

THE ROLE OF THE LEADERSHIP STYLE IN IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES ON THE EXAMPLE OF COMPARING GEORGIAN AND FRENCH ORGANIZATIONS

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Introduction

The 21st century can be called the era of great technologies. A few years ago, we could not have imagined the progress of artificial intelligence (Abashidze, Dabrowski, 2016), when countries would think about stopping it or adding regulatory bodies to existing institutions for regulation. As is known, the Italian Personal Data Protection Authority has banned (temporarily suspended) the use of ChatGPT4 and the French government has decided to mobilize additional measures to study the usefulness of this version of artificial intelligence (www.emarketerz.fr, 2023)

The development of technologies has its positive side and plays a big role in the progress of various scientific and industrial fields. Therefore, the pros and cons of new technologies should be well studied and the expected risks should be determined with great care and foresight.

According to research conducted by the American banking organization Goldman Sachs, new technologies have the potential to make significant changes in the global economy, as well as at a local level, including small developing nations (Lashkhi et al., 2022; Charaia et al., 2021). In particular, artificial intelligence, according to their calculations, can increase global GDP by 7% (almost 7 trillion dollars) and productivity by 1.5 percentage points within 10 years.

According to them, the progress of artificial intelligence systems could have a big impact on employment markets. Up to 300 million full-time jobs could be automated and replace humans (GoldmanSachs, 2023).

Especially in the age of technology, a large role is given to the leaders and the strategy they choose and the relationships between the persons/colleagues in the implementation of changes in the organization.

In business management theories, technological innovation and managerial innovation are often separated from each other (Jaouen and Le Roy, 2013). For authors Birkenshaw, Hamel and Moll (Birkenshaw, Hamel and Mol, 2008) Management innovation is the key to success. The term Managerial Innovation was coined for the first time in 1981 by the scientist Kimbarlim, who wanted to distinguish technological innovation from other types of innovation (Kimberly, 1981).

In managerial innovation, the emphasis is not shifted to the introduction of technological innovations, but the main attention is given to the mobilization of human resources and their preparation for relevant innovations.

The innovative management style and innovative vision of the leader is very important to achieve success in today's world. Otherwise, companies will not only be uncompetitive, they may even be destroyed

(Gamsakhurdia, 2013). We know many such cases in the industry. For example, the Blockbuster company, which owned about nine thousand stores by 2004 and in 2019, only a few branches remained (Clifford, 2011). The company's management refused to cooperate with Netflix and could not compete with Hollywood videos. Incorrect assessment of market innovations and managers' unrealistic expectations of dominance among competitors led the company to failure.

A similar situation developed in the case of Kodak, a company that employed eighty thousand people by 1980, faced unforeseen events at the beginning of the 21st century. The main reason for its failure was improper evaluation of digital technologies. The leaders of that time failed to adequately assess the trends of the coming era. In 2012, the company was forced to sell its patents to Apple and Google in order to avoid financial crisis.

From these examples it becomes clear how important is the objective assessment of the situation and the adequate attitude to the innovations on the part of the leaders and governing bodies.

When implementing changes, the leaders of the organization are of crucial importance, who act in different ways based on their personal qualities to achieve the set goals. Back in the 80s, psychologist Kirton proposed an interesting theory by studying adaptive-innovative attitudes to events. According to existing theory, every manager (individual) has to choose between adaptation and innovation. Individuals at both ends of the continuum are creative, just in different ways. Individuals with high adaptability prefer to find solutions using established systems, while individuals with high creativity prefer to go beyond current norms to find new answers to unsolved problems.

One of the main factors in the implementation of innovative approaches is the constant updating of acquired knowledge (Kvirkvaia et al., 2018). In successful countries, a lot of attention is paid to permanent training of employees, which is often financed by the organization and the state, in whole or in part (Papava, Charaia, 2021). Various funds and services have been created for such a development approach, which participate in the financing of employees according to certain criteria. In France, there are several funds that are directly interested in financing the training of managers, for example, AGEFICE, FAFCEA, FAFPM, FIFPL, SPP, PCM, VIVEA.

The paper gains from examining in more details how Georgian and French firms approach and manage change. Each of them has unique cultural norms, values and management techniques. This article examines and

contrasts leadership styles in these two different cultural contexts to offer light on the cultural implications leaders must take into account when undertaking digital transformation initiatives. Organizations can modify their change management techniques to optimize effect and prevent cultural pitfalls by recognizing cultural pitfalls.

Georgia's regional dynamics, religious beliefs and historical traditions all influence the country's leadership. France's leadership reflects the country's cultural origins, as well as its historic traditions. French leaders' underlying motives and priorities may be influenced by their cultural emphasis on intellectualism, art and the legacy of the French Revolution.

An important factor in determining a country's leadership style is its political climate. Because Georgia has relatively recent democratic history and political uncertainty, it may have distinct leadership difficulties compared to France, a well-established democratic country with a lengthy political history. In order to gain a better understanding of democratic procedures and political institutions, it can be useful to examine how leaders are elected and maintained in each nation.

It is not uncommon for the economic factors to influence leadership decisions. For instance, Georgia, a developing nation, might place greater emphasis on improving infrastructure, attracting foreign investment and expanding the economy (Sikharulidze, Charaia, 2018; Wang 2018). Considering that France is a developed country, social welfare, economic stability and international trade links might be of higher importance. Analyzing the leadership philosophies of each nation within the context of these economic priorities reveals the techniques used by its leaders.

With the help of these analyses, we can better understand leadership dynamics in different cultural contexts, which will also facilitate the development of international policies and practices to encourage efficient leadership.

Literature review

There are studies researching leadership styles in France and Georgia factors conditioning them. It is worth to note, that national culture seems to be an important factor shaping leadership styles in those countries.

Niforos (2010) shows that the experience French leaders gain in fast-evolving global environments demonstrates the versatility of French management techniques. National identity can be attributed to some shared characteristics (adherence to humanistic values, structured management and respect for individual freedom and choice). Despite the fact that they have taken different paths to reach the same conclusion—that subcultures and supracultures are capable of coexisting underneath or above national boundaries, resulting in hybrid cultural archetypes transcending national borders. Buckermann (2011) demonstrated that French national culture had a profound effect on the corporation's internal organization. Multinational companies that started out as national businesses and developed over time without engaging in significant cross-pollination with foreign companies typically exhibit such a condition. A

multinational company's highly uniform cultural approach has both advantages and disadvantages. When cultural frictions are not encountered during communication, internal tensions and frictions can be reduced, which can be advantageous. When there is a uniform cultural structure, it might be difficult to be tolerant of diverse cultures. Due to the emphasis on personal networks, auto-reproduction of elites and suppression of culture-foreign components, such a close-knit society is difficult to alter. Through the analysis of French organizational leadership's power sources, outcomes and triad model, Yang, Tossan & Law (2022) provide an overview of French organizational leadership. As a result of these relationships, which offer great legitimacy to the French leadership process, French leadership is fundamentally based on having connections with influential institutions such as top management and the *Grandes écoles*. Hierarchical, honor-based and ends-over-means leadership forms are suggested as part of the triangle model for French leadership. French leadership places a high priority on results as outcomes. The general traits of French leadership may be explained by enlightenment ideology since the French Revolution from an historical and cultural perspective.

According to the findings of Jacque Lou & Ferdinand (2020) both transactional and transformational leadership styles were used by the branch manager to effectively manage the manufacturing company. At a moderate level, authoritarian leadership was the least used, while *laissez-faire* leadership was moderately used. A manufacturing organization under study reported that the leadership styles used had an impact on the effectiveness and productivity of its employees. As a result, the employees gave an exceptional effort to their work. Human resource management involves implementing effective leadership techniques that support the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives, as well as the workforce's desired outputs and productivity. Management should devise plans that encourage workers to be innovative at work, use transformational leadership to make them feel like they belong, give workers a greater sense of responsibility, give them less direction from superiors, and let them express themselves creatively. Khan (2019) states that it is common in France for cultural organizational challenges to be unclear, inconsistent and weak in leadership. The main barriers to change are senior management's aversion to change, stereotypes, a lack of understanding, employees' mistrust of outsiders, nationalism, etc. It is possible that not every province in a huge country like France shares the same culture. In order to navigate this challenging path, the manager can employ transactional or transformational leadership techniques. Thus, not all organizations will accurately reflect the suggested leadership styles.

Gambier and Eclapier (2023) found that French organizations are characterized by commanding leadership. It is known as dissonant leadership, which lacks empathy for the workforce and can negatively impact an organization in many ways. French leadership culture is characterized by a rigid hierarchy that emphasizes respect for authority and hierarchical rigidity.

Naqshbandi and Jasimuddin (2018) found that higher degrees of knowledge-oriented leadership can improve open innovation outcomes. In other words, knowledge-oriented leadership positively impacts open innovation.

According to Evans (2010), women tend to apply greater restraint and prudence to financial management and are constantly concerned about not becoming over-indebted when it comes to financial management. There may be a reason why certain venture capitalists in France are less willing to invest in women-owned businesses if they are seeking a quick return on investment because women are generally more cautious and long-term-oriented. There is less risk for women and they are solidly rooted in the long term.

There are several researches studying leadership styles in Georgia, which provides mixed results.

Tkeshelashvili (2009) in her study demonstrates that Georgians rank their society highly in terms of in-group collectivism, assertiveness and power distance. Study suggests that Georgia is in close proximity to several Eastern European countries. Even though data from culture dimensions indicates that it should be more like authoritarian leadership, employees in Georgia see the predominant leadership style as Middle-of-the-Range Leadership. As a result of the correlation analysis, a high in-group collectivism culture dimension was more influential at work than a high assertiveness culture dimension or a high power distance culture dimension. Employee orientation is higher than expected as a result of these two factors.

Yasar and Chinelo (2015) studied 201 from the 396 employees at Georgian Oil and Gas Corporation (GOGC). They investigated the effects of Georgian Oil and Gas Corporation's leadership style on employee performance experimentally. They found that collaboration affects job quality positively, supportive communication has a positive impact on motivation and delegation affects employee satisfaction positively. Worker loyalty was positively and strongly correlated with the measure of aiding subordinates. Employee involvement in decision-making is recommended in order to foster a sense of community and improve job quality. This study proposes that a Caucasian setting can be used to study leadership style in order to build successful and profitable businesses.

Minadze and Minashvili (2018) found in their research that transactional leaders are considered to be more consistent with supervisory actions. They point out avoidant leadership as the least utilized style in Georgian organizations. The transformational style and the employee engagement showed the strongest linear relationship.

Maridashvili (2015) states that it is important to remember that managers create their leadership style based on intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic rewards, where business policies, empowerment, success and achievement, as well as praise for a job well done, stand out above others. Depending on the level of management to which these managers belong, their motivations and leadership philosophies vary.

Methodology

In this study, we examine the attitudes of leaders in French and Georgian organizations during organizational changes involving academic, industrial and public sectors. The purpose of this research is to gain insight into the factors that influence leadership approaches during times of change by examining the differences and similarities in attitudes across these two distinct cultural contexts. The research was conducted in French and Georgian organizations. Among others heads of Georgian Technical University, East European University, Georgian startup Atomus took part in the research.

From the French side, representatives of 13 organizations participated in the research. 15 percent were led by the representatives of the industry sector, followed by almost equal percentages of coaches, communication specialists, network marketing and public service officers/supervisors. From Georgian side, leaders of 5 companies took part in the research.

The survey was voluntary and the anonymity of the respondents was strictly protected. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure that a variety of organizations and leaders are represented. A proportionate number of organizations from each stratum was randomly selected to participate in the study. The population was divided into three strata according to academic, industrial and public administrative sectors. After selecting the organizations, leaders (managers, executives and decision-makers) were interviewed and surveyed.

Results and discussions

New leaders with less than 3 years of experience predominated among the participants. The majority (7 respondents) consider themselves a humanistic leader. 5 respondents of the surveyed managers consider the combination of financial progress, group development, collective goodwill, timely fulfillment of set goals as success. They think that making change requires making employees satisfied with their jobs. To achieve financial success and achieve goals, leaders must prioritize their team's needs and satisfaction during the implementation of change.

Six managers consider experience as their advantage, four managers - education, one - kindness towards colleagues, for the rest two managers - a combination of these criteria. In addition to emphasizing the importance of fostering a supportive and caring workplace, the participant attributes the success of the transformation to a combination of experience and education. Still they iterate that having happy employees is important to make change happen.

Eight respondents consider themselves innovative leaders, two believe that they are not innovators, one hopes that the group perceives itself as a news-loving leader. The rest believe that they do not have time for constant news. They believe that employees value innovation as well and looking forward for innovative leader, consistently introducing new ideas. Change process can go smoothly if employees perceive leaders as

people who promote a culture of change and embraces novelty.

Seven respondents believe that to improve the results, it is necessary to better train the heads of organizations, while two believe that it is necessary to develop digital skills better and the rest think that motivating group members more is a necessary condition for the country's progress. Obtaining better results and promoting good change within an organization require organizational leaders to improve their abilities and knowledge through greater training.

Nine respondents think that digital transformation is a very important factor for the development of the organization, the believe that a good knowledge of technologies is a necessary skill for the development of organizations. Participants highlight how technological skills play an important role in driving the growth and progress of their firm (Zivzivadze et al., 2021). They emphasize the importance of digital transformation and its ability to transform enterprises.

Eight respondents consider women leaders to be innovators. However, the supremacy of Cope Zimmerman's law (protection of parity in management boards) in innovative matters is not strongly expressed by the interviewees and they believe that a lot depends on the situation.

Six leaders consider artificial intelligence as a means of increasing competitiveness in their organizations and part of them think that it is possible to replace humans with this method. Though it is interesting that most of them do not use the assistance offered by the Bank of Entrepreneurs (methods of introducing and diagnosing artificial intelligence in enterprises).

As the research showed, the majority of the heads of the organization like the collaborative style and consider themselves humanistic leaders. For them, success is a combination of financial progress, group development, collective goodwill.

The research revealed that the interviewees consider better training of the employees of the organization as one of the prerequisites for advancement. The most important factor for them is digital transformation of organizations and high level knowledge of technologies.

It is not necessary to consider the unconditional success of the organization as only the involvement of female leaders and protection of parity for the participants in the research. A large part of them consider artificial intelligence as a means of increasing competitiveness in the future and a small part of the interviewees does not rule out replacing humans with them.

Results demonstrated in the survey of French leaders show characteristics of transformational leadership where a leader is humanistic, corporate culture-oriented, open-minded and focused on technical capabilities. It is the quality of leadership that motivates and inspires followers to achieve remarkable outcomes. Transformative leadership is a kind of leadership that motivates and inspires followers. Individuals and organizations are transformed through the adoption of a clear vision, the stimulation of creativity, the creation of a positive and collaborative culture for the team members to reach their full potential.

Through their humanistic and people-centered approach, the leader develops strong relationships, while his or her innovative thinking encourages creativity and innovation. In addition, transformational leaders are characterized by an open mindset, are open to feedback and are willing to consider alternative perspectives. In addition, the emphasis on technical skills corresponds to the transformational leader's desire to embrace change and incorporate applicable technology for improved organizational performance.

In general, the leadership style found in the survey of French executives displays many characteristics of transformational leadership.

From the Georgian side, representatives of 5 organizations participated in the research. They were representing manufacturing, education, business association, retail and public sectors.

Only one of the surveyed leaders stated that his leadership style is humanistic. Two of them stated that they were just goal oriented and two of them said they were good managers with sound knowledge and capabilities.

Only one of them stressed importance of team when talking about success, while others stated that financial success of the company and respect towards leader by the team, together with the team spirit are all important when talking about success.

Three leaders stated that they implement changes in the organization very often, while all of them agreed that digital transformation has an important impact on their organization. Four respondents believe that AI cannot replace human jobs in the nearest three years.

As a result of the company's focus on profitability and sustainability, its financial success was considered critical. Furthermore, the team's regard for the leader was deemed vital, highlighting how important it is for leaders to have credibility and influence within their organizations.

Some Georgian leaders emphasize the humanistic aspect, while others emphasize goal achievement and management expertise, based on the survey results. Success is seen as a combination of financial achievement, team spirit and leadership respect. With a willingness to embrace digital transformation, the leaders do not appear proactive in their approach to change. Even though AI is acknowledged as an important technology, it is widely believed that it will not completely replace human work any time soon.

Based on the qualities exhibited by the leaders surveyed in Georgia, the leadership style presented here combines Transactional and Situational leadership, as well as Task-Oriented and Transformational leadership qualities.

Georgian leaders' leadership styles appear to be a combination of a variety of approaches based on the responses. Transactional elements are used to set goals and manage tasks, situational adjustments are used based on the context, transformational elements are used to inspire the team and a forward-thinking attitude is used to lead digital transformation. This finding is not surprising and Georgia is currently experiencing a period of transition, since it balances its historical legacies with the winds of change that are sweeping the country

today. It is certain that some corporate leaders have been influenced by the country's history, particularly the Soviet era. It was during this period that people developed their visions and demonstrated a feeling of conservatism when it came to changes. Since they have traveled through an era of stability and uniformity, they may be inclined to conserve tried-and-tested techniques.

A new generation of young, energetic leaders embrace change, however. Their drive for growth and innovation motivates them to challenge traditional thinking. In addition, they are transformational leaders and growth catalysts since they are constantly searching for new and better ways to accomplish their goals.

Georgia's corporate scene has a distinct dynamic as a result of the coexistence of these two opposing leadership styles. Although conservative leaders tend to provide stability and continuity, their rivals offer a fresh perspective and energy. In the country's growth and development, this clash of viewpoints creates both opportunities and problems.

Furthermore, this changeover period fosters synergies and learning opportunities between the two groups. As the younger and older leaders connect and exchange ideas, the older leaders can gain insights into new techniques, while the younger leaders can gain wisdom and lessons from their past experience. Together, they contribute to shaping Georgia's economic ecosystem in a way that combines tradition and modernity in the future.

Conclusion

It is imperative that leaders adopt agile and adaptive leadership approaches as the digital landscape changes constantly. It is advised that leaders in both Georgian and French organizations are able to adapt quickly to market changes, customer demands and technological developments. When leaders adopt an agile mindset, they can experiment, fail quickly, learn and adapt their strategies accordingly.

In both Georgian and French contexts, leaders play an important role in implementing digital transformation. To implement a successful transformation, one needs visionary leadership, effective change management, cross-functional collaboration, digital leadership capabilities and agility. Leadership in digital transformation can be optimally adapted and optimized by comparing Georgian and French practices during digital transformation and by understanding the modern trends and findings in digital transformation.

The findings of the research are in line with the literature review, which shows that national culture is an important factor determining leadership style. Georgian leadership style is characterized with mixed qualities of different leadership styles, while study of French organizations showed that the leaders mostly utilize transformational leadership style that is partly aligned to the literature reviewed above. Based on these findings it can be said that the process of the change in French organizations will be more supported and the employees will be in the center of the process. While in Georgian organizations, this process largely depends on the background and philosophy of a leader itself.

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