

Driving Organizational Transformation: Leadership's Role in Public Administration Reform and Change Management

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ABSTRACT

Leadership plays a pivotal role in driving organizational transformation, particularly in the context of public administration reform and change management. This article examines how leadership influences the engagement and readiness of public officials to implement systemic changes within complex organizational structures, with a specific focus on the case of Georgia (Eastern Europe). Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative data from 581 civil servants and qualitative insights from 26 in-depth interviews with decision-makers and stakeholders. Utilizing John Kotter's 8-step model and the ADKAR framework as theoretical foundations, the research explores the interplay between leadership effectiveness, individual readiness for change, and the success of reform efforts. Key findings highlight the critical importance of visionary leadership, effective communication, and strategic management in fostering an environment conducive to transformation. The research underscores the necessity of aligning organizational culture with reform goals, cultivating a skilled and motivated workforce, and addressing challenges such as communication gaps, political instability, and limited managerial competencies. By providing actionable insights, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how leadership can serve as a catalyst for sustainable change in public administration and beyond.

Keywords: Change Management, Organizational Change, Leadership, Public Administration Reform

INTRODUCTION

Driving meaningful change in public administration requires strong leadership. It's about more than policies and procedures—it's about people. Leadership is the driving force that brings a shared vision to life, ensuring reforms are not just well-planned but effectively implemented. In public administration, where the stakes often include societal well-being, leadership becomes the bridge between lofty goals and real-world outcomes. Reforming public systems is a monumental task, requiring leaders who can inspire trust, guide teams, and create an environment where people feel ready to embrace change.

Effective policy implementation is heavily contingent on strong leadership, particularly at the uppermost echelons of political and administrative authority. Leadership assumes a pivotal role in the context of Public Administration Reform (PAR), as it requires leaders who share a mutual understanding of PAR's objectives and are committed to

establishing a fully functioning public administration system. Additionally, PAR calls for meticulously crafted planning documents that translate political priorities into well-defined objectives, establish performance metrics, delineate responsibilities, allocate resources, and provide guidance for executing the reform agenda. Ensuring sufficient financial backing and continuous monitoring, rooted in performance indicators, are indispensable components for achieving successful implementation.

The year 2014 marked a pivotal moment for Georgia as it ratified the Georgia-EU Association Agreement, ushering in a comprehensive wave of internal public administration reform. The central objective of this reform was to align politically and economically with the European Union. Key among these efforts was the Civil Service Reform (CSR), an intricate framework involving legislative adjustments, revisions in human resource management, and the cultivation of a merit-based public service. Despite international acclaim for the reform, their domestic implementation was intricate due to the set of challenges posed by the local context. The foundational On Civil Service legislation, a cornerstone of the reform strategy, encountered delays before being enforced in January 2018.

Over the subsequent five years, some progress was made in all five directions of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap. Particularly noteworthy was the augmentation of policy-making capacity through the application of civil service legislation, which redirected focus towards policy formulation and coordination. As the reform journey advanced, a deliberate drive emerged to enhance mechanisms for monitoring policy execution and encouraging active public involvement (1;2).

However, while substantial strides have been achieved, Georgia's public administration reform has exhibited a lack of systematic integration, thereby leaving several challenges unresolved. Issues like ineffective inter-agency coordination, inadequacies in disciplinary accountability mechanisms, and the continued need for corruption prevention monitoring within the public service remain. Yet, the civil service sector exhibits areas for enhancement. Proposed legislative revisions aim to fortify the Civil Service Bureau's mandate by expanding its functions to include standardization, monitoring, and scrutiny, surpassing its current advisory role. Furthermore, there's a pressing demand for bolstering institutional frameworks and achieving a coherent implementation of the Civil Service Law. Amid these intricacies, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 impeded the progression of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan, even though 84% implementation rate for the 2017-2020 period is reported. The tumultuous political landscape, characterized by upheavals and subsequent personnel changes, further disrupted strategic advancement.

The human factor assumes a significant and frequently pivotal role in civil service, particularly within the context of orchestrating extensive reforms and transformations. In contemporary times, the comprehension of individual values has gained prominence in the domain of organizational development, particularly for employers. Although not exerting direct influence over behavior, this facet possesses the potential to profoundly impact work attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of human personality traits, as asserted by scholars (3).

Given that civil servants play a pivotal role in this process, this article focuses on investigating the role of management and "political leadership" in initiating and implementing reform, especially in the public administration field, coupled with the identification of existing mechanisms that delineate efficacious change management strategies, thus ensuring the active participation of civil servants in the process. This examination constitutes a crucial aspect of the

empirical research conducted within the framework of the doctoral study. Additionally, the paper aims to identify existing mechanisms that shape effective change management strategies, thereby ensuring the active involvement of civil servants in the reform process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is a critical determinant of successful organizational transformation, especially in public administration reform, where the complexity of changes often requires a strong guiding vision. This section reviews key leadership and change management theories, examines their application in public administration reform, and identifies gaps in the existing literature.

Leadership is a cornerstone of organizational transformation, particularly within the dynamic and often rigid structures of public administration. Scholars emphasize that effective leadership serves as a catalyst for innovation, adaptation, and sustainable reform (4). The process of driving organizational change in public institutions is inherently complex due to bureaucratic inertia, political dynamics, and the diverse interests of stakeholders. This literature review explores the theoretical and empirical foundations of leadership's role in facilitating public administration reform and managing change, with a focus on frameworks such as John Kotter's 8-step model and the ADKAR framework. The review also delves into factors influencing leadership effectiveness, challenges specific to public administration, and strategies for achieving sustainable transformation.

Leadership theories provide a critical lens through which the transformative power of effective leaders can be understood. Transformational leadership, as conceptualized by Bass and Avolio (1994), emphasizes the role of vision, trust, and innovation in inspiring organizational change. This leadership style contrasts with transactional leadership, which relies on structured policies and defined rewards to maintain organizational order (5). Both styles, when judiciously applied, contribute to the nuanced requirements of public administration reform.

Change management frameworks such as Kotter's 8-step model underscore the necessity of creating urgency, building coalitions, and embedding change into organizational culture. Similarly, Hiatt's ADKAR framework approaches change through the lens of individual readiness, addressing awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. These frameworks highlight leadership's role in aligning organizational processes with reform objectives, facilitating a cohesive transition from traditional practices to innovative paradigms.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

The relationship between leadership and successful reform efforts is well-documented, particularly in fostering employee engagement and readiness for change. Transformational leadership enhances commitment and mitigates resistance by fostering trust and authenticity (6). Similarly, participative leadership styles have been shown to correlate positively with job satisfaction and organizational support, which are indispensable for sustaining reform initiatives (7).

In environments marked by political instability and underdeveloped institutional capacities, such as post-Soviet states, the role of leadership becomes even more pronounced. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) argue that clear communication and consistent support from leaders can overcome uncertainty and resistance among employees. Odisharia's (2021) study on digital governance reform in Georgia illustrates how visionary leadership and strategic

communication facilitated the adoption of transformative initiatives, despite challenges such as limited managerial competencies and entrenched resistance from mid-level bureaucrats.

Driving transformation in public administration is fraught with challenges, including bureaucratic inertia, political dynamics, and communication barriers. Resistance to change often emerges from entrenched structures prioritizing stability over innovation (8). Addressing this resistance requires leaders to cultivate a culture that values reform, leveraging trust and participation to foster alignment with organizational goals.

Political instability further complicates leadership effectiveness, as frequent changes in priorities can disrupt reform momentum (9). Leaders must navigate these shifts by building coalitions and aligning political and administrative objectives. Additionally, communication gaps undermine trust and amplify resistance. Transparent and consistent messaging is essential for leaders to build credibility and ensure stakeholder alignment (10).

Effective leadership strategies must account for the unique complexities of public administration. Visionary leaders who articulate clear, inspiring goals play a pivotal role in mobilizing collective action and overcoming resistance. Kotter's (1996) emphasis on the importance of a compelling vision underscores its role in creating urgency and rallying support for change.

Building leadership capacity is equally critical. By investing in training programs and development initiatives, organizations can equip leaders with the managerial and strategic competencies required to navigate complex environments (11). Furthermore, inclusive decision-making processes enhance stakeholder buy-in and foster accountability, creating an environment conducive to sustainable reform. Participative leadership, as Fernandez and Moldogaziev (12) demonstrate, builds a sense of ownership and commitment among employees, reinforcing the foundation for successful transformation.

The public sector requires effective leadership by aligning objectives with political goals, emphasizing continuous learning for leaders, providing purpose-built management tools, and fostering a conducive environment. This strategic approach aims to equip leaders with the autonomy, support, and tools needed to navigate complexities within the public sector. Effective public service leaders demonstrated agility by embracing new technologies and implementing innovative workforce management to safeguard well-being while enhancing essential service delivery. This showcases the capacity of committed and creative leaders to achieve substantial innovations when supported by appropriate resources and collaboration.

To deepen the understanding of methodologies for assessing readiness for change management within organizations, it's imperative to analyze further the theoretical underpinnings of prominent models, specifically John Kotter's 8-step model, the ADKAR model, and other significant frameworks. Each model offers unique insights into managing and measuring readiness for organizational change.

John Kotter's 8-step model for managing organizational change, delineated in his 1996 book "Leading Change," is underpinned by the principle that successful change is achieved through a series of phased steps. The model's steps are designed to build momentum, avoid pitfalls, and foster sustainable change within organizations. Kotter emphasizes the importance of each step: creating a sense of urgency, forming a powerful coalition, creating a vision for change, communicating the vision, empowering others to act on the vision, creating quick wins, consolidating

gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture. This model has been critically acclaimed for its practical applicability and the emphasis on leadership and communication throughout the change process (4).

The ADKAR model, conceptualized by Jeff Hiatt, founder of Prosci, in the early 2000s, focuses on change at the individual level as a conduit for organizational change. The model is structured around five key goals or outcomes (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement) that individuals must achieve for change to be successful. The ADKAR model is particularly noted for its actionable and employee-centric approach, making it a powerful tool for managers and change practitioners to address personal transitions and resistance to change within the organization (13).

Kurt Lewin's Change Management Model, introduced in the 1940s, is one of the earliest theories of change. It proposes a three-stage process of change: Unfreezing (preparing the organization to accept that change is necessary), Change (the transition period where organizations start to implement new ways of doing things), and Refreezing (solidifying these changes as the new norm). Lewin's model highlights the importance of understanding that organizations are systems of dynamic balance and that any change process must acknowledge and address the existing equilibriums (14).

The McKinsey 7-S Model, developed in the late 1970s by consultants at McKinsey & Company, including Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, provides a holistic approach to organizational change by focusing on seven internal elements of an organization: strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, style, and staff. This model is predicated on the idea that for an organization to perform well, these seven elements need to be aligned and mutually reinforcing. The 7-S Model is particularly valuable for its comprehensive view of the organization, which includes both hard elements (strategy, structure, systems) and soft elements (shared values, skills, style, staff) (15).

The choice of Kotter's 8-step model and the ADKAR model for the proposed research methodology reflects a comprehensive approach to studying change management. Kotter's model offers a macro-level, step-by-step strategy for enacting change, highlighting the pivotal role of leadership at every stage. In contrast, the ADKAR model provides a micro-level, individual-focused framework, emphasizing the personal journey through change. This dual approach facilitates a thorough investigation of change management readiness by addressing both the structural and human components of change. The integration of these models allows for a nuanced understanding of how organizations can effectively prepare for, implement, and sustain change initiatives.

Based on the theoretical review, the theoretical model has been elaborated to illustrate the dynamic interplay between several layers of influence in public administration reform, focusing on the role of leadership and strategic management. More specifically:

- **Visionary Leadership and Strategic Direction from High-Level Management:** This is placed at the apex of the model to underscore the critical role of senior leaders in initiating and guiding change. Their vision sets the course for reform and influences every other aspect of the change process.
- **Management Practices:** Directly influenced by leadership's vision, this component involves the specific actions and strategies that managers employ to bring about change. It includes decision-making processes, change management strategies, and the overall competency of the management team to

execute the vision for reform.

- **Organizational Culture:** This element reflects the internal environment of the organization, which must support innovation, risk-taking, and adaptability to facilitate reform. A culture aligned with the change vision is crucial for the receptivity and resilience of the organization during transformation.
- **Reform Policies and Structural Changes:** At the center of the model, this component represents the tangible changes implemented within the organization. It encompasses the new policies, procedures, and structural adjustments that embody the reform.
- **Employee Engagement:** Below the central reform policies component, employee engagement is critical for the success of the change initiatives. It shows that the workforce's active participation and support are essential for implementing the reforms effectively.
- **Change Facilitation:** Positioned at the foundation level, this represents the tools, mechanisms, and interventions designed to help ease the transition into new ways of working. It includes training programs, communication plans, and other resources that support employees through the change.
- **Reform Outcomes:** This final component captures the results of the reform efforts — the effectiveness and sustainability of the changes made. It is influenced by how well the organization's employees have engaged with the reform process and how effectively change has been facilitated.

Arrows indicate the direction of influence, with each level exerting an impact on the level below. The model suggests that successful reform outcomes are not just the result of policy changes but are also dependent on the quality of leadership, the management practices employed, the culture of the organization, and the degree of engagement and facilitation experienced by all staff members of the organization.

Leadership and Change Facilitation: Examining the Catalysts of Public Administration Reform in Georgia

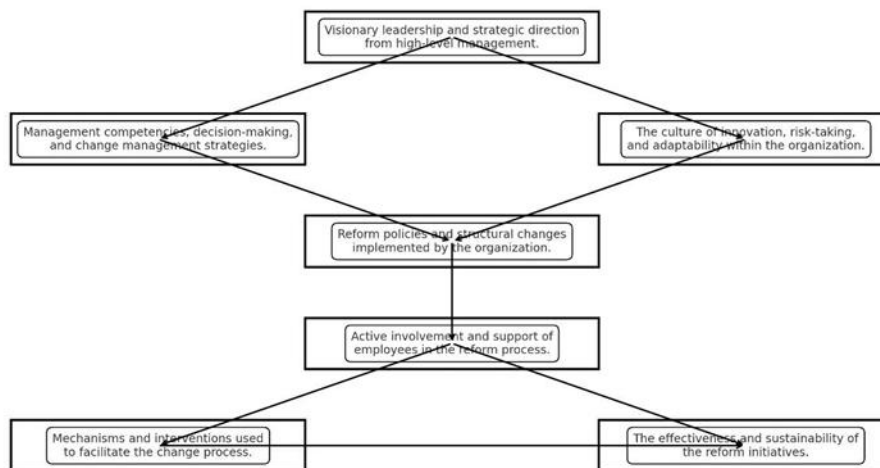


Figure 1: Theoretical Model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the role of the human factor in organizational development, focusing on the ongoing public administration reform in Georgia. It seeks to determine the factors influencing the readiness for change among civil servants of varying ranks while looking into the factors of the role of management in leading public administration

reform.

The research is oriented toward investigating the pivotal involvement of high-level management in the process of change implementation. This analysis encompasses an exploration of the substantial impact exerted by senior management on the intricate process of organizational transformation.

Lastly, the research project endeavors to discern and understand the intricate factors that influence public officials' propensity to embrace and endorse change initiatives. This exploration seeks to unveil the underlying determinants that shape their willingness to actively participate in and support change processes.

A mixed-methods approach has been employed, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative aspect aligns with John Kotter's renowned 8-step model for managing organisational change (4) Utilizing a structured questionnaire distributed through the Survey Monkey platform, the research design incorporates an initial "Filter" question to exclude respondents who have been employed in the public service over the past two years. The total number of completed questionnaires amounted to 581 civil servants with a minimum of one year's experience within the public sector, with 78.5% having a tenure before 2015, and 21.5% having been engaged in public service from 2015 to 2020. Participant distribution reflects 33% from the central government institution, 31.9% from local self-government bodies, and 35.1% affiliated with the legal entities of public law (LEPLS). Notably, 70.3% of respondents were women, and 29.7% were men. A diverse range of employment contracts is evident, encompassing 52% non-managerial civil servants, 33.1% managerial civil servants, 3.9% under managerial contracts, and 11% under non-managerial contracts.

In parallel, the qualitative methodology mirrors the principles of the ADKAR model, emphasizing individual-level transformations pivotal for effective organizational change. The qualitative component comprised 26 in-depth interviews, including decision-making officials and representatives from international and public organizations with pertinent expertise.

To deeply analyze insights from stakeholders, along with former and current public officials occupying key roles in public administration reform and decision-making managerial positions, and to draw substantial conclusions, this research has incorporated John Kotter's 8-step change management framework as a theoretical structure. Kotter's 8-step change model (4) establishes leadership as a pivotal phase for enduring sustainability. Notably, one of the central focal points under scrutiny within this research pertains to leadership — particularly, understanding the role of high-level management and its influence in the process of implementing changes. Concurrently, the study aims to explore factors associated with public officials' readiness for change and the core mechanisms of change management within the public sector, while also evaluating their influence on the active participation of public officials as dynamic participants in the transformative process. The comprehensive Kotter's 8-step model is delineated as follows (4)

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The empirical findings, derived from a comprehensive data analysis, hold significance within the ongoing public administration reform landscape. These findings underscore the novelty inherent in this research endeavor, offering distinctive insights into the determinants underpinning the significance of the human factor within the intricate panorama of organizational development among adept civil servants.

The research outcomes delve into the intricate dynamics surrounding the role of high-level management and its consequential impact on the process of change implementation within the realm of public administration reform. Derived from qualitative interviews, the findings unveil several noteworthy revelations:

Initially, a consensus emerged between international stakeholders and current/former public officials, highlighting that the preparedness of civil servants for change hinges upon a multitude of factors. These encompass timely and consistent information dissemination, cultivation of awareness regarding the rationale behind specific changes, the impetus provided by senior management, their competencies, and the significant influence wielded by political determination. This underscores the multi-dimensional nature of readiness, extending beyond individual inclinations to encompass institutional support and awareness.

Subsequently, the reform process was found to be susceptible to the disruptions caused by high-ranking political transitions. Notably, any alteration in official roles reverberated negatively throughout the reform progression, contributing to an atmosphere of skepticism among civil servants. However, it was discerned that during the initial phases, officials perceived management as steadfast in embracing changes from the outset, subsequently assuming full responsibility for the unfolding events. This highlights the pivotal role of early-stage leadership and its potential implications for the reform's trajectory.

Furthermore, effective communication emerged as a cornerstone in the journey of transformative change. Successful reform necessitates the swift dissemination of decisions coupled with an open environment for employee feedback. However, this process necessitates robust communication mechanisms and coordination—elements notably absent within the present civil service infrastructure. Such communication gaps were observed to hamper both readiness and active engagement in the reform process (16).

Identified obstacles to reform encompassed the lack of political will, entrenched inertia, and deficiencies in infrastructure, including mechanisms for feedback and coordination. These challenges collectively impede the recognition and communication of incremental reform successes.

The role of high-level management emerged as a complex notion. While these figures were acknowledged as pivotal in steering change and facilitating organizational development, the research uncovered a disparity between their intended significance and their practical manifestation within the Georgian public administration reform context. Participants, encompassing former and current civil servants, underscored the central role of senior management in orchestrating systemic transformations and the associated cultural shifts. However, a notable subset of interviewees underscored a deficit in competencies at the political echelon. High-ranking officials demonstrated a limited grasp of the fundamental components necessary for a robust public system, a limitation that curtails the potential for substantial transformation.

Furthermore, the research illuminated the existence of partial political neutrality within the public sector. While an enhanced form of political neutrality was discerned, the public sector remained susceptible to political influences. Consequently, management mechanisms were deemed insufficient, contributing to disorder and inefficiency. Political instability emerged as a prominent barrier, intertwined with the limited involvement of officials, fragmented communication, and a marked inertia in planning and executing individual tasks.

In summary, the research findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between high-level management, political dynamics, communication efficacy, and competencies in shaping the trajectory of public administration reform. These insights enrich our comprehension of the challenges and prospects embedded in orchestrating effective and sustainable change within intricate organisational settings.

The quantitative research outcomes provide valuable insights into various dimensions of the ongoing public administration reform in Georgia:

To commence, a notable revelation pertains to the awareness of the public administration reform's existence since 2015. A mere 7.7% of respondents reported a lack of information regarding this reform, with managerial positions displaying higher agreement that they possessed or had acquired adequate information. This suggests a prevailing awareness of the reform among respondents, particularly within managerial roles.

Another facet explored was the perception of employee awareness concerning the necessity of the reform. Only 13.6% of respondents believed that all employees in their agency comprehended the significance of the reform. Approximately a fifth of respondents perceived that most employees grasped the reform's importance. This indicates that while awareness exists, achieving a comprehensive understanding across the board remains a challenge.

In terms of active participation, 13.5% of respondents claimed active involvement in the reform process. A noteworthy distinction was observed between employees in managerial and non-managerial positions; those in managerial roles expressed a greater sense of involvement. This discrepancy might underscore a heightened sense of ownership among managerial staff.

Support for the reform emerges as a prevalent sentiment among civil servants, with a substantial 86.5% indicating full or substantial support. Nonetheless, a decline in support from the earlier 2016 research is evident, suggesting a nuanced shift in perspectives, possibly influenced by evolving contextual factors.

The study delves into the willingness of civil servants to be engaged in the reform process. Roughly 43.9% of respondents expressed high eagerness for involvement, along with parallel beliefs about the enthusiasm of immediate supervisors and department heads. Notably, a significant portion found it challenging to assess their own or their leadership's potential for continued engagement, reflecting an element of uncertainty amidst the reform's progress.

The pivotal role of management in facilitating change and reform success is evident. Respondents largely agree that managerial support in terms of professional development opportunities, task facilitation, and motivation creation are vital. Notably, consistent communication about reform progress received the least agreement, suggesting room for improvement in this aspect of managerial involvement.

Furthermore, respondents generally concur that their managers provide information about reform progress, are engaged in decision-making processes, and create a motivating work environment.

As for the assessment of reform effectiveness, approximately a fifth of respondents deemed it effective, and a third rated it with high effectiveness. Meanwhile, opinions on the impact of reform are mixed, with over half responding moderately positively, around one in ten stating no discernible impact, and a small proportion expressing negative consequences.

The pivotal role of immediate supervisors in fostering readiness and involvement is underscored, with 41.1% acknowledging their importance. In parallel, 41.5% of respondents perceived themselves as leaders with a significant role in cultivating readiness and involvement among subordinate employees, signifying a shared responsibility for driving engagement.

Lastly, managerial practices towards subordinates emerged positively, with managers striving to include subordinates in decision-making processes and creating motivational environments to enhance task fulfillment.

In conclusion, these research findings shed light on diverse facets of the ongoing public administration reform in Georgia, including awareness, involvement, support, and perceptions of effectiveness. The role of high-level management emerges as pivotal in fostering successful reform implementation and engagement among civil servants.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study delves into the intricacies of public administration reform, uncovering the pivotal role of management in driving effective change. Middle managers of various public agencies at central and local levels exhibit vague recollections of reform initiation, equating their involvement with sectoral directions only in the later stages. This suggests limited accessibility of information about the 2015 reform, accessible to a relatively small group (17). High-ranking civil servant testimonies underscore the challenges in conveying the reform's importance and its positive implications. A concerted effort was required to persuade civil servants of the reform's benefits, including enhancing legal status, working conditions, and aligning with the purpose of serving the nation and its people.

A significant weakness cited by all stakeholders is the inconsistent, chaotic, and fragmented communication during the reform. Instances of absent or constrained communication channels, like email, impede understanding complex reform processes. Externally, limited communication with the public hampers progress and elongates reform processes. Communication inadequacies with local self-governing units further compound the issue (18)

Testimonies echo the sentiment that initiating "change management" earlier and involving managers could have bolstered progress significantly. Effective communication strategies emerge as key components for successful reform (18)

In the implementation phase, donors and international organizations recognize the Civil Service Bureau's communication efforts. However, they lament the lack of strategic communication during the reform's onset and subsequent phases. The emphasis on specific initiatives over comprehensive strategies is deemed secondary, affecting reform progression (19). Addressing the communication gap, respondents highlight the need for systematic delivery of reform goals and tasks to all civil servants. Correct and consistent communication emerges as the bedrock for readiness and active participation, enabling individuals to comprehend their contributions (19)

Rapid communication is essential for change implementation, necessitating proper coordination and infrastructure. Respondents lament the lack of systemic infrastructure in public agencies for efficient information flow (20). Obstacles to reform are multi-fold, including political will, inertia, infrastructure deficits, and limited official competencies. These challenges hinder the celebration of small reform successes.

According to civil servants, effective change implementation hinges on high-level managerial influence. Changes

originating from top management are executed faster and more efficiently, underlining the significance of leadership attitudes on subordinates.

Donors stress the critical role of senior management in this reform type. Differentiating management and leadership poses challenges. Overlapping roles between highest-level managers and deputy ministers creates complexities in the reform process, impacted by political dynamics (21).

Constructing a realistic and data-driven understanding is vital for addressing the current scenario. The study underscores the need to define existing capabilities in the planning stage, appoint officials, and streamline infrastructure to expedite reform implementation (22)

Quantitative research yielded insights into the role of management in public administration reform. Respondents evaluated several aspects, shedding light on communication, involvement, motivation, and perceptions of reform effectiveness.

The respondents assessed the clarity with which reform necessity was explained, the extent of information available in 2015, and current information levels. Interestingly, the majority perceive greater current awareness, though managerial positions tend to believe they had sufficient information. Statistical significance emerged between managerial and non-managerial positions in this assessment ($P < 0.05$ and $P < 0.005$ respectively), implying a varied impact of communication strategies (23).

High-ranking officials and managers of specific ministries were identified as communication sources during the reform's inception. However, respondents found it challenging to gauge the extent of benefits shared (24). This highlights the need for more transparent communication regarding reform advantages.

The Civil Service Law reinforces the role of high-level managers in reform implementation. Respondents endorsed this by assigning a leading role to them, acknowledging their integral contribution (22).

Interestingly, lower-level officials were perceived as more motivated than their supervisors or political representatives. Nonetheless, these officials lack decision-making authority, creating a cultural dilemma as leadership does not encourage subordinates to enact the proposed changes.

Around 13.5% of respondents actively engaged in the reform process. Self-assessment of involvement indicates a significant difference between managerial and non-managerial positions ($t = -3.8$ (473), $p < 0.001$), with managerial roles demonstrating greater engagement (25).

Approximately 40% find it challenging to gauge their future engagement in the reform process. A smaller portion is ready for it, indicating uncertainty and a need for further clarity (24).

The success of reform hinges on management's role in supporting employee participation, creating motivation, and ensuring fairness in career advancement. A substantial proportion of respondents agreed that managers facilitated professional development, obligation fulfillment, and motivation. However, fewer fully agreed that managers consistently provided progress information (22).

Around 56.4% of respondents largely agree that managers regularly inform about reform progress. Additionally, 61.3% believe managers play an active role in decision-making, 70% see managers as motivating, and 68% find a

sense of stability in their jobs. Moreover, 62.3% believe they influence decisions related to their work.

Opinions about the overall effectiveness of the public administration reform are moderately distributed. Approximately 23.8% hold unequivocally positive views, while 53.4% perceive it as somewhat positive. Around 21.9% find it challenging to evaluate, and 10% believe the reform had no impact or negative consequences (26). Respondents prioritized continuous information flow, active involvement, and motivation by senior managers as pivotal reform success factors. Awareness of the ongoing reform process, career growth potential, and agency priority were identified as influential factors (25)

The role of managers in planning and implementing changes was also explored. Among managerial respondents, 41.5% deem themselves crucial in ensuring subordinate readiness and involvement during the reform's execution.

Managerial self-evaluation reflects their role in decision-making, motivation, and obligation fulfillment. Although involving subordinates and fostering motivation were common, rewarding and incentivising contributions was less prevalent (50%). Managers recognize rewards as effective motivators (27) These findings underscore the intricate role of management in communication, involvement, motivation, and ultimately, the success of public administration reform.

CONCLUSION

In line with the primary objective of this paper, an exploration into the significance of the human factor within the realm of public sector organizational development has been undertaken, using the initiation of the public administration reform in Georgia as a case study. The study focused on comprehending the extent of civil servants' readiness and engagement in ongoing organizational transformations. These aspects are shaped by individual work attitudes, competencies, motivational influences, and leadership roles, ultimately molding personal dispositions and conduct within the context of transformative changes, particularly the public administration reform.

The research's specific focus allowed for the scrutiny of the core hypothesis, which posits that the success of public administration reform hinges on the willingness and participation of public officials in the transformation process. The empirical data obtained substantiates this notion. The investigation delved into the correlation between engagement in the ongoing public administration reform and officials' preparedness to partake in its execution. The findings reveal a robust positive correlation between these variables ($r=0.51$, $p<0.001$). This implies that a higher willingness to participate corresponds to a heightened engagement in reform implementation. This relationship underscores that both these factors act as determinants of reform success. However, it is important to note that for officials to be adequately prepared and cognizant of the necessity and significance of engaging in ongoing changes, requisite knowledge and competencies are essential, attributes currently possessed by a mere 25% of respondents.

The study, based on the ongoing public administration reform in Georgia, once again underscores the pivotal role of the human element in driving successful organizational change. This emphasis on the human dimension serves as a crucial precursor to accomplishing set goals and attaining desired outcomes.

In conclusion, the findings presented herein illuminate the pivotal role of the human factor in the implementation of organizational changes, particularly evident within the context of public administration reform in Georgia. This underscores the imperative of cultivating a receptive and skilled workforce, bolstered by effective leadership and clear

communication, to ensure the realization of transformative objectives.

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