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*LEADERSHIP AS A KEY COMPONENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT*

Habilitation Thesis

The habilitation thesis titled *Leadership as a key component of organizational development* is in the field of administrative sciences and brings together the candidate's scientific, professional, and research results in disciplinary and interdisciplinary thematic directions. As reflected in the thesis, the research activity focuses on leadership and organizational development.

My research on the topic of Leadership stems from the assumption that leaders play a critical role in the creation of value and efficient delivery of value of any organization. In the case of the public sector organizations, this role presents challenges and is characterized by a higher level of complexity due to the specifics of this sector. The characteristics of public sector organizations, of public administration, play a crucial role in understanding those leadership challenges.

My research focus has been twofold:

1) Understanding the state of leadership research in Romania with a focus on (a) the state of the art concerning leadership research in the Romanian public administration and (b) the connection between administrative reform and leadership.

In the context of a continuous administrative reform process, public leadership is key both for the backing and effectiveness of the process. However, research on the connection between leadership and change in the system (understood as reform) is scarce. My analysis concerning the research on leadership in the public sector (in Romania) indicates that there is a "thin layer" of data.

2) Focus on leadership in the Romanian public administration and the link to culture and performance.

In the context of limited research on the topic of leadership in the public sector and given the popularity of transformational leadership as a theoretical frame, mostly given the strong empirical evidence of the link between this style of leadership and organizational performance, my research was focused on this theme.

One of the issues of the existing research regarding leadership in the public sector in Romania is the lack of significant evidence concerning the influence of national and organizational culture along with institutional factors on the actual practice of leadership. This is an area that needs to be analyzed in depth since it is a critical area of organizational development.

No Organizational Development intervention will be successful without the support of leadership within the organization. Leaders can influence change in organizations, bureaucratic or post-bureaucratic. They are the ones behind organizational success or failure. Reviewing and analyzing different leadership theories (from the initial, trait-based ideal leader theories to the sophisticated, contingency, transformational ones) is essential to understanding the essential relationship between organizational development and organizational leadership. Attempting to understand organizational development apart from its relationship to leadership quality is one of the most unhelpful managerial endeavors.

One of the current topics of my research is governance in turbulent times—more specifically resilient leadership. In the specialized literature, the topic is intentionally defined broadly due to a variety of contributions, coming from different fields, which analyze varied situations where governance organizations and institutions must cope with highly variable, inconsistent, unexpected, and/or unpredictable political and managerial demands.

The topic for my new direction is closely linked with the current regional (Central and Eastern Europe) and global context. The last years have proven to be extremely turbulent for Europe and the world alike: new and persisting social conflicts, armed conflicts and civil wars, large-scale displacement and migration, natural disasters linked to climate change, rising living costs, acute labor shortages, and an economic slowdown, all amid continued consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has generated effects that go far beyond those of a regional conflict. Besides a large displacement of people, it has generated global political and economic consequences. All these developments can be described with one single word which is turbulent.

These turbulent times challenge democratic politics and governance in Western countries. Party systems, in many instances, have failed to produce solutions to vital policy problems like immigration, state borders, welfare, or environmental issues. Populism is on the rise in several countries; social conflicts are gaining momentum as well, fueled by citizens' discontent with and low trust in government and the existing political system and governance arrangements. Against

this backdrop, one legitimate question is how much stress systems can sustain before they reach some kind of limit. On the other hand, these turbulent challenges can be viewed as an opportunity to examine the resilience of existing governance patterns and governance arrangements and to foster novel and innovative ways to deal with crises.

My research outlines several changes in the concept of governance, specifically the concept of adaptive governance and turbulent governance. Also, I tried to highlight the link between these concepts and the general concept of resilience using the COVID-19 pandemic as an example of disruptive change which can be managed by adopting such forms of governance.

My future research intends to address the connection between leadership, administrative reform, and governance in turbulent times. Resilient leadership is an integrated response to the challenges brought about by the interaction of an ever-changing environment and the need for the management systems of public organizations to perform and be effective. The analysis of this type of leadership approach and how it can best be placed in stimulating administrative reform efforts is an essential element of future research. Understanding resilient leadership involves integrating complex elements such as strategy, organizational culture, conflict management, organizational communication, performance measurement, quality management, etc. The most complicated dimension of research in this field seems to be the identification of intelligent ways to connect the characteristics of resilient leadership with the features of a turbulent environment and the strategic needs of public governance. However, a structured analysis of these key areas can yield interesting results regarding the essential dilemma of what type of leadership can respond to the current challenges facing public sector governance.

Besides my academic results outlined above, I want to also stress one of my most significant achievements from a professional standpoint. This refers to my position as associate editor for *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences* (indexed in web of Science, former ISI) and *Revista Transilvană de Științe Administrative*. I have been involved in the establishment and the subsequent development of these two journals from the very beginning. As associate editor I have been in constant contact with the most recent trends in the academic literature in the field of public administration. This has greatly shaped my research as well, which reflects, at least in the recent years, preoccupations for some of the trends dealing with adaptive and turbulent governance as a response to an ever-changing social and political environment. In this position I was able to interact with numerous networks of researchers in the field of public administration

and this has had also an impact on the quality and scope of my research which is now a lot more international. Finally, as associate editor, I interacted with fellow editors of the most prestigious journals in public administration at the international level. This allowed me to stay in touch with all relevant dimensions of the publishing activity and to further contribute to the development of our journals.