“Transformational leadership for organizational change in the Lebanese public sector”

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TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN THE LEBANESE PUBLIC SECTOR

Abstract

The public sector is facing multiple changes. In a constantly changing environment, that is more and more demanding in terms of innovation and performance, the concept of leadership is of particular importance, as it is one of the few tools available to public managers.

Based on the transformational leadership theory, the aim of this study is to explore how transformational leadership characteristics influence organizational change within the public sector in Lebanon. To serve this purpose, a qualitative approach is adopted based on a series of semi-focused interviews conducted with ten public managers running 10 public administrations. These administrations have undergone significant changes over the past five years.

The results point out the importance of transformational behaviors adopted by public managers in leading change within the public sector in Lebanon, despite the multiple obstacles. They confirmed the role of two transformational dimensions related to idealized influence and inspirational motivation in the successful implementation of organizational change. This study contributes to better understanding of the role of transformational leadership in promoting change in the public sector.

Keywords transformational leadership, organizational change, public sector in Lebanon

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INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of the 21st century, in a digital economy characterized by the abolition of borders and globalization, every institution is subject to frequent organizational changes, which constitutes an unavoidable necessity for its growth and survival in an increasingly fluctuating environment. Organizations in both public and private sectors need a revolutionary transformational change to survive and cope with uncertainty, increased competition, frequent restructuring, downsizing, budget cuts and layoffs (Warrick, 2011).

Leadership style is considered a critical element in organizational change (Yousef, 2000; Chou, 2014). Indeed, the leader is the one who can influence the introduction, acceptance and adoption of new ideas through setting the specific goals and the creation of work environment favoring the acceptance of change (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008). The successful implementation of organizational change has become an important management task, especially as modern businesses become more and more engaged in change to improve their competitiveness and market survival (Higgs & Rowland, 2005).

The impact of leadership on organizational change may be difficult to examine, since there are several factors involved in shaping this

change. In this study, we will focus on the theory of transformational leadership in the public context. Indeed, since its conceptualization by Burns (1978), this theory has become one of the most important behavior theories.

The concept of transformational leadership has been widely applied by researchers in the private sector. For researchers, the public sector provides less conducive framework to practice transformational leadership, as public leaders are bound by financial regulations and constraints and sometimes by the arbitrary nature of political demands and by unforeseen events (Hargrove & Glidewell, 1990). However, the constraining nature of the public organization environment described in these studies justifies also the use of transformational leadership. Since the standardization of the payment and rewards system limits the use of transactional practices, transformational leadership remains one of the few tools that are available to public leaders (Moynihan et al., 2014).

Thus, recently, this concept has emerged in empirical studies on public organizations. Contemporary leadership theories have begun to emphasize the importance of transformational leadership in understanding administrative processes and organizational outcomes (Sun & Henderson, 2017). Indeed, despite their static or even declining resource base, public organizations operate in an increasingly demanding environment, an environment that calls for more innovation and performance. In order to be effective in this changing environment, leaders will be required to overcome many of the environmental and structural constraints that characterize the public sector (Moynihan et al., 2014; Wright & Pandey, 2010).

Furthermore, the increased attention given to transformational leadership in researches on public sector happened at the same time with ideas of the new public management and theories that highlight more altruism and motivation in the public sector (Wright & Panday, 2010).

In addition, the literature has also remained deficient in studies examining how transformational leadership could make a significant contribution to organizational performance (Sun & Henderson, 2017). According to Chou (2014), a lot of research has been conducted on the characteristics of leaders who turn out to be important in a context of change. However, the relationship between these characteristics and the success of organizational change has not been studied enough. In order to fill this gap, we plan to explore the relationship between leadership and organizational change based on the transformational characteristics of leadership, and taking the public sector in Lebanon as a field of application for our research.

In fact, the public sector in Lebanon occupies an important place in the country. However, in its daily working, this sector faces multiple malfunctions such as administrative burdens, quality problems, absenteeism etc. Moreover, it is still subject to the turmoil of its national environment, and is expected to face multiple unpredictable changes of economic, political, social and technological nature (Damaj, 2013). This situation affects the expected growth of this sector and its performance. During the last five years, the Lebanese government has deployed efforts in order to seriously engage in the process of development and public sector reform. The envisaged reforms call for a modern conception of the state and of the wheels of bureaucracy (Najjar, 2017). We can say that organizational change has become a necessity to solve the structural dysfunctions of the administration and to ensure its smooth functioning in a world that has become more and more uncertain.

Our paper aims to suggest some insights and provide answers to the following two questions: How do the transformational leadership influence change in the public sector in Lebanon? Did the dimensions associated with transformational leadership, as they have been set out by the transformational leadership theory of Bass (1985), influence organizational change within the Lebanese public sector?

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Thus, referring to theories of leadership, specifically that of Bass (1985), we want to examine how the theory of transformational leadership makes a significant contribution to organizational change in the Lebanese public context.

Hence, at first, we will expose the theoretical framework of our research; first, we will tackle the two approaches that have been used to understand the role of the leader in organizational change while emphasizing the contributions of style-based leadership theories, then, we will elucidate the two key concepts of our study, i.e. transformational leadership and organizational change, and finally we will close the theoretical part with the results of previous research that examined the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational change.

In a second step, we will expose the empirical study carried out with senior officials working in the public sector in Lebanon. Finally, we will present the main contributions of this article by gathering the elements likely to answer our research questions.

1. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1.1. The mobilized theoretical framework mobilized

According to Bass (1990), "Leadership is the ability to influence the behaviors of individuals within a group and between the members of a group to achieve the desired goals". For Chemers (1997), leadership would be a process of influence whereby one person, the leader, is able to mobilize the support and assistance of others for the accomplishment of a common goal. These two definitions of leadership having been widely recognized and validated by researchers, we will retain them for the conceptual framework of our article. For the purposes of our study, we will consider leadership as the way by which a person influences others in order to achieve a common goal by giving them a good vision of the future for effective action.

Two different perspectives have attempted to understand the role that leadership could play in change (Herold et al., 2008; Warrick, 2018). The first is based on leadership theories. These theories fall into three broad categories: leadership theories based on traits, theories based on the situation and theories based on the leadership styles. Theories based on leadership styles emphasize the role the leader plays in performance and individuals (Warrick, 2018). They consider change as a situational contingency that may be moderated by the effectiveness of certain leadership styles. Thus, this approach assumes that certain types of leaders will better drive changes (Herold et al., 2008). According to this approach based on leadership styles, transformational leadership appears to be particularly effective during periods of change (Herold et al., 2008), as it is fundamentally based on issues related to processes of transformation and change (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

In addition, there is a second approach (the change management approach) that focuses on the specific behaviors which managers will have to practice for a good conduct of the change (Kotter, 1995). This approach focuses more on what leaders should do when facing a specific period of change, and is less concerned with the behaviors and styles of leaders (Herold et al., 2008). According to this approach, certain behaviors appear more appropriate during the change (develop a sense of urgency, establish coalitions, seek support persons...); these behaviors can be determined and adopted by any leader in order to achieve positive results.

Our research is definitely positioned in the first perspective. Thus, we refer to leadership theories that focus on styles in order to examine the impact of the leader's role on organizational change while highlighting the concept of transformational leadership.

1.2. The concept of transformational leadership

Transformational leadership has been central to leadership literature for almost three decades

(Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). It is recognized as the leadership style that increases the awareness of the members of the organization to the need to achieve the collective objectives (Garcia-Morales et al., 2012). According to Bass (1985), whose works are a continuation of that of Burns (1978), *"transformational leadership is defined as the leader's ability to transform the energies deployed by his collaborators so as to bring them to be more motivated in achieving the desired results and objectives, both individually and organizationally"* (Molines, 2010, p. 4).

Transformational leaders would motivate their employees to go beyond their personal interest in working for the common good of the organization through four dimensions: inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 2009; Bass, 1985; Wang et al., 2011). The inspirational motivation consists of developing and articulating a vision while demonstrating optimism and confidence in the ability to realize that vision. It represents the faculty of the leader to give challenges and a meaning to the work of his followers, which arouses team spirit, but mainly motivates followers to surpass themselves for the sake of the organizational mission (B. Bass & R. Bass, 2008). The idealized influence also called charismatic leadership can be defined as the ability of the transformational leader to admirably and coherently act with the articulation of the vision, in order to trigger imitation and identification behaviors among his collaborators (Bass, 1985). Such leaders are recognized for their exceptional will, which earns them the admiration, respect and trust of their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Intellectual stimulation consists of inciting the followers to give suggestions and ideas, encouraging them to question some ideas and to take risks. Finally, individualized consideration refers to the leader's ability to develop an orientation towards his team, to pay particular attention to his followers, to be aware of their personal concerns and to foster a two-way communication with them (Bass, 1985).

Transformational leadership helps to increase employee satisfaction and motivation, and leads them to achieve a higher performance, as they not only meet work expectations, but rather exceed them (Chenard et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2011). This type of leadership also promotes innovative thinking and creativity (Warrick, 2018). Finally, referring to a considerable number of previous studies (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Michaelis, Stegmaier, & Sonntag, 2009), we could conclude that transformational leadership builds trust in leaders, improves the performance of individuals and groups, and creates a shared vision and commitment to making important changes. But what is change?

1.3. The concept of organizational change

In a constantly changing environment, change is becoming a necessity to adapt to new ideas and cope with technology, an increasingly competitive environment and challenges of development and growth. According to Graetz et al. (2010), change is normally part of the business world. Thus, organizations must embark on the path of change in order to improve their competitiveness and ensure their survival in markets that have become increasingly competitive. The successful implementation of organizational change should then be considered as a key managerial task (Nging & Yazdanifard, 2015). Organizational change seems a broad and ambiguous concept, and has been the subject of several definitions. Thus, Collerette et al. (1997, p. 20) pointed out that organizational change is "any relatively long-lasting modification in a subsystem of the organization, provided that this modification is observable by its members or the people who are related to this system". According to Nurcan et al. (2002), organizational change is a process that brings an organization from a current state to a future state.

More recently, Halkos (2012) defines change as the continuous and adequate adaptation of companies to rapidly changing markets through the change of structures, behaviors and processes in order to achieve their development.

Therefore, organizational change refers to the transformation of the organization from its current state to the desired future state (Nging & Yazdanifard, 2015,). This transfer is based on an analysis of the current situation and its dysfunctions or rather on a definition of the desired future situation.

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Our field of investigation being the public administration, the latter is threatened neither by death nor by competition as such, but its decline gives rise to various economic, social and political problems. Thus, for the purposes of our research, we will retain a more general definition of organizational change such as that delivered by Bartoli and Hermel (1986). They have defined change as a strategic step that is essential for the organization that wants to control or at least lead the movements it is forced to perform or undergo, in order to survive or develop.

In addition, there are several types of organizational change depending on the nature of the organization and its environment. Some authors have distinguished between two aspects of change: planned change and emergent change. Planned change is the product of reasoning and action; it results from the conscious and deliberate action of men charged with leading the organizations (Child, 1972). For its part, emergent change appears spontaneously due to the influence of external factors (economic, political, competitive, etc.) or internal factors (games of power, distribution of knowledge, uncertainty, etc.) (Starbuck, 1983; Stacey, 1993).

In our research, we start from a planned vision of change. Planned change enables planning and management attempt. The planned changes are more related to the management in which management put deliberate effort to make something happen (Abbas & Asghar, 2010). But when organizational change is well planned and carried in a structured way, it leads to continuous improvement and organizational innovation (Boston, 2000).

1.4. Transformational leadership in the challenge of organizational change

Authors and researchers all agree that leadership plays a very important role in managing organizations or in achieving different organizational changes (Abbas & Asghar, 2010; Senior & Fleming, 2006). Dunphy and Stace (1994) described the leader as a person who can promote change in an organization by his vision and strategy. Yet in this era of rapid business change, the role of leadership is becoming more and more crucial. Thus, according to Warrick (2018), the leaders who will be most able to face these difficult times that are undergoing dynamic changes are the transformational leaders. Nothing could transform an organization faster or prepare it better for future success than competent transformational leaders (Warrick, 2011).

The role of leadership during organizational change has considerably attracted the researchers' attention (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005; Herold et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2012). Arguments about the relevance of transformational leadership for organizational change are found in the literature on organizational change and that of transformational leadership (Peneva & Sehic, 2014). According to these two authors, among the different theories on leadership, the theory of transformational leadership is considered as particularly relevant in the context of organizational change. In fact, several empirical studies have highlighted the positive impact of transformational leadership on organizational change (Nemanich & Keller, 2007; Herold et al., 2008; Bommer et al., 2005). On the other hand, it is generally admitted that transformational leadership is effective in organizational change because of its approach to treating crises and change (Bass, 1999; Herold et al., 2008; Van der Voe et al., 2014). Thus, Nemanich and Keller (2007) highlighted the significant role that transformational leadership plays in reducing employee resistance to change. In addition, according to Chou (2014), employee support for organizational change could be reinforced by the role of transformational leadership. Other studies, such as those of Herold et al. (2008) and Van der Voe et al. (2014) have also found indirect relationships between transformational leadership and employee support for change.

To summarize, the past research have pointed out the importance of transformational leadership for organizational change. However, the relation between the characteristics of transformational leadership and the success of organizational change have not been much investigated.

2. METHODOLOGY

Organizational change management is a broad phenomenon defined in different ways according to different contexts. Thus, in order to under-

stand the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational change, we will adopt an exploratory qualitative approach based on content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Our qualitative data were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with ten public managers (G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, and G10). To the data collected by the interviews, we will add secondary data from several written (laws, periodicals) or verbal (discussions with officials working at the Ministry of Administrative Development) sources.

We chose our interviewees among the General Managers of the Public Service in Lebanon. Each of them occupies the position of top manager at the level of a given Ministry. At first, we chose three managers after conducting discussions with experts working in the Ministry of Administrative Development. It seems to us that our choice meets the objectives of our research. Then, at the end of each interview, we asked the interviewee to recommend us other potential participants who might be part of our research and, thus, we followed the snowball technique. The size of the sample was determined according to the principle of theoretical saturation (Thietart, 2003).

People were met and interviewed at their workplace. The duration of the interviews varies between 45 minutes and one hour. We faced some difficulties in meeting with some interviewees who hold important positions in the public service, and who were totally overwhelmed by their daily tasks and persecuted by citizens who ask them about information on their formalities, and by the Minister and the politicians who constantly contact them for the follow-up of delicate files. The data collection was spread over 3 months.

The interview guide includes 8 questions that focus on two main themes: the role of the transformational leader in the public sector in Lebanon, the relationship between the components of transformational leadership and the success of change programs in the public sector. In the analysis of our interviewees' discourse, we have adopted the content analysis approach by counting the number of times each transformational characteristic was related to organizational change:

1. Tell me about your career path (the positions you once held either in public administration or in the private sector).

2. What is the position you actually hold, what is your actual status and what are your duties?

3. Can you tell me about the changes you have experienced in your current position? (What do you consider as important in these changes? What changes were of less importance? What are the changes that have been implemented recently? What are the tools of these changes?)

4. What impact do the changes have on the organization and the working conditions, and how are these changes experienced?

5. In your opinion, what are the reasons behind the success of the changes occurred in your administration? And how did your behaviors affect generating these successful changes?

6. How do you motivate your followers and how do you involve them in the change process?

7. What are the encountered problems?

8. Is the leader able to make a difference in the public sector? To which level? How could he guide the necessary changes and succeed?

This approach will allow us gain an in-depth understanding of the complexity of the factors involved in some types of leadership during organizational change. It also enables clarifying how certain characteristics or components of transformational leadership intervene to influence organizational change within the framework of public administration in Lebanon.

3. THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN LEBANON

The public administration in Lebanon is responsible for implementing public policies in different fields: defense, health, education, economy, etc. In

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the context of these public policies, the public administrations (the various ministries) ensure the production of public services and manage the public domain. They are characterized by formalized work procedures and a highly centralized control system; they work according to a programming and budgeting logic. Public managers are governed by specific statutes very strongly codified. Moreover, these administrations are not concerned with the notion of survival that characterizes private companies, and do not seek profit. By referring to laws in force and to reports on administrative reforms, we notice that strategic changes within the public administration are generally guided by public decisions, and particularly the existing governments.

Among the administrations operating in Lebanon, we have chosen 10 ministries to be our research field. In fact, each of these ten ministries includes the object of our research. These ten administrations have been able to make major changes during the recent years. According to the opinion of several advisers working within the Ministry of Administrative Development, these administrations have overcome the multiple constraints on the public sector in Lebanon and have managed to implement significant changes because they were supervised by exceptional managers, true leaders. We have relied on these points of view to outset our research work and to deal with our research problem, which seems more complicated in the context of the public sphere.

4. RESULTS

The results of our exploratory study highlight the following three points: the role of transformational behaviors of public leaders in the implementation of organizational changes, the content and nature of the made changes and the factors that intervene to limit the positive impact of the transformational components of public leadership on the success of changes in the public administration in Lebanon.

4.1. The role of transformational components in change

Bass and Avolio (1994) identified 4 main components of transformational leadership: inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Our results have shown that only the two characteristics related to idealized influence and inspirational motivation play an important role in the changes occurred in the public sector in Lebanon.

4.1.1. The role of the idealized influence

According to Bass (1990), the idealized influence is to provide vision, pride of duty, and to gain the respect and trust of one's followers. Thus, the leader plays a model role and shows ethical behavior. Power could not be exploited for the realization of personal gains (Bass, 1990). This component is the most noted by our interviewees.

"My followers are proud to work with me because they are certain of my integrity. I have no reason to accept that they compromise my beliefs, that I be pushed to do something against my convictions" (G2).

"After my appointment, my followers did not take long to get to know me and they quickly started to believe in me and adhered to my plans for change. In fact, they are convinced that I only ask them to do what needs to be done. I do not aspire to any personal favor and I do not covet anything. I am guided only by my personal ethics and by my respect for general interest" (G1).

According to House et al. (1991) and Michaels et al. (2009), leaders influence the beliefs and behaviors of employees through their own behavior and beliefs. They can thus bring them to achieve the mission they articulate.

"What I ask them to do, I do it before them. I make them feel the belonging, the love, and that I am like them. I avoid negative relationships" (G1).

Followers appreciate the work of the leader, this represents for them the basis for accepting the radical change of the organization (Nging & Yazdanifard, 2015).

"At first, the employees showed some resistance. They did not want to work and were not motivated to take on more work as a result of the intended changes. But when they realized how personally I am involved in my work (I used to work constantly

in my office from morning to evening), they started to give up and got more and more involved" (G2).

4.1.2. The role of inspirational motivation

According to Bass (1985, 1990), inspirational motivation is to involve the followers in a vision while showing optimism and the ability to realize that vision. This is the second component that was quoted by our interviewees.

"I share my vision with them. I do not make a careful planning of the changes I plan to make. But I have a vision of the future of this administration, of what it could become and the role it is supposed to play within the public administration in Lebanon" (G2).

"He must be transparent with his team, and sensitize his members to the encountered problems and the set objectives. He must tell them everything and must admit his failures. He cannot treat them as stupid; otherwise, he will not gain their trust and their involvement at work".

4.1.3. The role of intellectual stimulation

According to Bass (1985), Bass and Avolio (1994), intellectual stimulation refers to the development of the capacity of followers to solve problems by adopting new methods. It is defined as the ability of the leader to encourage followers to innovate. This dimension was the less quoted by the interviewees.

"I always ask them to come up with new ideas for the evolution of work, even if only 10% of my employees react with me and show creativity, the majority is idle and I cannot bring out something from them" (G6).

"When I want to make a decision, I take the opinion of all the Ministry's heads of units. I involve them in the changes and I am convinced that their point of view is so important especially that there are among them specialists in vital areas, whereas the General Manager is an administrative" (G3).

4.1.4. The role of individualized consideration

According to Bass (1985), individual consideration emerges when the leader develops an orientation towards his team, shows particular attention to followers and properly answers to their needs. The leader listens to the followers, delegates, develops their potential, and monitors their evolution and progress (Bass, 1996). This dimension appears timidly in our interviewees' speeches.

"I maintain relationships with my employees as a group, but I also have individual relationships with each one of them. I know the abilities of each one of them and I try to give them the right tasks and missions" (G2).

"In order to motivate them and push them to work, I gave them a lot of facilities and I praised them in the evaluation reports. The results were satisfactory, they were not used to having the leader discuss with them and listen to them and to their problems" (G4).

4.2. Factors that limit the impact of transformational leadership on the success of organizational change in the public sector in Lebanon

The major problem is that the opportunities for strategic change for public managers are limited since their actions are closely tied to public policies decided by the government and political coalitions. These findings are consistent with the arguments of many public managers' researchers (Boyne, 2002).

"We have elaborated a plan for the development of the industry sector in Lebanon, we based our work on rigorous statistics and on a study on the needs of industrials, but unfortunately the various concerned political parties refused the plan because it is not included among their priorities" (G6).

"There are several political constraints to the development of our ministry. First, I was given the green light to work and make the changes necessary to save the ministry from its inertia. When we came to the point, they made me understand that deeper changes are not part of the government's current policy" (G7).

In addition, the changes made are still not based on an integrated and global approach and on the implementation of a powerful change management system.

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"The introduction of computerization was performed in an arbitrary manner, without the implementation of a rigorous plan for the steps to be followed and the measures to be taken. Indeed, we should have agreed on the personal status issues before their digitization, which did not happen, so the project failed" (G3).

Moreover, the Minister's support for the change policies initiated by the General Manager is a key factor in their implementation.

"The public leader cannot make big changes alone. He needs the support of the administration for his projects. His project must be adopted by the Minister. The latter must be convinced of the need to embark on this project. Strategic support is very important for the leader" (G3).

Furthermore, some of our interviewees pointed to the weakness of teamwork within the Lebanese society in general, and within the public sector, in particular. This attitude represents a major obstacle to the success of change policies. These findings are consistent with the results of Dirani (2008) concerning the individualism of the Lebanese society.

"The war has strengthened the Lebanese people's tendency towards individualism, and currently it prevents them from founding a modern state, developing the administration and making it more efficient" (G6).

Finally, the lack of communication about change decisions is another important problem that has been detected. According to Woodward and Hendry (2004), the inadequate communication by a change agent is one of the main obstacles to organization members absorbing and coping with the change.

4.3. The nature of the operated changes

For a long time, public administration in Lebanon developed entirely on a legal basis, namely the promulgation of laws and regulations (Labaki, 2017).

"We have worked for 2 years for the amendment of the organic law of the ministry and for the promulgation of a new law. The old law dates back to 1959 and is no longer able to answer to the development of the ministry's affairs and to the new expectations of people" (G9).

Currently, public managers are much concerned about implementing the necessary changes in order to reduce the administrative routine and the cumbersomeness of procedures in the Lebanese public sector.

"In my opinion, the most important change we can make is to overcome routine and administrative formalism. The great innovation in the field of public administration would be concentrating on the substance of administrative work and giving much less importance to formalism and to certain formal rules such as respect for working hours" (G2).

Finally, according to Hanna (2011), public leaders will be called upon to manage online information delivery, reorganize the administrative mechanism and guide the path to ICT transformations. Our interviewees seem increasingly aware of the importance of technological innovations in order to improve the efficiency of administrative action.

"It's amazing what ICT can bring us. We are currently working on a vast computerization plan. We would like to put online the entire process of issuing permits and licenses by the Ministry so that citizens will no longer need to move to carry out their transactions" (G9).

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

According to Warrick (2011), having a single competent transformational leader at the top of the organization could contribute to its success. Our results have confirmed this point of view.

Transformational leadership could be directive or participatory (Bass & Avolio, 1991). The results of the interviews revealed that the Lebanese transformational leaders are of a directive type. The directive aspect of the idealized influence emerges from the speeches of our interviewees who all insist on the need for followers to trust their leadership and their own orientations to succeed. This means that in the majority of cases, leaders make

the decision and followers must comply (Yaslioglu & Selenay, 2018; Bass & Avolio, 1991). Lebanese public leaders are also developing a directive inspirational motivation.

"In all the major changes that have been implemented in this administration, I took the initiative myself. I contacted the World Bank and the Ministry of Development so that they facilitate my access to advanced training abroad. These trainings helped me modernize the work here. I also took the initiative to see the modern laws in the field of auctions. Frankly, I myself have done everything to change the role of my administration and make it more efficient" (G2).

Thus, public managers encourage their followers to continue their progress, but they are still far from establishing a work environment that is favorable to teamwork, which happens in the case of a participatory inspirational motivation.

Moreover, other factors intervene to limit the role of transformational leadership in the public service in Lebanon. In fact, public leaders operate in a legally and regulatory rigorous context. Their missions and the financial resources made available to them are set by law. In addition, cultural factors such as individualism, lack of transparency and poor communication at work, play a negative role and prevent transformational public managers from achieving their transformational projects. These limits can be attributed to the Lebanese perception of hierarchical authority (Hofstede insight, n.d.) and to the individualism of the society (Dirani, 2008).

CONCLUSION

Our exploratory study highlights a more in-depth understanding of determining the role of transformational leaders in promoting change in the public sector. It confirmed partially the role of transformational leadership theory in implementing change since only the two dimensions related to idealized influence and inspirational motivation were well identified. However, we find that the Lebanese public leaders are confronted in their transformational projects to multiple political and legal constraints. Moreover, they adopt directive transformational behaviors, and thus, they are still unable to clearly communicate the mission and vision of the organization, share information with their followers, and subsequently allow them to develop their professional skills.

The findings of the study suggest that managers and human resources practitioners should encourage and work for the development of all dimensions of transformational behaviors among public leaders. Moreover, they should raise awareness and take action to train the public leaders to be less directives in their changing initiatives.

We are aware of the limits of our results in terms of generalization to the extent that the validity of our conclusions remains contingent within the studied organizational environment. Further empirical research must be conducted in order to build and elaborate on our findings. Finally, we suggest that future research should focus more on how dimensions of transformational leadership would separately affect organizational change and contribute to its successful implementation within the public sector.

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