

CONFRONTATION OF ALBANIAN LEADERS WITH GLOBAL CRISIS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract

The Albanian leaders were not prepared to face the requirements of a capitalist economy due to the transition of Albania, from a centralized economy to a market economy. Many state enterprises and institutions in Albanian were privatized, and local and global competition required from the organizational leaders to growingly face issues warranted long-term solutions. Organizations and businesses of every kind were facing a challenging environment of where to operate. New emerging requirements made a large number of organizations not flexible to the new financial local situation. Consequently, development appeared as an impossible objective to be achieved. Being unable to avail themselves of scarce opportunities caused difficulties to many local organizations and managers. The managers, owners, employees and consumers were unprepared in response to this situation, and this has brought about dissatisfaction. The theoretical and empirical analysis in this study will elaborate the role of leaders and managers in achieving the objectives of organizational effectiveness, and the steps to overcome financial crisis difficulties in Albania.

Keywords: Leadership, effective organization, financial difficulty, global crisis.

Introduction

Notwithstanding the change of system; lack of a market economy tradition or worse, still oriented by a centralized authoritarian leadership which was inherited from the period of dictatorship, undoubtedly cause difficulties to the present leaders in applying new characteristics required to

face transition challenges and recently the global crisis. Therefore, the analysis of this situation is of special importance for a more advanced study on the role of Albanian leaders in business organizations and organizational effectiveness.

The purpose of this study is to highlight the role of leadership in local business, its type and characteristics, and understanding of the leader's role to enhance organizational effectiveness and analyze difficulties encountered by the Albanian leadership during the period of global crisis. Some research questions were raised to meet the objectives and the purpose of this study. These questions are further supported by the following study hypotheses:

1. Does the leadership play a key role in enhancing organizational effectiveness in the Albanian business organizations?
2. What are the management strategies by which the Albanian leaders overcame the global financial crisis difficulties?
3. Are there any other factors affecting the enhancement of organizational effectiveness in a business organization in Albania? If yes, what are these factors?
4. What is the impact level of a traditional leader in financial crises mismanagement and reduction of organizational effectiveness in Albanian business organizations?

Furthermore, the above research questions are attached to the main study hypothesis on leadership role in the organizational effectiveness as follows;

H1 => Leadership is the key factor in enhancing the organizational effectiveness of a business organization in Albania.

H2 => Global crisis difficulties have oriented Albanian leaders to the reduction of prices of products and services.

H3 => Due to the tradition of authoritarian leaders, Albanian leaders display obvious problems with respect to communication with their subordinates.

H4 => Traditional authoritarian characteristics of Albanian leaders leads to the reduction of organizational effectiveness in a business organization.

The study was accompanied with some limitations taking into consideration that no related studies have been conducted in Albania. Thus, almost none of the local researchers had assumed to carry out a genuine study on the leadership role in organizational effectiveness. Empirical studies on this topic were barely conducted by local researchers. Accordingly, it is hard to draw comparisons with other periods of time but on the other hand, our study will be a good starting point for similar studies and other researchers who may be focused on the data obtained by our empirical and theoretical study.

The questionnaires were made with Albanian local leaders, who majorly run the largest companies operating in the capital, considering also that the largest number of business organizations have their central

headquarters in Tirana. The interviewees exercise their positions in private and non-public institutions, acting as Administrators, Executive Directors, Directors of Affiliations or Units and Managers of different levels.

The study provides empirical and theoretical data which, besides the purpose of moderately filling a gap on this study topic, accomplishes the initial steps toward the acknowledgement of the role of Albanian leadership in organizational effectiveness. Therefore, it introduces major scientific implications for all researchers who are interested in this field of business management.

Literature Review

The society evolution during these millenniums has caused the parallel development of the leader's role in Business Organizations (BO), as a prerequisite to meet the changing business needs. According to Lynham & Chermack, (2006, page 73), leadership models which used to be once operational, can no longer be applicable during this new period; as non-profit organizations are investing large amounts of money in search of the "magic key" to achieve the desired success. Basically, the leadership of an organization is the process by which leaders influence attitudes, behaviors and values of others toward organizational goals (Lusthaus, Adrien, Anderson, Carden, & Montalvan, 2002). They may improve the performance of a team or organization affecting the processes, determining the performance (Yukl, 2012) as the central concept of leadership in organizations influences and facilitates individual and collective efforts to achieve shared objectives. Furthermore, from the perspective of Lynham and Chermack, (2006), leadership causes the need to follow up the desired results by targeted stakeholders within an organization.

Studying leadership and its role within one organization and a whole society is highly interesting and complex in relation to its perspectives. By using the term "*Leader*", people imply or equal it to values such as strength, dynamic personality characteristics, intelligence and wisdom and a good predictor of crises and collapses, either be financial or social ones (Shoraj and Zenelaj, 2012). Although leaders' values and integrity are not attached special priority in early researches on the effective leadership, thus there has recently been a growing interest for them (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Numerous leadership theories are classified in some historically distinguishable approaches focused on characteristics, behavior, situational or cultural opportunities (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1989; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1991). During the second half of the last century, thousands of studies were conducted about the behavior of leaders and their effects on BO-s, but the very large number of behaviors used for researches, indisputably complicates the result comparison and integration (Bass, 2008).

Leadership models

According to some researchers, modern leadership theories are divided into five models, including (1) charismatic leadership, (2) transactional leadership, (3) transformational leadership, (4) visionary leadership, and (5) culture-based leadership (Yukl, 1994; Bass, 1985; Sashkin, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1987). However, which of these leadership models is the most appropriate for the enhancement of organizational effectiveness and performance of business organization? Is there a direct or indirect link between these variables? Undoubtedly, the implementation of each of these models will be used in due time and in the right place. Supposedly, within an organizational environment, an effective strategy is selected for the management of human resources, employing a proper leadership model to guide (Liao, 2005) and motivate the subordinates (Elenkov, 2002), for the purpose of achieving the general objective. Though, building and maintaining favorable relations only with colleagues and superiors is insufficient for being a successful leader. Similar relations should be also developed with external persons who may provide information, resources and political support (Iharra & Hunter, 2007; Kaplan, 1984; Kotter, 1982; Michael & Yukl, 1973). Thus, their support and trust are important for the success and survival of business organizations (Fanelli & Misangyi, 2006).

Various researches demonstrate that effective leaders use additional combined behaviors in a complex situation, and all this product is larger than the integral sum thereof (Kaplan, 1988). It often occurs for a leader to find due compromise for behaviors which seem inappropriate or unnecessary, for instance, the direction, guide to empowerment etc. (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). The compromises for different results are frequently described by leadership theories such as the theory of competitive values (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983) and flexible leadership theory (Yukl, 2008). A larger number of researches will be definitely required in the future, in order to find out how the effective leaders use specific behaviors in improving many results, minimizing negative adverse effects and balancing challenging compromises. The aptitude and skill in using a series of specific behaviors and their flexibility, according to the following researches, is called “Behavior Flexibility” and is related to the effective leadership (Hart & Quinn, 1993; Hooijberg, 1996; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

Without limitation to the broadly defined skills (Katz, 1955; Mann, 1965) or other researchers, divided into three groups are skills such as technical skills, inter-personal skills and conceptual skills. Therefore, we may equally cite other important types of skills broadly used in leadership researches during the recent years. They might include political skills (Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas, & Lux, 2007), administrative skills

and powers; including skills to use specific types of behavior such as planning and training (Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson, 2007). Skills are not equivalent to the current behavior, but they may help us understand why some leaders are capable to select specific behavioral patterns and use them effectively.

It is worth mentioning that the concept of transformational leadership model was initially emphasized by Burns (1978) in the context of political sciences, and was later formulated by Bass (1985) in the organizational leadership theory. According to Burns, transformational leaders are those leaders who motivate their proponents to perform beyond the expectations, thereby enhancing the trust levels of proponents and providing support to the development of performance high levels. Based on the investigations of some researchers (Crawford, 2005; Crawford, Gould, & Scott, 2003; Crawford & Strohkirch, 2000), transformational leadership is closely connected with the result innovation. These leaders are more capable to elaborate work-related concepts, either as technical or modern, compared to transactional or delegating leaders (Crawford, 2005). Thus, further advancing the leadership factors of Burns, Bass and his collaborators identified the following components of transformational leadership behavior: idealized characteristics, idealized impact, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulus and individualized analyses. These components distinguish those other leaders and have a key impact on their success.

Research Methodology

The research methodology used for this study is a mixed one, with the application of both qualitative and quantitative approaches through which inductive and deductive empirical data were provided. 11 semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with Executive Directors of some local business organizations and 118 surveys with managers and directors of different affiliations of the same business organizations.

Measuring Instruments

In this study, instruments were drafted on the basis work of (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, pg, 39). “Semi-structured interviews” will be employed, which are focused on active techniques, and not with fully structured questions. The active interview is “freely oriented”. The interviews are made by keeping in line with a format of questions built by the applicants and which is commensurate with the purpose and objectives of this research. The semi-structured interviews contain about 13 open questions, enabling the interviewee to freely express himself/herself about the question made.

Meanwhile, the questionnaire contains 35 multiple-choice questions and different measuring scales such as hierarchical, likert or numerical. The

questionnaire is divided into four main sections, thus facilitating data analysis. The questionnaire form is a mixed one, where questions start with the demographic ones, to continue with more concrete questions which are directly linked with the main hypothesis testing.

Qualitative data

As we stressed above, 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the leaders of some main local companies to be introduced in a grouped format, after having made the transcription of these interview data. In analyzing qualitative data, an indicative system was established to include all topics and type of data available in the non-processed interviews. Furthermore, during the indexing process, specific codes were determined, where every data of interest for the explanation of research questions and hypothesis was clearly identified. Analysis continues with the design of two-dimensional table supported by the “framework” approach of thematic analysis described by Ritchie and Lewis (2003). Below, the designed table has recapitulated two main topics of the study such as Leader in organizational effectiveness and difficulties of global financial crisis.

Main Topic: Leader in Organizational Effectiveness and Difficulties of Financial Global Crisis		
Interview number	Initial Interpretation	Categories
INT 1	An effective leader should be consistent in what he seeks, visionary and ambitious, but should also develop a tolerant and an ethical communication style, in order to ensure organizational sustainability and effectiveness. Global crisis requires a democratic and flexible leader in terms of company changes and adaption.	A coherent and ethical leader enhances organizational effectiveness. A flexible leader with democratic character.
INT 2	There is no organizational effectiveness as long as there is nepotism-based leadership. Such leaders are overconfident and cannot produce a good performance for the organization. The crisis has affected consumers; therefore a good leader should anticipate the need for price reduction in order to prevent fatal bankruptcy.	A nepotic leader does not produce organizational effectiveness. Crisis has oriented price reduction.
INT 3	The Albanian leader is very traditional and individualistic. Relationship with subordinates is simply a manual of orders and full beliefs. This approach hence reduces organizational effectiveness and exacerbates the relations with subordinates. The crisis has not yet been overcome; it is even its worst stage. Difficulties for different prices from the third parties were increased, but the market requires price reduction at any rate.	Communication problems reduce organizational effectiveness There are difficulties in terms of the application of price reduction, not supported by the third parties.

<p>INT 4</p>	<p>Basically, we have an autocratic leader. If there are democratic leaders, the organizational effectiveness is apparent and the leader plays a key role. A need has arisen to identify new clients and reduce the cost of products and services.</p>	<p>A democratic leader provides organizational effectiveness. Identify clients. Reduce costs.</p>
<p>INT 5</p>	<p>A leader is vital in an organization, but the history of Albania shows the existence of a despotic leader with a non-ethical communication skill, which thereby results to a negative consequences to a business organization. Some interventions are required for crisis management such as price reduction, cost reduction, and personnel number decrease.</p>	<p>A despotic leader has an adverse impact on organizational effectiveness. Reduction of internal and external costs decreases the number of subordinates.</p>
<p>INT 6</p>	<p>The leader's role is essential for a business organization, as it is the main example of building inter-personal relations leading to success. Crisis management is achieved only through flexibility, being tailored to the market need.</p>	<p>Inter-personal relations between leaders and subordinates ensure success. Flexibility in respect of market needs.</p>
<p>INT 7</p>	<p>I believe that organizational effectiveness is increased if the leader is less tolerant during crisis period but not only leaders play a role in enhancing organizational effectiveness. There are many interactive factors. Appropriate adaption and strategies, price reduction to further attract consumers although unfair competition renders it difficult.</p>	<p>A restrictively tolerant leader during financial crisis leads to EO increase. Reduced prices, proper strategy in a time of crisis.</p>
<p>INT 8</p>	<p>Notwithstanding the need for a democratic leader, again I do not believe an authoritarian leader has a reduced organizational effectiveness, as there are some components to impact organizational effectiveness. To manage the difficult international financial period, we had to increase innovations and diversify financial and human resources.</p>	<p>An authoritarian leader does not affect EO reduction. There are several influential components. Increase of innovations/diversification of financial and human resources.</p>
<p>INT 9</p>	<p>Albania does not have many cases of successful leadership, but a foreign leader operating in an Albanian business has normally produced organizational effectiveness, thus implying that the leader and his role are key factors in a specific business. Reduction of prices and of all internal expenses until the restructuring of organization personnel has helped me manage the financial crisis, during which this year has been highly sensitive to our business.</p>	<p>A foreign leader increases EO. Price reduction/personnel restructuring manages financial crisis.</p>
	<p>A leader is vital for a successful business, and I am one of those to have enhanced the</p>	<p>Increased EO if the leader sees beyond the</p>

INT 10	effectiveness of business organization where I work, without limitation only to allocation of tasks to the subordinates. An expensive product at a time of crisis is a risk of failure to the whole business, although the product is of high quality. Consequently, I have attempted to maintain a high quality but also to reduce price.	division of staff responsibilities. Good quality at a reasonable price results to good business management.
INT 11	The leader should be transformational and flexible to the current difficulties, if he/she aims to have a positive impact on a business. The effectiveness of an organization may be increased only in this way, without excluding the fact that this leader should influence specialized human resources, advanced technology, good budget management and relations between subordinates and superiors with a coherent communication. The crisis has only one appeal to the leader: adapt to the market, meet the consumer's need for a cheap product and be transformational.	A transformational leader selecting specialized staff, manages budget and creates ethical communication relations, increases EO. The consumer's need for cheap product leads to financial crisis, and transformational leadership.

According to the qualitative data of the above table, the variable of organizational effectiveness is closely linked with the variable of leadership. Thus, these two variables demonstrate their mutual relationship. More specifically, it follows that organizational effectiveness is enhanced when we are dealing with a tolerant, democratic and flexible leader. According to relevant data, the transformational leader is necessary for the Albanian business which also provides organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, other variables have emerged, which provide organizational effectiveness within a business organization, such as good budget management, specialized personnel, vision, inter-personal relations and ethical communication.

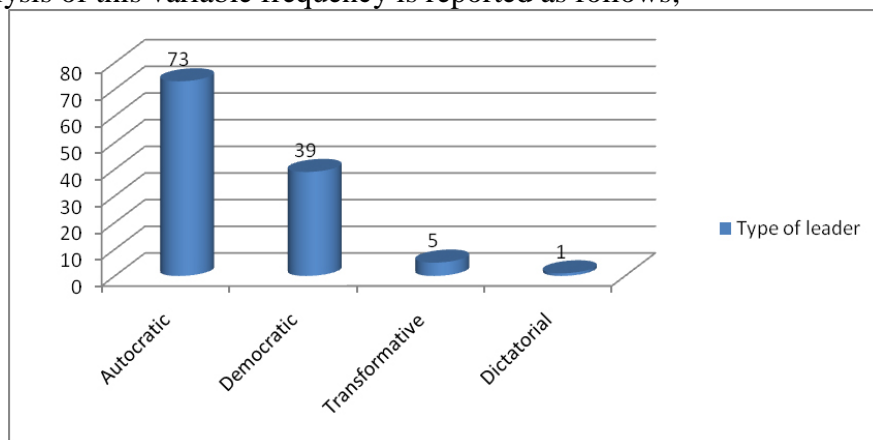
In the meantime, the variable of crisis management is related to the variable of product price reduction. Basically, relevant data indicate that global financial crisis management has required a price reduction. However, as noted in the above table during the analyses, it was highlighted that other variables such as identification of new clients, increase of innovations, reduction of the number of employees/subordinates, diversification of resources, good quality of products and flexible transformational leader, have led to financial crisis management in the Albanian business organizations.

The elaborated data and above categories clearly demonstrate that communication problems between leaders and subordinates, nepotism, despotic and authoritarian leaders have a negative impact on organizational effectiveness. The existence of these variables reduces the organizational effectiveness of a business organization in Albania.

Quantitative Data

The quantitative data analyses was conducted using SPSS statistical program; where according to collected data, out of 118 surveys was conducted with administrators, heads of affiliations or 82 were males, from 69.5 % of the sample population and 36 were females, from 30.5% of the sample population, respectively. According to their positions, there are 48 directors of affiliations, 59 managers and 11 administrators. The Albanians are of a fairly young age, where 75 of them belong to the groups of between 25-30 and 31-40 years of age; and the other 43 belong to the groups of between 41-50 and 51-60 years of age. 109 subjects of the sample population out of 118 have completed their Bachelor or Scientific Master studies, and 9 of them are Doctors of Sciences. According to the variables designed on the basis of seniority of each leader and the physical time they dedicate for running the organization or their personnel, it follows that an average of 74 subjects out of 118 respondents, part of sample population have 2-6 years of job experience. Regarding the physical time a leader dedicates to his/her work, 82 respondents admit they spend 10-12 hours daily.

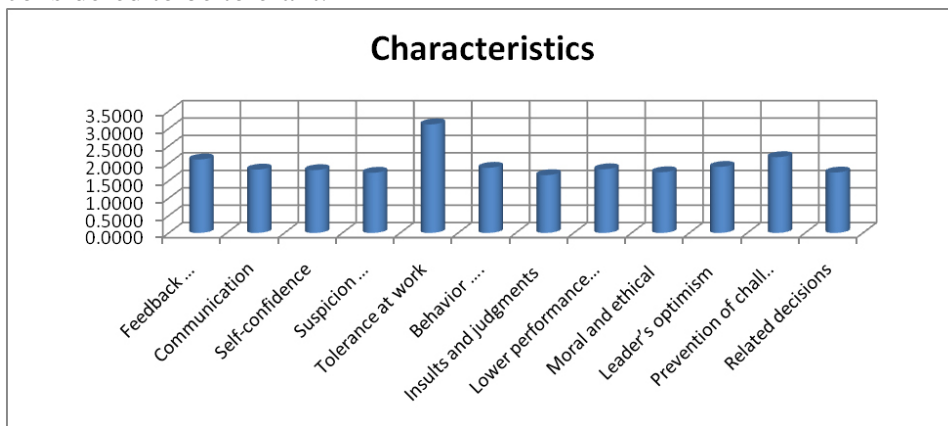
Apart from many questions and variables to be elaborated below, the respondents were asked about the type of Albanian leader, his/her characteristics and which leader these characteristics are attributed. The analysis of this variable frequency is reported as follows;



Graph 1: Type of Albanian leaders.

Furthermore, the measuring instrument determined those variables used to potentially test the characteristics of a leader in Albania, where the variables are linked with the way and how they see the feedback of subordinates about their leaders, how important is a good communication with subordinates, self-confidence, suspicion about decisions taken by the leaders, tolerance at work, how they evaluate the behavior toward subordinates, insults and judgments over them, responses to a lower

performance of subordinates, moral and ethical consequences of those decisions, leader’s optimism while facing difficulties and prevention of challenging situations and related decisions. There is a descending scale of such variables, where the evaluation starts from 1 identical to 5 non-identical scales. Below, the graph demonstrates an average value of answers for each variable on the leader’s characteristics, and as can be noticed, the variable “tolerance at work” assumes a higher value which implies that the average of all respondents is calculated as 3, otherwise a leader in Albanias is not considered to be tolerant.



Graph 2: Characteristics of Leaders in Albania

In the first part of this study, we introduced study hypotheses where the relations between independent variables will be tested as follows, and consequently the testing of veracity (truth) and not the hypothesis posed. Regarding the first hypothesis, respectively “*Leadership is a key factor in enhancing the organizational effectiveness of a business organization in Albania*”, it follows that the observed statistics of the hi-square test 117.986, with a freedom scale 20 and importance level 0.00, demonstrates an independence level lower than 0.05. Hence, the link between variables exists at 5%, implying that the foregoing hypothesis is proven, thus accepting the relationship between the variables of leader and organizational effectiveness.

Chi-Square Tests(The first hypothesis)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	117.986 ^a	20	.000
Likelihood Ratio	114.617	20	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.011	1	.025
N of Valid Cases	118		

a. 21 cells (70.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

In the second hypothesis, I admit that “*Global crisis difficulties have oriented the Albanian leaders to a reduction of prices of products and services*”. After testing the relationship between the variables of financial crisis and price reduction, it follows that the observed statistics of hi-square test 71.908, with a freedom scale 3 and importance level 0.00, demonstrates an independence level lower than 0.05. The connection between variables exists at the level of 5%, implying that global financial difficulties in Albania have oriented a leader in price reduction.

Chi-Square Tests (The second hypothesis)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	71.908 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	62.999	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.317	1	.012
N of Valid Cases	118		

a. 34 cells (85.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

The third hypothesis aims to prove the relationship between variables of the authoritarian leader and communication between subordinates, where I admit; “*Due to the tradition of authoritarian leaders, the leaders in Albania display obvious problems in terms of communication with their subordinates*”. In testing the hypothesis, it follows that the observed statistics of the hi-square test 0.951, with a freedom scale 2 and importance level 0.02, demonstrates that for an independence level lower than 0.05, the link between variables exists at 5%.

Chi-Square Tests (The third hypothesis)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.951 ^a	2	.020
Likelihood Ratio	.959	2	.619
Linear-by-Linear Association	.928	1	.335
N of Valid Cases	118		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.08.

Last hypothesis, “*Traditional authoritarian characteristics of Albanian leaders lead to a reduction in organizational effectiveness of a business organization.*” It follows that value of the observed statistics of hi-square test 4.458, with a freedom scale 5 and certainty level of 0.486, demonstrates a certainty level higher than 0.05 and the link between variables at 5 % does not exist.

Chi-Square Tests (The fourth hypothesis)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.458 ^a	5	.486
Likelihood Ratio	4.286	5	.509
Linear-by-Linear Association	.062	1	.803
N of Valid Cases	118		

a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.39.

Conclusion

Based on the data results, I hereby conclude that a leader is of major importance for an organizational effectiveness growth. Those variables demonstrate their inter-relation in both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Meanwhile, financial crisis difficulties in Albania have caused leaders to reduce prices of products for the consumers. Concurrently, the crisis faced some other steps launched such as increased innovations, good product quality, diversification of financial and human resources, reduction of internal costs and specialized staff.

According to data results, the characteristics of Albanian leaders have shown a trend of authoritarian leadership, manifesting restricted tolerance at work, thus leading to poor communication between the leaders and subordinates, insults and lack of ethics.

The organizational effectiveness is reduced due to some factors and not only by the presence of a traditional authoritarian leadership. A business run by a nepotic and despotic leader mainly produces negative effects on the organizational effectiveness, although such a leader affects the effectiveness of a business organization.

The Albanian leaders are required to be adapted to the type of business or organization they are running and the situational context of the current assignment. From that perspective, these factors set the limits and level of responsibility of the leadership role. A leader can ultimately play a key role in balancing conflicts of values and in developing a consensus between the general political values of society and values an organization has formulated to achieve its objectives. However, in meeting this goal, the leaders in Albania should adopt a leadership approach based on meritocracy, personal and professional skills. Furthermore, they must have a clear business vision and expectations; and flexibility to time, place and purpose of the organization. Acting in the position of a leader due to acquaintances, connections or family succession is not sufficient, although this trend has apparently changed during recent years which are being taken into consideration by all businesses in Albania.

At the end of this study, I would recommend the Albanian leadership to pursue another approach on the way on how a business or an organization operates. Ideally, the Albanian leadership should have the characteristics of a transformational leader. Being under the influence of globalization process, all businesses are under evolution to a global economy which consists of interlinked markets. This evolutionist process launched only some decades ago is currently progressing at a rapid pace. Consequently, a traditional leader would not lead to business development and Albanian economic growth. Therefore, it is advisable and necessary that the leadership tradition radically changes, from an autocratic leader to a transformational leader highlighting the fundamental organizational change. To implement such changes, the leaders should develop and “sell” a new strategic vision to the agency units and key “stakeholders”. Thus, the Albanian leadership should develop a vision based on values and organization, and turn this vision into a long-lasting reality.

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