducted by straightforward text interpretation and comparative analysis, for which illustrative diagrams were prepared. Our results are described below.

Results

10 organizations that form the basis of the case studies are in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. In terms of their field of activity, they were included in the sample from the areas of trade, manufacturing, agricultural production, food production and other services. The organizations are divided according to their size as follows: small enterprises (4), medium enterprises (2), large enterprises (4).

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As a criterion for the preparation of the case studies, companies that have completed at least one radical organizational change in the last 3 years were included in the sample, therefore its success or failure, as well as the contributing factors, could be fully evaluated.

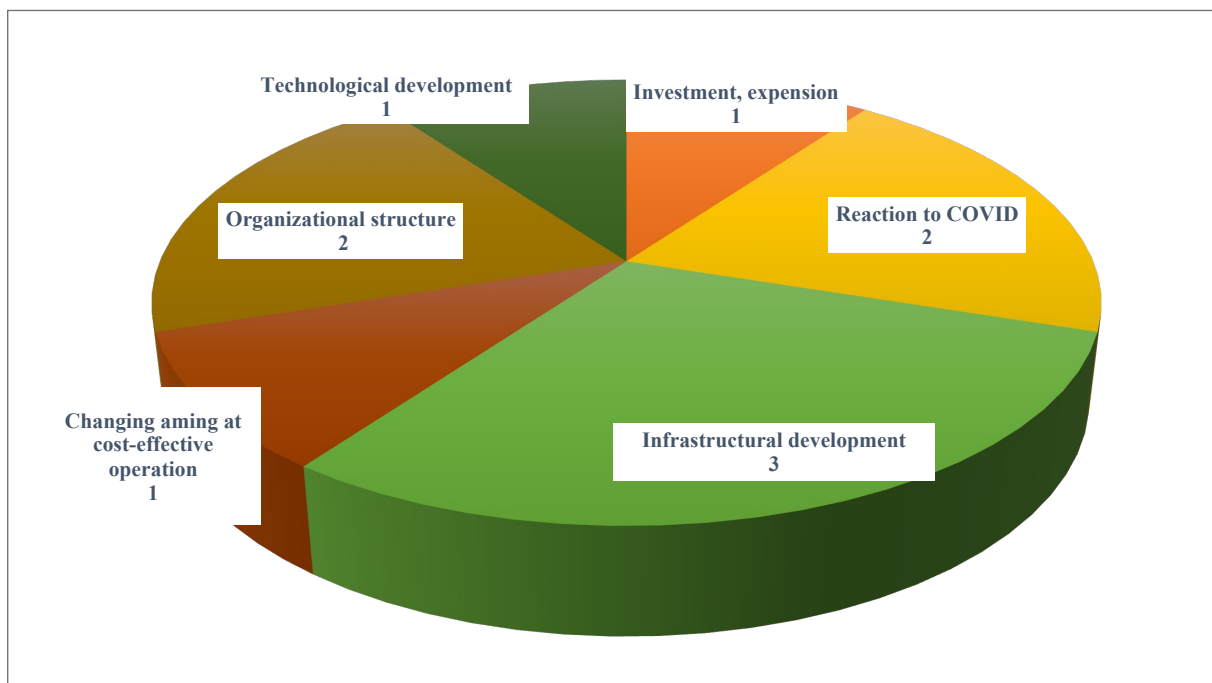
Among the changes, we distinguished 6 different directions:

- technological development,
- investment, expansion,
- change affecting organizational structure,
- reaction to pandemic,
- changing focusing on cost-effective operation (re-organization, work-flow optimization, etc.),
- infrastructural development (development particularly in IT).

Among the orientations, infrastructural development characterized the pattern in 3 cases, changes affecting the structure, and the reaction to the situation caused by COVID-19 in 2 cases each, all other orientations occurred in 1 case (*Figure 1*). In all 10 cases, the change of the organizations included in the case study was initiated from the top down, i.e. the measures were initiated from the top management level or from the owner level. The direction of the initiative raises the possibility of investigating the extent to which the employees are empowered or involved, and how leaders dealt with resistance.

Based on the sample, one of the main objectives of our article is to formulate findings regarding the management tasks and the common features of the leadership role during the various organizational changes.

FIGURE 1: ORIENTATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE BASED ON CASE STUDIES (N=10)

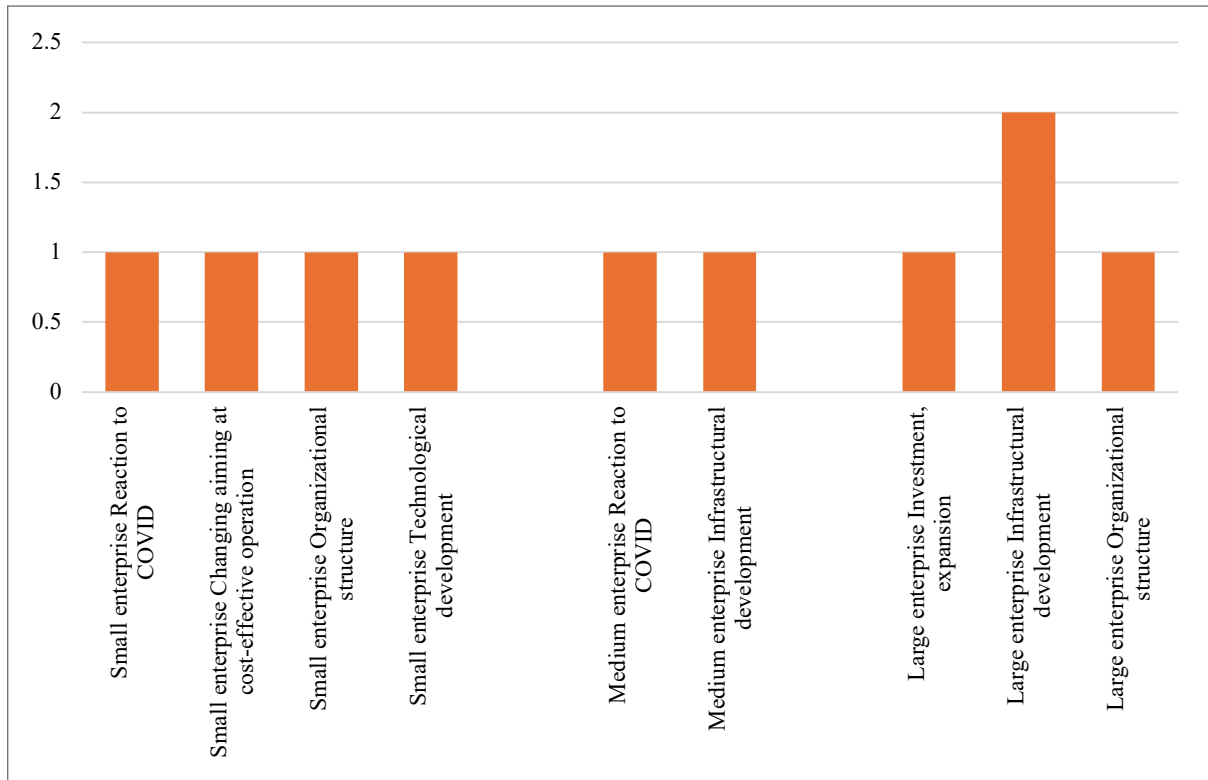


Source: own research (2024)

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Examining the orientations, in the case of the organizations that are part of the study, activities aimed at changing appear in the same proportion, considering the size of the organization (Figure 2). In large enterprises, activities aimed at investment and expansion appear, and two case studies deal with the management of change during infrastructural developments.

FIGURE 2: DIRECTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES ACCORDING TO ORGANIZATIONAL SIZE (N=10)



Source: own research (2024)

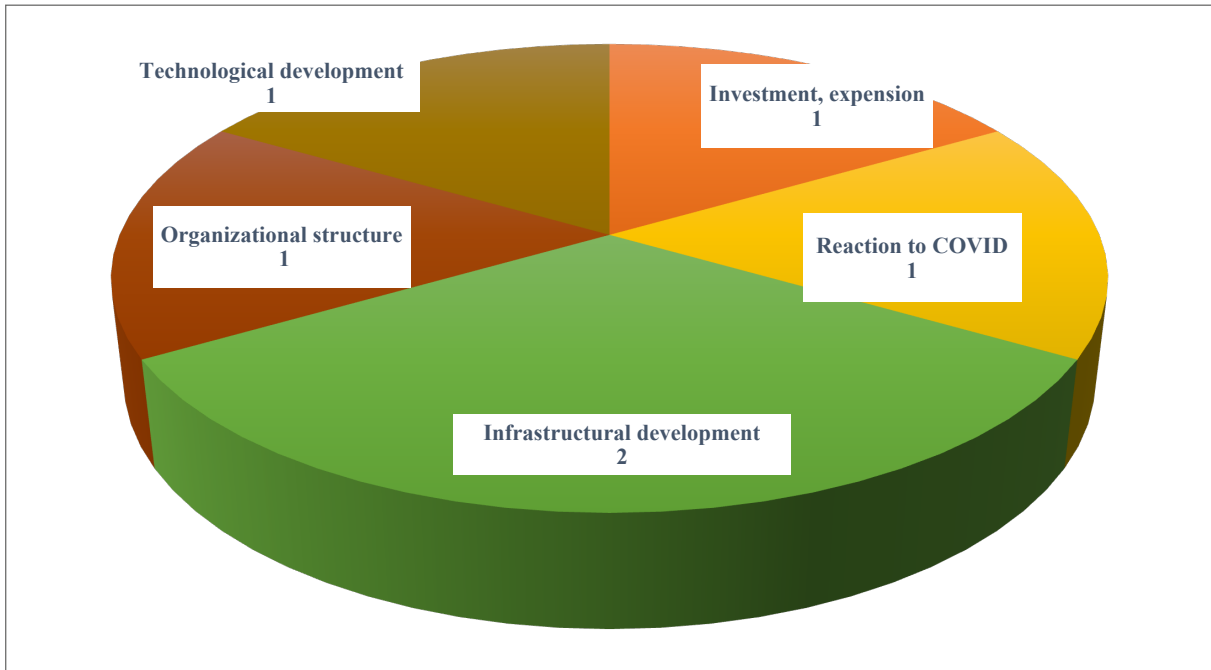
Organizational changes examined in the case studies were successful in 6 cases, excluding 1 case or only partially, and in 3 cases ideas were partially realized. It may therefore be worthwhile to compare the differences that formed the basis of successful and only partially successful changes, and what role the leader played in them.

In addition to the steps of transformation of organizational characteristics, case studies related to changes also dealt with management tasks and expectations of managers, which topic was intended to answer the main questions of this study.

To gain a deeper understanding of the requirements placed on the manager during organizational changes, we examined the appearance of management tasks, the availability of new management tasks, and the definition of the expectations placed on the manager.

Let us first examine the changings that were successfully completed by the organizations in the sample.

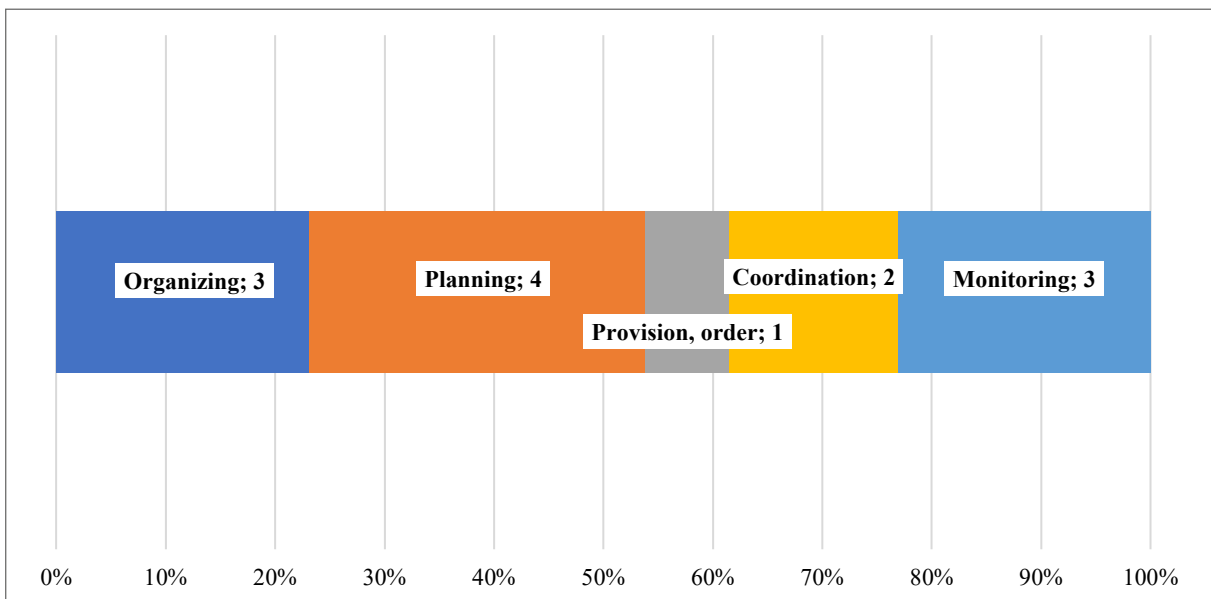
FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGINGS ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF THE CHANGING



Source: own research (2024)

Successful organizational changing took place in 5 of the 6 categories mentioned earlier (Figure 3). If we look deeper into these cases, it can be concluded that, apart from the response to the pandemic, all the changes were introduced gradually, which provides a good basis for employees to get used to the changes, as well as reducing resistance. The significance of management tasks drafted by Fayol (1916) is equally important in the examined cases in terms of frequency, more emphasis is placed on organization, planning and control, less emphasis is placed on provision and instructions (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: THE FREQUENCY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGEMENT TASKS DURING SUCCESSFUL RADICAL CHANGING

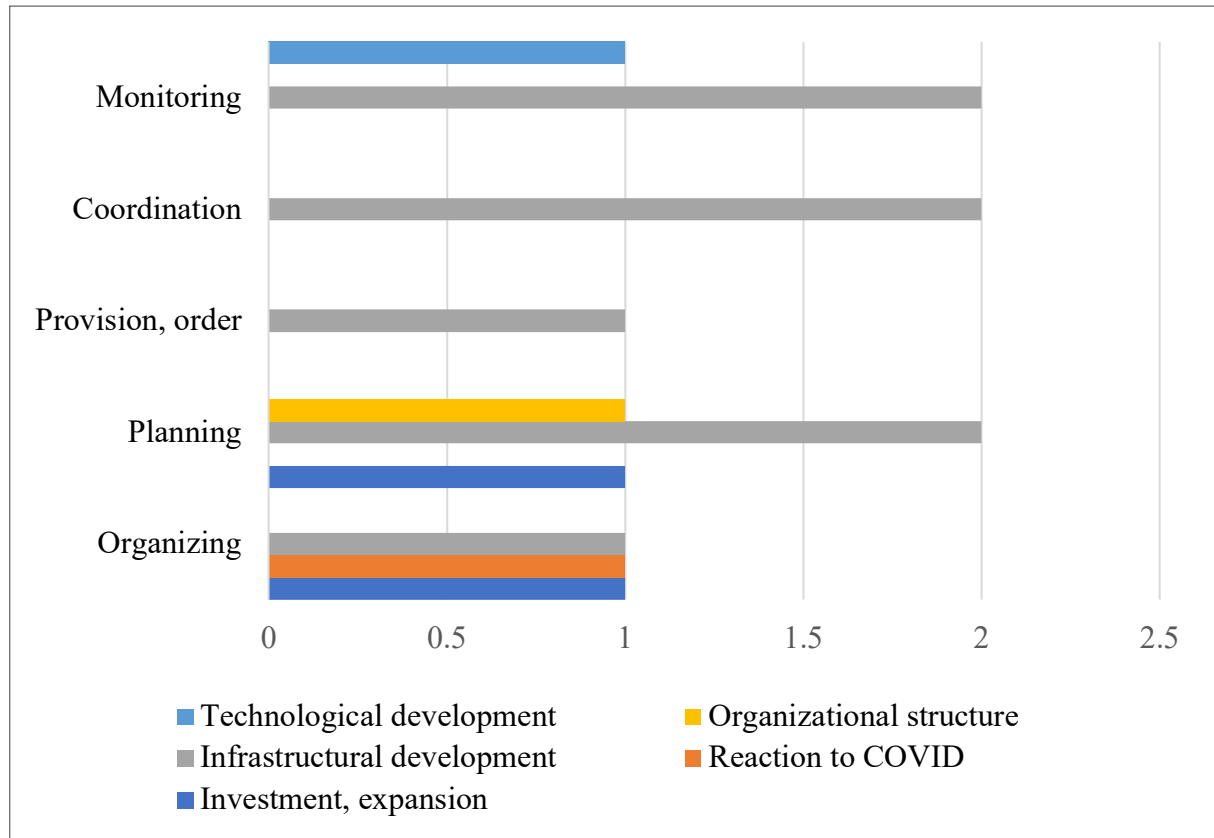


Source: own research (2024)

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This result can be attributed to the fact that proper planning and the organization of related steps are crucial during such an organizational event. All the employees feel its decisive role. This is also supported by the approach that when examining individual changing activities, organization and planning appear in several cases as outstanding management tasks (investment, expansion, infrastructure development, COVID response). In addition, changings that affect the organization as a whole – in this case the infrastructural development – all management tasks are handled with emphasis (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: THE FREQUENCY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGEMENT TASKS ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGINGS



Source: own research (2024)

All the management tasks drafted by Fayol (1916) appear in the description of the case studies during the above-mentioned organizational developments. Regarding developments related to investment and expansion, organization and proper planning are given greater emphasis, which is clearly reflected in the studies. However, during changings related to organizational structure, planning can be defined as a key management task. In the chaotic and unpredictable environment generated by COVID-19, proper organization was of fundamental importance in organizations, as illustrated in Figure 5. In fact, the prominent role of other management tasks was not formulated in the relevant case study. The transformation of the shift schedule was an urgent issue, here a so-called alternate shift was involved instead of 1 shift. The speed of the response to the pandemic situation did not allow thorough planning, but the new process had to be implemented without a transition. Appropriate management organization played an indisputable role in this respect.

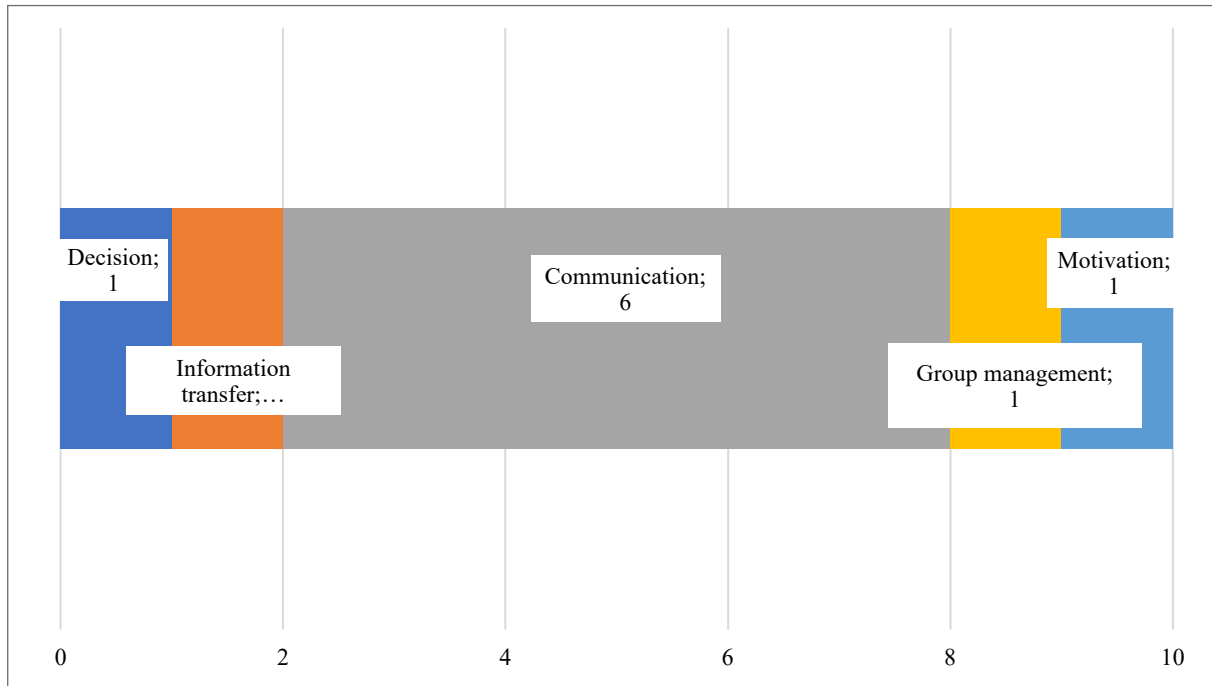
During the successful changes, it can be established that the importance of the role of management tasks formulated by Fayol (1916) can be demonstrated, especially regarding the activities of organization and planning.

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I also examined additional management tasks in the case studies, such as decision-making, information acquisition, communication, group management, motivation, delegation, authorization, and perception.

If we examine these aspects more closely, similar to the previous method, we can see that communication as an activity clearly stands out from the other management tasks (*Figure 6*).

FIGURE 6: FREQUENCY OF IMPORTANCE OF OTHER MANAGEMENT TASKS IN SUCCESSFUL RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGINGS

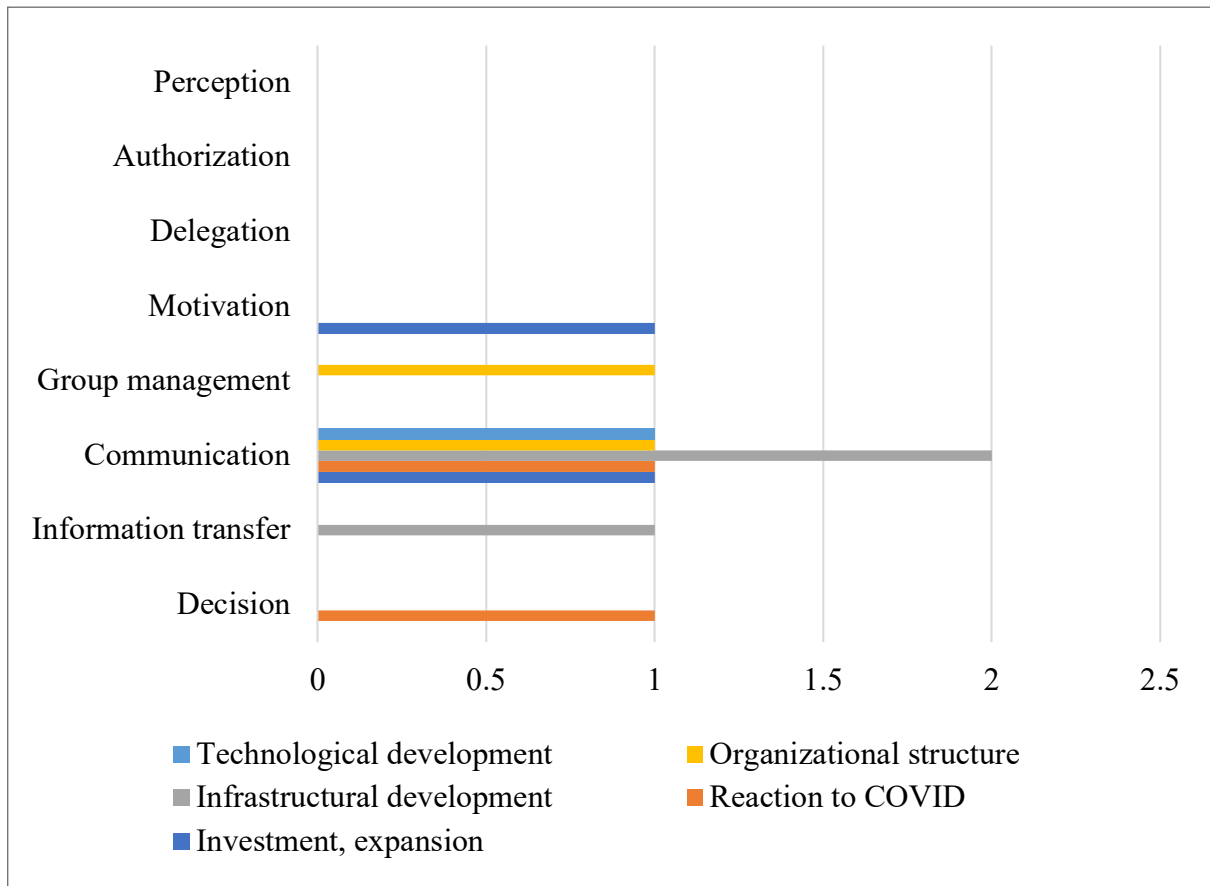


Source: own research (2024)

The result confirms the fact that one of the key elements of successful organizational changings is communication by the manager. The importance of decision, information transfer, motivation and group management also appear among the success criteria, however, in changing circumstances, managerial communication is the most suitable for reducing the uncertainty of employees, for understanding the reason for the change, and for presenting the vision of the future.

If we examine the importance of other management tasks according to the breakdown of the nature of organizational changes, we can see that communication appears as a criterion for all examined organizational changes, but detection, authorization and delegation are not at all expected management tasks of outstanding importance (*Figure 7*).

FIGURE 7: THE FREQUENCY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGEMENT TASKS ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES



Source: own research (2024)

In the case of infrastructural developments, the appropriate transfer of information is one of the key management tasks of successful change, while communication and group management appear in transformations affecting the organizational structure. During changes affecting the organizational structure, it is inherently important to lead and keep the right groups together to ensure that the changes take place smoothly in the organizational structure. In the study under review, there was a merger that changed the entire operation. It is clear and unequivocal that in this situation the dynamic cooperation of the already familiar groups was necessary.

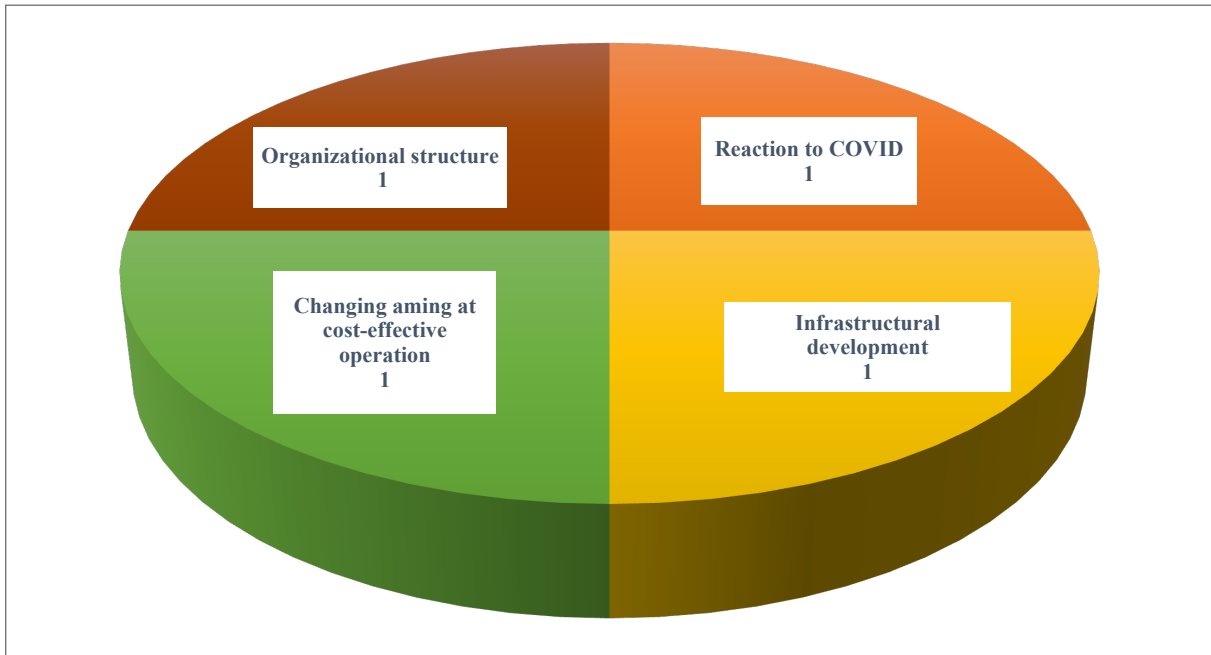
In the examined case studies, motivation was not at the forefront of successful change. This may be due to the fact that radical changes – which affect the organization as a whole and affect the entire organizational culture – are not primarily implemented through the motivation of employees. The results suggest that proper planning, organization of change management and proper communication can be potential success criteria. Based on this, an interesting line of investigation could also be whether different management tasks come into focus during minor organizational changes.

In the following, we present the management tasks or their shortcomings that can be found in the partially or unsuccessfully completed organizational case studies.

In 4 cases, the examined changes that form the basis of the case studies were not successful or can only be considered partially successful. 1-1 case uniformly deals with changes affecting organizational structure, response to COVID, transformation aimed at cost-effective operation and infrastructural development (*Figure 8*).

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FIGURE 8: DISTRIBUTION OF UNSUCCESSFUL OR PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL RADICAL CHANGES ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF THE CHANGE (N=4)

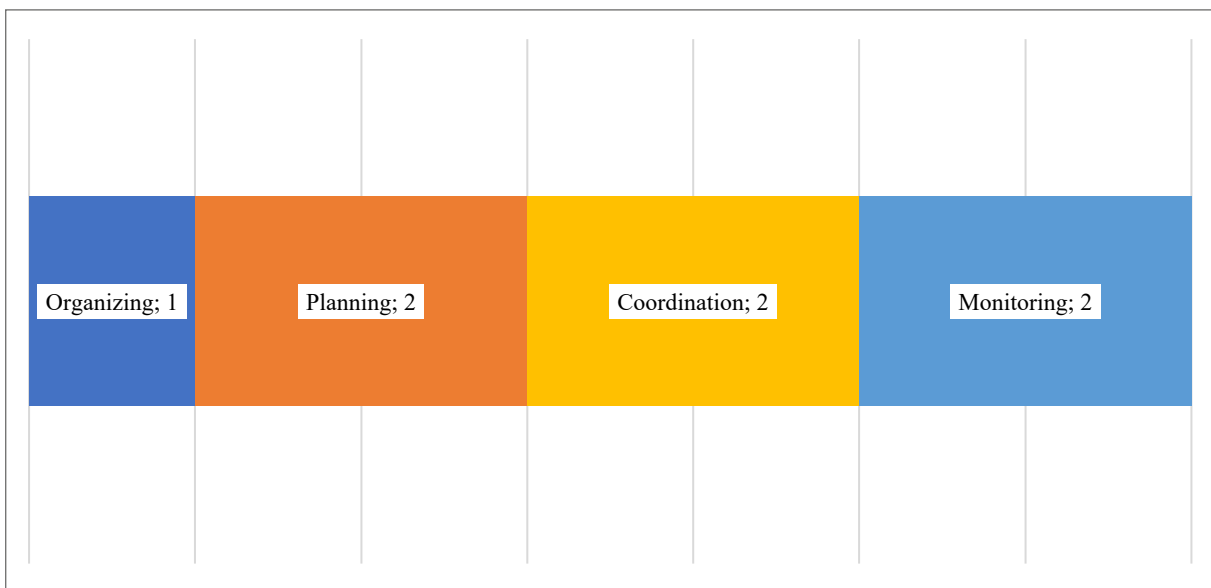


Source: own research (2024)

In these cases, it is worthwhile to examine the role of management tasks, and what identifiable deficiencies were clearly linked to management.

It clearly emerges that in those cases where the organizational change cannot be evaluated as successful, among the management tasks defined by Fayol (1916), provision and instructions as management tasks are missing (*Figure 9*). This predicts the problem that the planned and organized processes were not properly distributed to the employees, based on which the implementation could also encounter difficulties. Of course, deeper studies are also necessary.

FIGURE 9: FREQUENCY OF APPEARANCE OF MANAGEMENT TASKS DURING UNSUCCESSFUL OR PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL RADICAL CHANGING



Source: own research (2024)

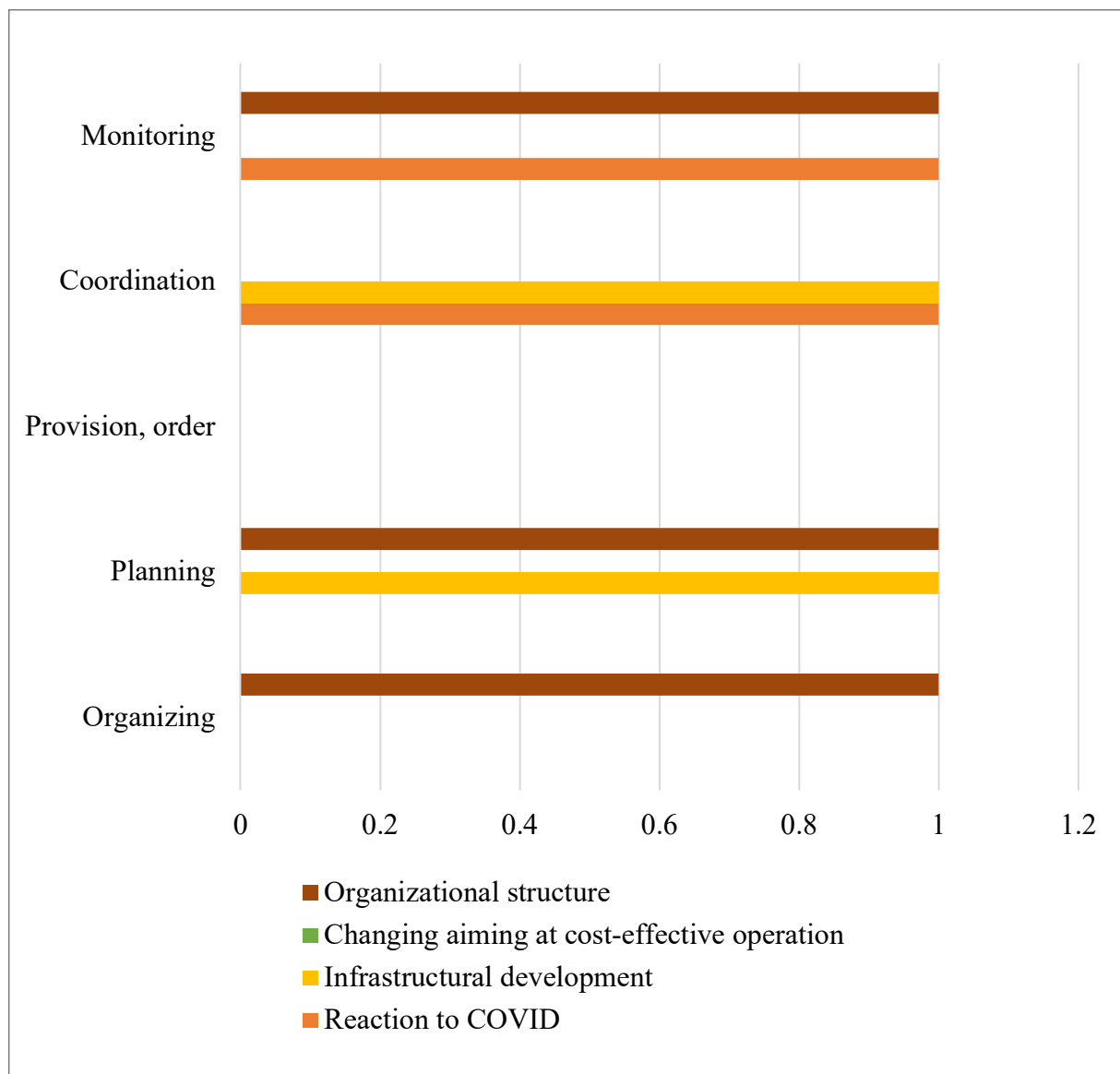
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Breaking down the results, as before, we can observe that the identification of management tasks is characterized by a less structured appearance compared to successful changes (Figure 10).

During the transformation affecting the organizational structure – which in the case study involved a reorganization accompanied by a significant increase in the number of employees – organization, planning and monitoring can be identified as management tasks, but the activities of provision and coordination are missing. However, these two missing activities are crucial for a properly implemented transformation, so the reason for the failure becomes almost clear.

During the reaction to the uncertain situation caused by COVID-19, coordination and control were included among the identifiable management tasks, however, the previous results clearly showed that a key factor in this special situation is proper organization, which was completely omitted in this case, they only tried to involve the employees at the end.

FIGURE 10: THE FREQUENCY OF THE APPEARANCE OF MANAGEMENT TASKS DURING UNSUCCESSFUL OR PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL RADICAL CHANGES ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF THE CHANGES

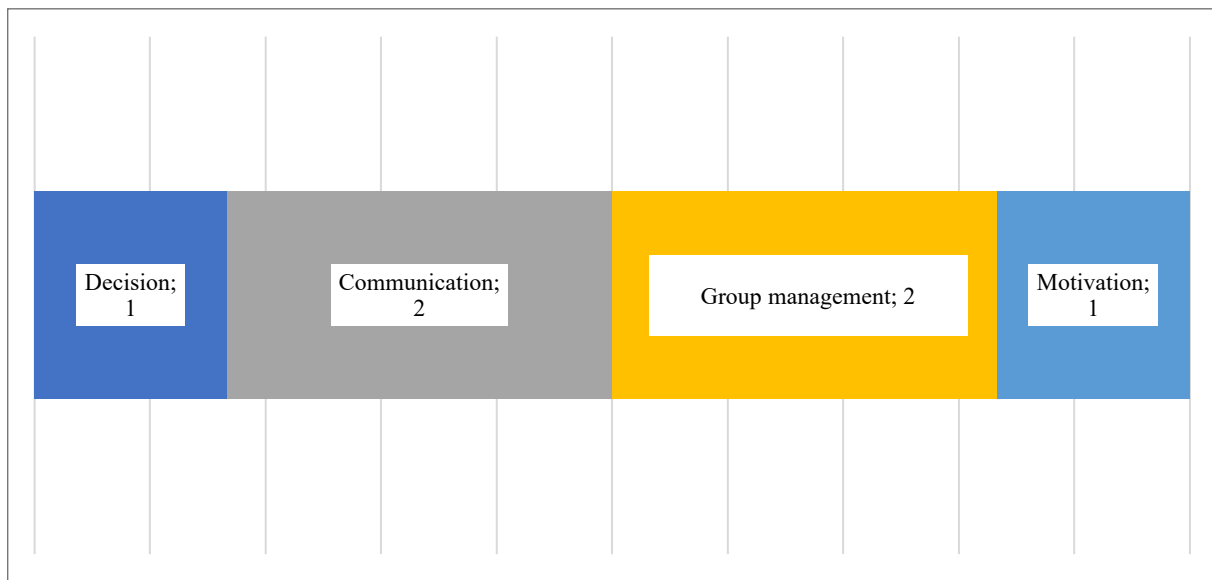


Source: own research (2024)

Planning and coordination were identified as management tasks in the transformation affecting the infrastructure – which in the case study was the introduction of a corporate management system – but there were no signs of other management activities. This case study is a good example of how, due to the lack of control, several errors were revealed in the new system, which generated significant resistance from the employees. As a result, the employees evaluated the innovation only as an aggravating circumstance and essential work processes reverted to the previously usual procedure. The managers involved the employees, who worked with the given processes as part of the daily routine, in the change, but it was already an unsuccessful attempt. During the change aimed at cost-effective work, not a single management task could be identified, which predicts the failure of the change.

Regarding the examination of other management tasks, the results show that communication and group management gained somewhat more importance during the change, however, the difference is not significantly significant compared to decision making and motivation (*Figure 11*).

FIGURE 11: THE FREQUENCY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF OTHER MANAGEMENT TASKS IN UNSUCCESSFUL OR PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGINGS



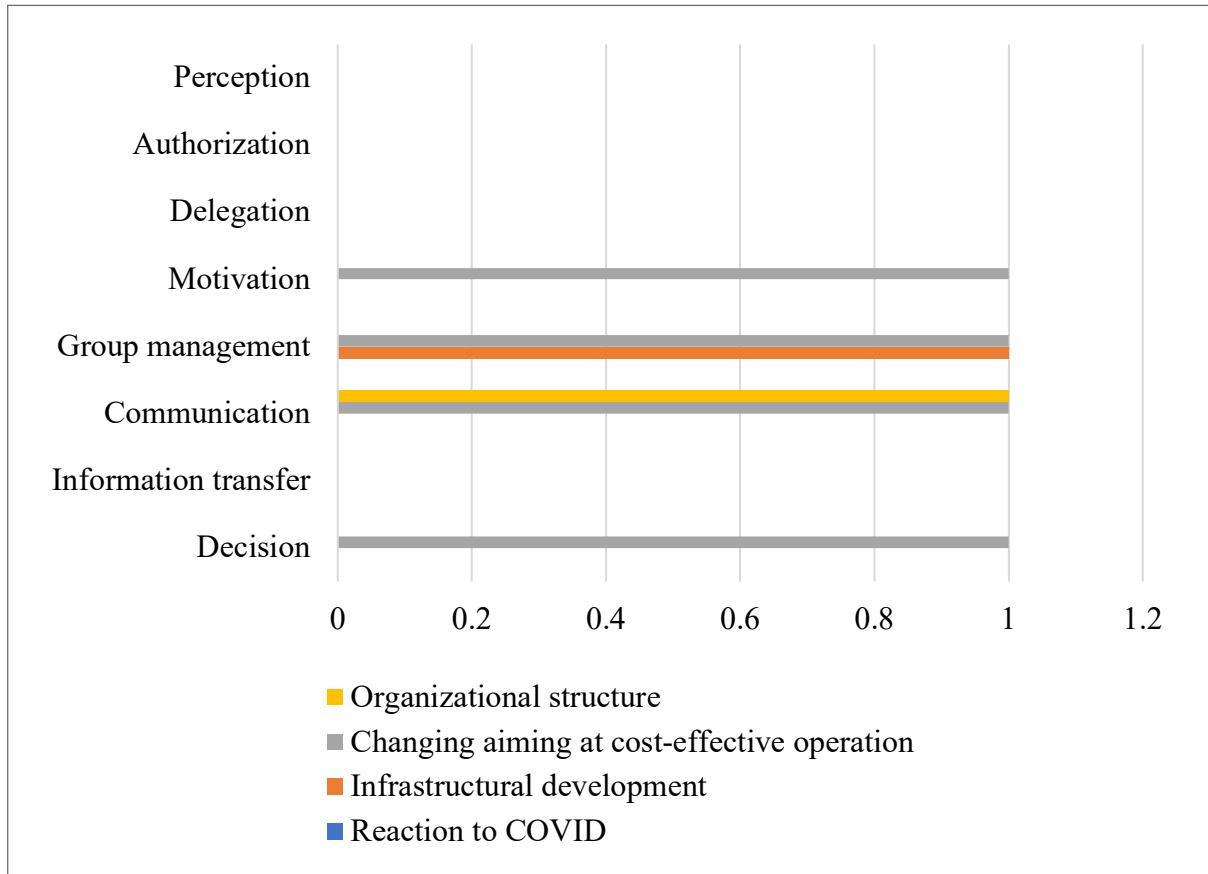
Source: own research (2024)

According to the nature of the change, we get an even more nuanced picture, which is illustrated in *Figure 12*.

Some thoughts about the results of the change aimed at cost-effective operation. The organizational example was a shift rearrangement, layoffs and closure, which the manager tried to trigger by extreme overloading and overtime of the employees. As described above, general management tasks could not be identified. However, in the diagram below, among other management tasks, the decision and its communication appear, as well as group management and motivation. In this form, it is a less fortunate scenario. The decision was not preceded by planning and organization, no instructions were issued, and coordination and control were not carried out either. In contrast to the classic top-down change: the manager made the decision, which he communicated to the employees, and then tried unsuccessfully to motivate the few employees who remained in the organization. The employees were not aware of the expected goals and results. The manager's ideas about implementing the transformation were constantly changing, which created serious

mistrust on the part of the employees, even towards the person of the manager. The reason for the failure can be clearly stated, which is also extremely well supported by the results.

FIGURE 12: THE FREQUENCY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGEMENT TASKS ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGINGS



Source: own edition (2024)

Analyzing the figure, we can observe that in the relevant case study, nothing but communication took place during the changes affecting the organizational structure. Organizational restructuring took place based on the decision of the top management, and the employees were not involved at all. Based on the case study, this meant more than a year of struggle with resistance for the organization’s leaders. In the end, the change can only be partially evaluated as successful. The second case study of the reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic was an unsuccessful change attempt, in which neither organization nor other management tasks appeared, in fact the change was concentrated on coordination and control. As part of this, the employees’ working hours and wages were reduced during the measures. This provoked such a degree of resistance from the employees that they were later unwilling to adapt to the new processes intended to be developed, and they reverted to the previously usual procedures.

Summary

In this article, we examined how management tasks appear in radical organizational changes. Our further goal was to answer whether the differentiation of management tasks can be interpreted during successful organizational transformations. To answer these questions, we examined the extent and nature of the organizational change based on self-prepared organizational case studies, identified emerging management tasks, and evaluated the success of the change. In addition, we

analyzed five management tasks drafted by Fayol (1916), known from classical management schools, and some other management tasks in relation to organizational cases.

All the organizational case studies that form the basis of this article were radical changes that occurred in the past 3-5 years in the organizations concerned. There was a total of 6 cases, the results of which were consolidated and made part of daily practice. In four cases, the organizational change was not successful, or the changes were only partially rooted in the daily processes. We interpreted these two categories separately in our article. Our results showed that the basis of successful management during radical organizational changes is organization, planning, disposition, coordination, and control are also implemented. Among other management tasks, the importance of communication could be identified in all cases, however, motivation and group management had a smaller role during the radical changes. From this, we drew the conclusion that radical changes – which affect the organization as a whole and affect the entire organizational culture – are not primarily implemented through the motivation of employees. Adequate planning, organization of change management and communication can be potential success criteria. Considering the unsuccessful or partially successful changes, it was revealed that management tasks do not appear systematically. No structure can be discovered, general management tasks are missing. Provisions and instructions were completely absent in the studies we included, and planning did not appear as prominently as it would be desirable during an organizational transformation.

Our results show that all of the general management tasks defined by Fayol (1916) are necessary to implement a large-scale change affecting the organization as a whole. In the event of any deficiency, implementation becomes extremely risky.

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