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Differences on Organizational Practices and Preferred Leader Attributes Between Polish Managers Studied in 2010/2011 and 1996/1997

1. Introduction

The main goal of our research presented in this paper was to compare Polish middle managers studied in the years of 2010/2011 and their counterparts investigated during 1996/1997 under the GLOBE project, on manager's perceptions concerning attributes and behaviors that distinguish effective from less effective managers.

Poland as a member of the European Union is in the process of designing the suitable institutions and legislations that are beneficial to a democratic system. So, there is a good reason to believe that the political and economic transformation should be advantageous for shaping Polish management practices and organizational values.

2. Method

Middle Polish managers (defined as managers having at least two hierarchical levels below and above them) of randomly selected industrial organizations participated in our study. Managers filled out a questionnaire measuring their beliefs regarding attributes that distinguish effective from less effective managers.

In the years of 1996/1997 two hundred seventy seven Polish managers completed the leader attribute questionnaire developed by GLOBE research project.

In the years of 2010/2011 a follow-up study was conducted among 100 managers representing several industrial organizations (employing at least

100 people) located in Western part of Poland. Middle Polish managers tested in years of 2010/2011 filled out identical questionnaires as their counterparts studied in the years of 1996/1997, under the GLOBE project.

The measurement of beliefs about attributes that distinguish effective from less effective leaders asked managers to rate 8 attributes according to the degree to which they either help or inhibit someone from being an outstanding leader. Thus a high attribute score indicates that the attribute is perceived to be necessary for leadership effectiveness.

The leadership measurements asked managers to asses their leaders, according to the traits that are presented below:

1. <u>Performance Orientation:</u> improvement oriented, excellence oriented, achievement oriented.
2. <u>Team Orientation:</u> group oriented, collaborative, loyal, consultative.
3. <u>Autocratic Orientation:</u> dictatorial, bossy, elitist.
4. <u>Decisiveness:</u> willful, logical, decisive.
5. <u>Humane Orientation</u>: generous, compassionate.
6. <u>Integrity</u>: honest, sincere, just, trustworthy.
7. <u>Charismatic/Visionary</u>: foresight, prepared, anticipatory, plans ahead.
8. <u>Charismatic/Inspirational</u>: enthusiastic, positive, morale booster, motive arouser.

In generating leadership items, the focus was on developing a comprehensive list of leader attributes and behaviors. The initial pool of items was based on leadership behaviors and attributes in several existing leadership theories, as described by House et al. (1997). The items were rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale that ranged from a low of "This behavior or characteristics greatly inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader" to a high of "This behavior or characteristics contributes greatly to a person being an outstanding leader" (Koopman, P., et al., p. 11).

All scales used in this study are based on extensive pilot study (see House, et al. 2004). Questionnaire items were translated from English to Polish and then translated back into English. Back-translation were checked by US coordinating team.

3. Research results

Data analyzed in this paper concerning Polish managers investigated during 1996/1997 were drawn from extensive international research under the GLOBE project, which was developed by House (1997) to study societal, organizational and leadership differences more extensively through the use of multiple methods and at multiple levels of analysis (House, et al., 1997 a; b). In turn data concerning Polish managers during 2010/2011 have been collected by students of the Łódź Management Academy (Branch in Świdnica), while working on their dissertations.

1. **Performance Orientation**

GLOBE's concept of the Performance Orientation is defined as the degree to which a community encourages and rewards innovation, high standards and performance improvement. In relation to performance orientation, David C. McClelland introduced the concept of need for achievement, which is defined as the need to do better all the time (1987, p. 228). He pointed out that people with high need for achievement tend to derive pleasure from advanced improvement; take personal responsibility for their performance, seek continual feedback, search for information on how to do a better job, and are in general innovative.

Figure 1 presents the mean differences between the Polish middle managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on performance orientation.

Figure 1. Differences between the Polish managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on Performance Orientation.
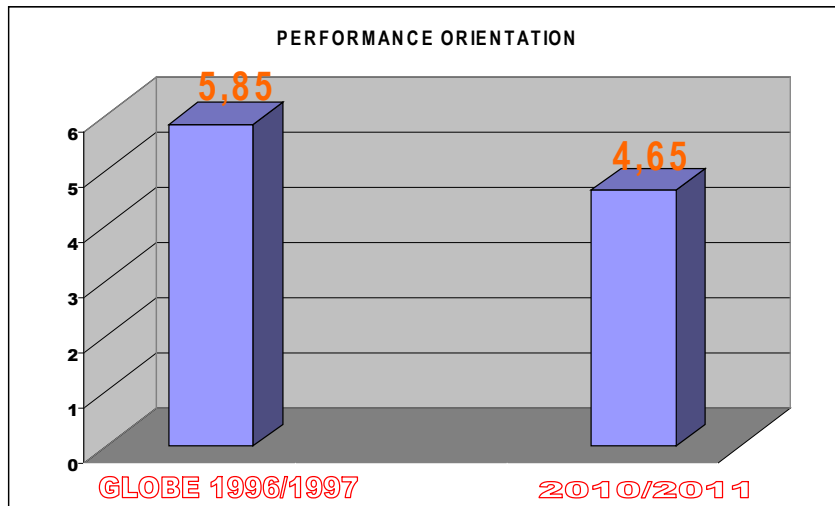

The results presented in Figure 1, indicate that Polish middle managers investigated in 2010/2011 in comparison to their counterparts from 1996/1997 are significantly less achievement oriented. It appears that newer generation of Polish managers have weaker motivation to improve its performance and develop their potentials.

2. **Team Orientation**

Team Orientation is a leadership dimension that emphasizes effective team building, collaboration, loyalty, consultation and implementation of a common purpose or goal among team members. Team-Oriented Leadership dimension in the GLOBE project include collaborative team orientation, team integrator and diplomatic orientation.

The differences between compared groups of managers on Team Orientation are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Differences between the Polish managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on Team Orientation.
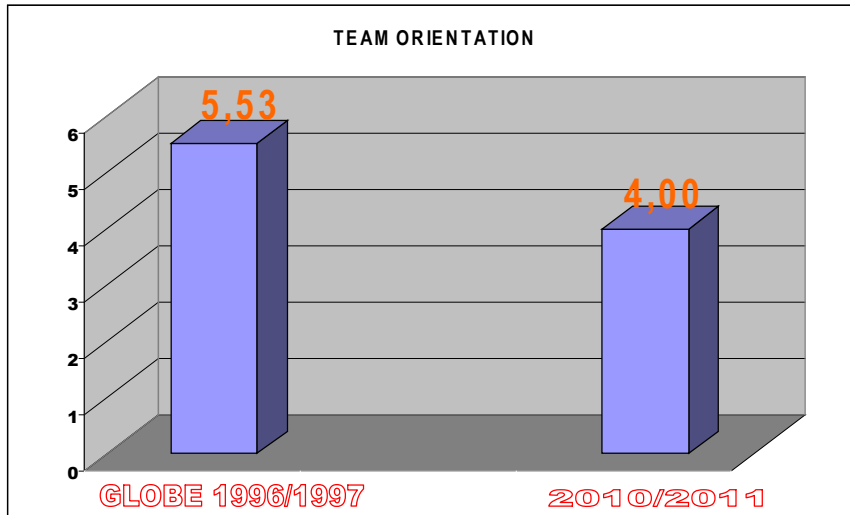
From the data displayed in Figure 2, it can be easily seen that Polish middle managers investigated in 2010/2011, in comparison with managers studied under the GLOBE project in 1996/1997, are significantly less team oriented. It can be pointed out that managers investigated in 2010/2011 express lower consideration towards subordinates interests and feelings.
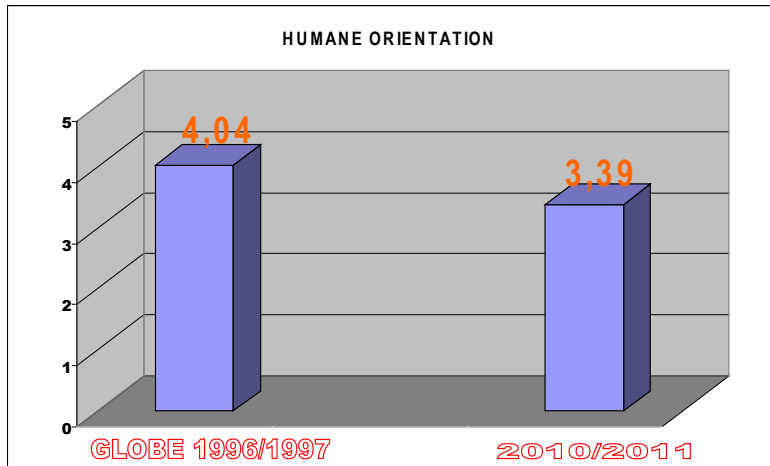
3. Humane Orientation

GLOBE's concept of Humane Orientation is interpreted as the degree to which society or an organization encourages and rewards people for being generous, altruistic, friendly, compassionate, caring and kind to others. This attribute is manifested itself in the way individuals treat one another and in social programs institutionalized within each society (House, et al., 2004, p.569).

Our research results indicate that the way in which managers treat their followers, in the terms defined above, varies in the compared groups of managers.

The data for such analysis are reported in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Differences between the Polish managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on Humane Orientation.

HUMANE ORIENTATION

4,04   3,39

GLOBE 1996/1997   2010/2011

Our research data presented in Figure 3, indicate that Polish managers investigated in 2010/2011 display lower level of humane orientation than their counterparts studied in the years of 1996/1997.

4. **Autocratic Orientation**

Autocratic Orientation as a leadership attribute, under the GLOBE project is defined as being dictatorial, bossy and elitist.

The differences between analyzed groups of middle managers are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Differences between the Polish managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on Autocratic Orientation.

AUTOCRATIC ORIENTATION

3,21   4,06
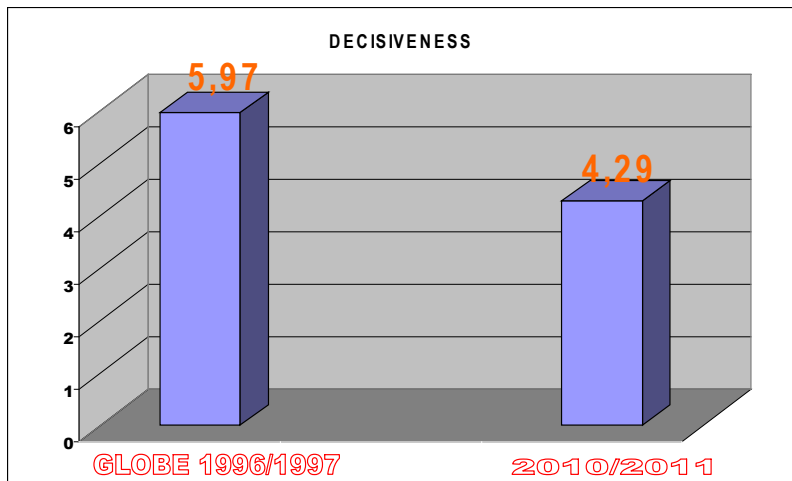
GLOBE 1996/1997   2010/2011
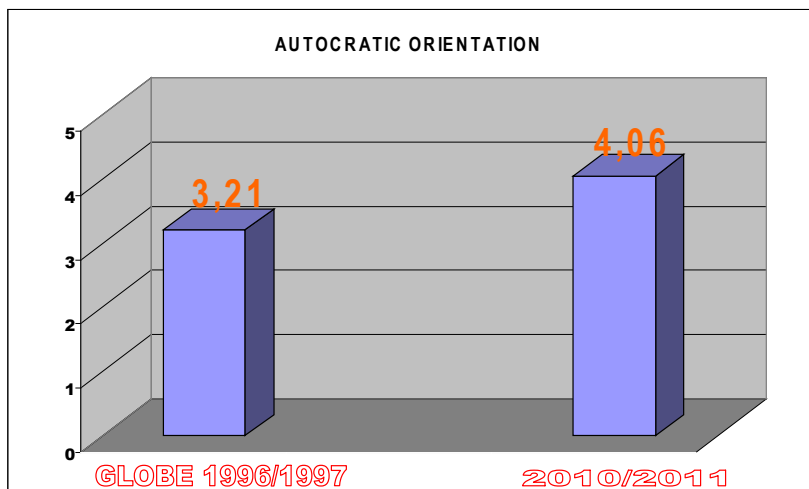
The results presented in Figure 4, show that Polish middle managers investigated in 2010/2011 in comparison to the managers studied under the GLOBE project are significantly more autocratic oriented.

5. Decisiveness Leadership Dimension

Decisiveness is a leadership attribute that is characterized by being willful, logical and less formal and procedural.

Figure 5 shows the differences between compared groups of middle managers on Decisiveness Dimension.

Figure 5. Differences between the Polish managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on Decisiveness Leadership Dimension.

From a comparison of the results presented in Figure 5, it can be easily seen that Polish middle managers studied in 2010/2011 score lower on decisiveness dimension than middle managers investigated under the GLOBE project in 1996/1997.

The last three figures present data concerning such leadership attributes as : Integrity, Charismatic/Visionary and Charismatic/Inspirational.

6. Integrity Leadership Dimension

Integrity as a leadership dimension can be defined as being trustworthy, just, honest and sincere.

Figure 6 reports the differences between compared groups of middle managers on Integrity Dimension.

Figure 6. Differences between the Polish managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on Integrity Leadership Dimension.
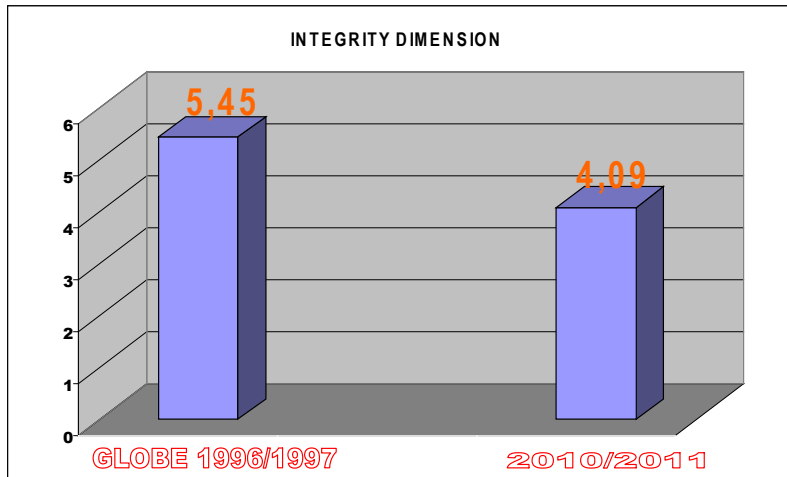

From a comparison of our research results presented in Figure 6, we can see that the managers investigated in 2010/2011 score significantly lower on Integrity Dimension, than their counterparts studied in 1996/1997.

7. Charismatic/Visionary Leadership Dimension

Visionary leadership can be characterized by the following terms : foresight, anticipatory, prepared, intellectually stimulating, future oriented, inspirational. An important function of visionary leadership is envisioning the future, providing long-term direction and articulating it to followers (Yukl, 1998). Thomas and Greenberger (1995) postulated that the ability to create vision is to some extend dependent on the future-time perspective characterized by the leader. A leader who is focused on future orientation is willing to direct his energy toward the future.

Figure 7, reports the differences between managers studied in 2010/2011 and 1996/1997 on Charismatic/Visionary Dimension.

Figure 7. Differences between the Polish managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on Charismatic/Visionary Leadership Dimension.

CHARISMATIC/VISIONARY LEADERSHIP DIMENSION

6,01

4,12

GLOBE 1996/1997   2010/2011
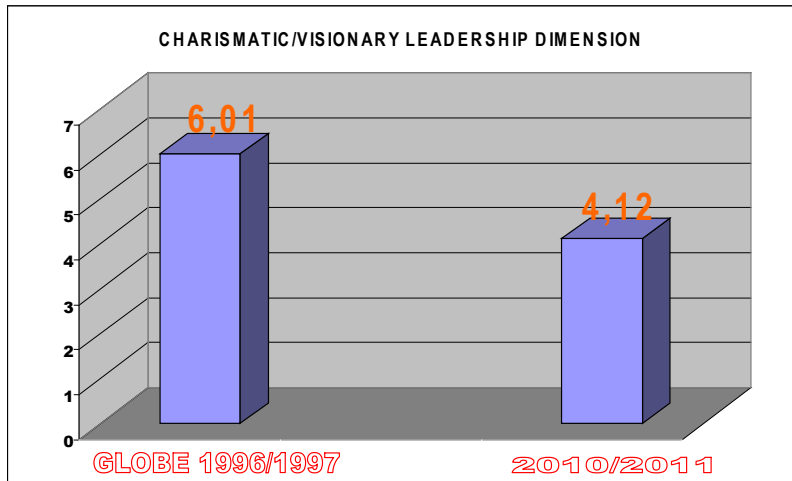
The data presented in Figure 7, show substantial evidence of differences in mean score between these two compared groups of respondents.

Managers studied in 2010/2011 display significantly lower level of Charismatic/Visionary attribute than their counterparts investigated in the years of 1996/1997.

**8. Charismatic/Inspirational Leadership Dimension**

Under the GLOBE research project, Charismatic/Inspirational Leadership reflects the ability to inspire, to motivate, to encourage, to build confidence, and to expect high performance outcomes from subordinates.

The last Figure show the differences between analyzed groups of middle managers on Charismatic/Inspirational Leadership Dimension.

From the results presented in Figure 8, it can be clearly seen that the managers studied in 2010/2011 display significantly lower level of Charismatic/Inspirational Leadership attribute than their counterparts investigated under the GLOBE project in the years of 1996/1997.

In other words the attribute "Charismatic Inspirational" was seen as much more important for being a good leader by middle managers studied in the years of 1996/1997.

Figure 8. Differences between the Polish managers of 1997/1997 and 2010/2011 on Charismatic/Inspirational Leadership Dimension.
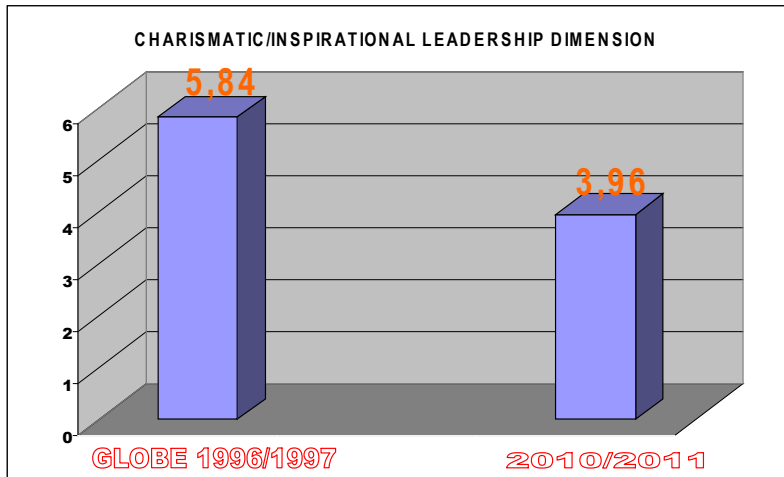
4. Conclusions

It is surprising and to some extend unexpected, that middle managers investigated during 2010/2011 revealed a substantially less negative attitude towards autocratic leadership style than did middle managers studied in 1996/1997 under GLOBE research project.

There is a good reason to assume, from results presented in this paper that the more autocratic leadership style is applied towards subordinates, there is a less opportunity to demonstrate team orientation, humane orientation, visionary, integrity and charismatic/inspirational leadership attributes in organization.

GLOBE research results clearly indicated that managerial leadership is influenced by the dimension of national culture which Hofstede labels "Power Distance".

From a survey of 116,000 employees in 40 countries, Hofstede defines this construct as "the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed equally" (1980, p. 45).

According to Hofstede (1980; 1991; 2000) in high power-distance countries, managers make decisions autocratically; they use close supervisions and do not exhibit much consideration for subordinates' interests. These subordinates are unwilling to disagree with their leaders. On the other hand, managers in low power-distance countries consult with their subordinates before making final decision and employ a higher level of consideration for subordinates' views.

Our results with respect to attributes concerned with leadership effectiveness are largely consistent with findings reported earlier for differences in organizational dimension scores. Particularly, attribute such as autocratic leadership style is

"more strongly associated with leadership effectiveness by Polish middle managers studied in 2008/2009, who also describe their organizational cultures as higher on Power Distance," (Mączyński, et al. 2010, p. 130).

Higher scores on Power Distance of Polish managers studied during 2010/2011 than their counterparts investigated in 1996/1997 were unexpected, since a great deal of beneficial changes in Poland concerned with transition from a command system to new free market economic system and above all, the process of joining European Union in 2004, took place.

That is why we assumed that substantial changes in political, social, and organizational systems, under the current transition process should decline Power Distance in organizational values and practices and lead to more negative attitude, among other things, towards the autocratic leadership style of the newer generation of Polish managers.

Explaining our research results in this light, leads to the conclusion that Power Distance is still enduring phenomenon deeply embedded in polish culture, which has an intense effect on leadership style of Polish managers. That is why Polish managers of 2010/2011 have a considerably less negative attitude towards autocratic behavior than their counterparts investigated during 1996/1997.

"Our research results point to the conclusion that the introduction of a market economy in Poland has shown little effects so far on the leadership behavior of Polish managers. It would mean that profound changes in political, social, economic and institutional systems are not sufficient (satisfactory) factors that would modify organizational values and subsequent attitudes and behaviors. It means that deep changes in the mentality of people are needed to make necessary, beneficial changes in the cultural values and subsequent (succeeding) attitudes and behaviors" (Mączyński, et al. 2010, p.131).

It should be emphasized that advancing (continuing) higher scores on Power Distance and Autocratic Behavior for Polish organizations produce unfavorable situation for Polish organizations relative to Western institutions.

We express the view, that managerial behaviors and organizational practices that emphasize Power Distance and autocratic leadership style will probably become particularly dysfunctional for organizational survival and development.

This leads to the conclusion that to be able to cope effectively with the present economic crisis and to be competitive with western organizations, Polish managers will have to acquire such a values and management practices which would help them to overcome demanding severe economic conditions (see also: Den Hartog, et al., 1997; Mączyński, et al., 1997; 2008; 2010).

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Abstract

This study compares Polish managers' perceptions of their organizational culture and their beliefs concerning attributes necessary for leadership effectiveness, investigated in 1996/1997 and 2010//2011. As was unexpected, our results show that Polish managers of 2010/2011 score significantly higher than managers of 1996/1997 on Power Distance, Autocratic Orientation and slightly lower on Performance Orientation, Team Orientation, Humane Orientation, Decisiveness, Integrity, CharismaticlVisionary Leadership Dimension and Charismatic/Inspirational Leadership Dimension. Our findings suggest that more autocratic orientation in Polish organizations is still necessary in order to survive and be effective during the current turbulent and highly uncertain economic and business conditions. Our findings are also consistent with regard to leadership attributes of Performance Orientation, Team Orientation, Decisiveness, Humane Orientation, Integrity, Visionary and Charismatic/Inspirational, which are somewhat less strongly associated with leadership effectiveness by Polish middle managers investigated in 2010/2011 in comparison with their counterparts studied in 1996/1997.