

PERFORMANT LEADERSHIP FOR ROMANIA

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‘‘We leave in Romania and this keeps us busy.’’
Mircea Badea

The leadership has been a constant preoccupation for those who liked involving in the efficient leadership of people. The need of results trained both some philosophers and researchers and effective or potential leaders to understand the human characteristics and the way in which these characteristics can be used in order to reach desirable results.

In the past, the interest in leadership belonged to the politic, military and religious elite. It is a logic fact. These were the systems that involved the most people and therefore those in which the leadership had the most important applicability.

When industrial revolution came, the number of economic organization was exponentially increasing. Nowadays, as sociologist Anthony Giddens [1] remarked, from the moment we are born and until the end of our days we interact with organizations. Not only that the number of them continuously increases, but the organizations themselves increase their size and diversify their activities, so that many positions appear. It is obviously that these posts can't be occupied only by persons with native leadership skills, in the way that understanding and integration of leadership are as important as continuous learning. Actually, it is necessary to be included in the continuous learning program that is personally assumed.

The challenge that we face today in Romania consists not only in the change of paradigm in regard to world understanding as a systemic and global entity, but it consists in looking at our own concepts and actions with critical spirit and honesty in order to try to build a society in which life really deserves to be lived.

About the psychology of Romanians – critical aspects

One of the most representative studies related to the psychology of the Romanian people belongs to Dumitru Draghicescu, political personality and remarkable scientist, paradoxically less known and less integrated in the national cultural inheritance.

D. Draghicescu was the first Romanian that obtained the PhD in sociology in Sorbonne in 1904, supervised by Emile Durkheim, one of the parents of this science. At the Nationalities Congress held in Rome, 1918, he had a major role obtaining a firm agreement that recognized the Romanians' right related to the ethnical boundaries unity. He fundamentally contributed to the international recognition of the Union and consolidation of the Entente politics referring to the destiny of the allied states after the First World War and struggle against chauvinism.

D. Draghicescu writes ‘‘About the psychology of Romanians’’[2], ‘‘the first significant monograph of our national soul’’ (Virgiliu Constantinescu-Galiceni). Aware of the imperfections of the paper and complexity of the scope, Draghicescu endeavoured to form a correct image of the people about themselves, to create an objective reflection of their mission in the world as indispensable remedy against moral and social disintegration

that are the dangers of passing historical age of deep transition. This objective was a necessity by the beginning of XX century, at the dawn of the Romanian unitary state when this paper was written, but it is more than ever present in Romania after 1989.

Draghicescu looks at "Romanian soul" as a consequence of cultural mix imposed by a convulsive history.

Similar to a foreign chronicler, he deplored that we borrowed "the lack of good faith from Greeks", "vileness and vanity" mix from Pharaohs, "debauchery" from Russians and "divorce" from Polish. According to D. Draghicescu, the worst influence is the Turkish one: "the moral atmosphere of the Orient has surrounded, overwhelmed and isolated us from the world of Occident". This influence would stay at the origin of our major sins: idleness, indifference, apathy and in his opinion "Even the clothes have had an impact: bag trousers, long and large (furry) coat predispose to laziness". A more subtle and objective observation is that many words had been taken from Turkish language, but none of them is verb.

The hectic history ("in this way, our historic life has been a row of transfigurations") gave **incoherence** to the Romanian nature ("it is difficult to begin, but it is loose").

Refusal of authority

Draghicescu observed that being almost always learned to be dependent on others from outside, the Romanian has compensated with anarchical stubbornness the inside. He accepts hierarchical discipline with difficulty; everyone wants to be his own boss. According to Draghicescu, the spiritual reality is reflected in the historical reality that had been dominated by the short and ephemeral reigns in a continuous dethronement of one by another (e.g. "between 1538 and 1634, in 96 years, 31 reigns"). These vertiginous changes had a disastrous impact due to the "the continuum of hysterical seizure... convulsions and fears that appeared at short intervals".

Seizure of panic

Another baneful consequence of the dependent everlastingness, on the despots from outside or inside, was "the timidity, the lack of wiliness, fear, lack of courage that dominated and still dominate the soul of Romanians". Count Salaberry wrote in 1820 "The tyranny transformed Romanians into vile and timid people. Draghicescu observed that "Romanians' prudence beyond some limits (...) patience, tolerance and timid modesty (...) are features that the historical events imposed and developed to some extreme extend that (...) are near cowardice". In fact, the well-known mythical competitiveness becomes "our traditional indifference, the faith in fatality, destiny, luck, without trust in our forces".

Incoherence and social incompetence

As a consequence, from the social point of view, these traits led to the lack of civic attitude and conscience, social immaturity, a deep "unfinished" state; "our nation body being unfinished, the same way is our souls. We are unfinished from the historical and geographical point of view; we are immature from the social point of view". To this other traits observed by Mihai Ralea in his study on almost the same topic "Romanian phenomenon", 1927, contribute: radical scepticism, adaptability, "the lack of public opinion", solving difficulties by individual "arrangement", "transitional spirit".

In this context, the militant activity that is specific for human rights protection is absent being erased by verbal protest and unproductive "grin and bear it". Draghicescu observed the specific Romanian transfer of complaining resources from one act to monolog: "The lack of active energy and wiliness, the defensive and resigned passivity that

are characteristic to Romanian's fact make room for verbal complains, either by causticity or wails and critics against despots.

Provisional state

This state of unfinished that characterises Romanians makes us "improvident and careless" (p.383). We tailor "vague... misty and unclear plans" (p.372) but "even when we do something, we do nothing", always becoming a victim of improvisations, provisional state. "Almost all the Romanian mentality fruits bear the stamp of inequality, incoherence, lack of unity and method".

Moral relationship

Last but not least, anticipating Max Weber (The Protestant ethics and spirit of capitalism), Draghicescu noted that "even the orthodox church brought and intensified the Oriental influence (...) The orthodox Christians are passive and speculative, while the Catholics and Protestants are diligent and energetic". In his opinion, this phenomenon would have its origin in the essence of orthodoxy that to Romanians consists in faith statements rather than "the concretization of the moral laws", these particularities are the cause, in the opinion of the contemporaneous researchers, for moral deviations of Romanian clergy in the next half of the century, in the communist period.

To summarize, Draghicescu analyses the history that is found responsible for the Romanians' main traits: passivity, fear, lack of self-confidence, lack of social cohesion, passion for provisional state and improvisation as well as the negative critical spirit and refusal of authority, in his opinion "both society and the Romanian soul" being "full of contrasts, unfinished, provisional, unequal and amorphous from the all points of view.

Remedy

The author draws the conclusion that the remedy belongs to the future, with messianic echo, because "they are necessary to appear this century, provoked by our need to develop, those impressive personalities, those people that create the cultural, intellectual and political forms that should stabilize and fully accomplish the lines of the Romanian spirit and society.

Short analyse of the Romanian society envisioned by Gert Hofstede theory

According to the estimation of the respective indices, taking into account cultural dimensional indices analyzed by Gert Hofstede [3] – power distance, individualism, masculinity, avoiding uncertainty – Romania's context is presented below (Figure 1).

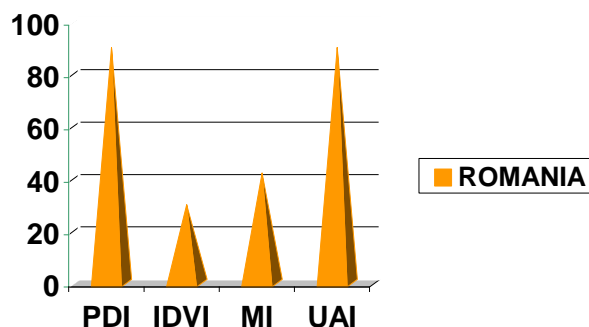


Figure 1 Indices with regard to the fundamental cultural dimensions of Romania (after G. Hofstede)

Romania's power distance index (PDI) is one of the highest value considering the states analyzed by Hofstede (90), among the analyzed states only Panama and Guatemala having bigger indices (95). More than that, among the South-East European states with an average index of 67, Romania has the biggest power distance index. It is interesting to notice that the mean value of this index in European Union, excluding the East European states, is 41, while the mean value of index Latin America is 70.

This big power distance indicates a high level of inequality with respect to power and wealth within the society. This condition is not necessary imposed to population; it is rather accepted by society as part of cultural inheritance.

Next to power distance index, the same value has the uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) – 90. This high level of uncertainty avoiding tendency indicates a low level of accepting uncertainty by society. The value is near the mean value of East European states, that is 83. The mean value recorded in Latin American states is 85, while the European Union states' mean value, excluding East European states, is 63.

Taking into account the effort of minimizing or reducing the level of this index, society intends to adopt and implement some strict regulations, laws, politics and rules. The final scope of this society is to control everything in order to eliminate or avoid the unexpected events. This level of index shows that the society does not easily accept changes and manifests an increasing adversity to the risk.

In the Romanian context, it can be noticed that the traditions are very well kept. There is a social conformism that nonetheless can especially create long-run problems. The world is continuously changing; in this period of humanity development the tolerance to new ideas strengthens and it should be useful to be adopted.

According to Hofstede theory, the combination of these two very high values of indices leads to a society where leaders practically have the final power and authority. More than that, the laws and regulations developed by those in power consolidate the control position. Considering the theory, it is not unusual that the new rulers to become leaders by military insurrection rather than democratic change.

Nevertheless, at macro social level, we can figure out that these were the conditions that lead to the Revolution in December '89; its continuation was based on the same aspects. We should be aware of this cultural cocktail Molotov – the term is not exaggerated, maybe is not a random case that our indices are near Russian ones: 90 and 95.

Another significant value is the low level of individualism. This cultural marker has a general positive influence on the human relationship within society. Yet if the value is low, then it shows that personal identity affirmation is much lower compared with the West European indices (65).

Eternal and fascinating managerial Romania

Based on the research accomplished by the Romanian researcher Marian Nastase [4] with regard to the organizational and managerial culture of the Romanian firms between 2003-2004 – based on the answers given by 150 preponderant superior and medium level managers, out of 102 firms that operate on the Romanian market – we will draw some conclusion obtained from the quantification of the primary results of the research, regarding leader skills of managers that operate on the Romanian market.

Romanian managers perspective on the stakeholders importance on the results of their organizations

Table 1. Romanian managers perspective on the stakeholders importance on the results of their organizations

Priority	Category	Points
1	Managers	1263
2	Clients	1126
3	Owners	1102
4	Employs	1086
5	Suppliers	886
6	Competitors	796
7	Banks	775
8	Local Authorities	585
9	Local Community	547
10	Labour Unions	499

The first position of managers as primordial factor in getting the organizational results (Table 1) is not a narcissist preoccupation, but it is about Romanian mentality – to paraphrase man that sanctifies the place – correspond to the boss sanctifies the organization.

The fourth position of organizational members – employees – after managers, clients and owners shows the importance given by Romanian managers to the human resources of their organizations. In some way it is normal. They are the managers, the clients finance and the owners give the position and capital for investments. For the Romanian managers the fact that Garry Becker obtained the Nobel Prize for special achievements in economics in 1992 with his thesis “Human capital” can be a negligible detail. In the case it is known. It is even more interesting that 70 % of inquired managers are involved in commerce, services and construction sectors – the more important sectors in regard to the number of employees.

The local community is the last on the list. Unfortunately, neglect of local community has become something usual in Romania. The local community in Romania is seen as an amorphous mass of people, almost neglected by the companies. If they not practice the social responsibilities, then at least they should involve the local community in increasing their own wealth.

Relation between Management and organizational members

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Table 2

Priority	Characteristics	Points
1	The authority of managers is very big	640
2	Managers are interested in both the results obtained by employees and their social problems	628
3	It is important to always consult the employees before making a decision that significantly affect them	570
4	It is important to maintain a good atmosphere within the firm, even though this means a certain decrease of firm performance	535
5	The persons that have enough information can make decisions on their own, regardless the hierarchy position	423

Similar to the previous paragraphs, here the same ideas can be emphasized (Table 2).

Managers' authority is the first on the list. There is nothing new. In a society in which the power distance index is very big, the managers use this fact and the subordinates usually grin and bear it until succeed in getting rid of manager to enjoy the post attained in this way.

At first sight, according to the second position, we may consider that managers are interested in the social problems of employees. This can be accepted if we think that this fact happens because of the first analyzed characteristic that is focused on "the results obtained by the employees", seen by managers as their own results and therefore managers pay the right attention to them.

The main cause of the above mentioned results is the central vision given by the last position, at a very big distance compared with the rest, a decentralized vision of organization.

Organizational communication

Organizational communication

Table 3

Priority	Characteristics	Points
1	There is no performance without a strict control	639
2	The informal communication is very important for the firm's interests	638
3	The information is transparent, activities that are carried out are well-known	527

Here there is an interesting situation.

Obviously, in a clear consistency of the central vision with those previously mentioned, our managers consider that the performance can not be achieved without a strict control.

To classify on almost equal terms the importance of informal communication can have two reasons, both with positive meaning or maybe three. The first reason is that there are companies in which this informal communication can be recognized and encouraged, the second reason is that this idea omnipresent in the management and leadership literature and trainings has been known by managers and at least they recognize it wherever is found.

There is a third reason that demonstrates the second leading position of the importance of informal communication: the place custom in Romania. During communist period, without influence and relations you have no chance. It was the survival mode and even after the replacement of the political system in '90, things have not dramatically changed especially in the state owned companies and those unbundled that used to be state owned companies. Even in the multinational companies, where Ms. Geta was replaced with Miss. Assistant Manager Georgiana and Mr. Sandu was replaced with team leader Alexandru, the organizational politics that sometimes have strong genuine Romanian influence predominates.

The logical conclusion that results from analysing the results is that managers from the Romanian environment generally have an archaic perspective on organizations ruled by them – an attitude that is not similar to the one of the long-run developers. We mean generally speaking because the points summarize all the answers given by managers. It is likely that some managers – maybe not few – look at organization as a system in which the human factor plays a strategic role.

Instead of epilogue...

Emil Cioran in “Transfiguration of Romania” says that „our destiny was in favour of negative tendencies of the Romanian psychology” and proposes a vision that is quite opposite of the historical one of Draghicescu. According to Cioran, our psychological deficiencies are not the fruits of history, but vice-versa: our history is the result of our deficiencies.

Maybe both are right.

However, continuing as we have stated after the change of the regime in 1989 without a perspective to be attained, ignoring the fond problems of our society and individuals, postponing some decisions with respect to our own life and way we influence the others lead to results that if they are considered as satisfactory, then it means that we choose to deceive us.

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