

THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ENHANCING THE PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF CIVIL SERVANTS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of transformational leadership in enhancing the personal professional identity of civil servants and its importance in management activities. Methods of analysis and synthesis comparative assessment, literature review, surveys were effectively used to determine the types and qualities of leadership. The study used a system of input and output diagnostics, which provides a comparable assessment of the level of development of change management skills in an organisation before and after training. The study subjects were specialists and heads of civil service departments, as well as district governors. The main part of the article presents the results of a research study monitoring the actions of modern civil servants characteristic of transformational leadership and suggests ways to develop the qualities of a transformational leader. The study concludes by describing the importance of transformational leadership for the future of the country in implementing the "Listening State" concept.

Keywords: civil servant, transformation leader, initiative, ethical values, change management, strategic thinking

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing the personal and professional identity of a civil servant in public service requires a high level of responsibility. This phenomenon encompasses several human qualities, starting with the legal literacy of a civil servant in everyday life and extending to the formation of pride in serving society throughout their professional career. Along this path, it is worth highlighting five key qualities for improving the professional identity of a civil servant: (i) legal expertise, (ii) mastery of one's work, (iii) exemplary behaviour, (iv) service to the people, and (v) leadership. "These five qualities contribute to the conscious renewal of civil servants, guiding them toward the harmonious collaboration of intellectual, professional, and ethical aspects of their work. They shape targeted steps aimed at systematising the principles, values, and skills necessary to respond to societal demands".³

In any era, one of the factors in establishing mutual trust between the state and the people is the daily work of civil servants. This trust is formed through the quality of services provided, the professionalism of civil servants, the transparency of management processes, and a focus on the real needs of citizens, in line with the concept of a "Listening State".⁴ The concept of a "Listening State" transforms government activity from an administrative-control model to a

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⁴ En aldymen adamdar <https://ahaslides.com/kk/blog/transformational-leadership-examples/>

service-based and partnership-based one, strengthening the focus of management decisions on the real needs and life situations of citizens. For the population, this means increased accessibility to government services, expanded feedback channels, and increased trust in government institutions through involvement in decision-making processes. Combined with a human-centred approach, this model fosters a sustainable culture of dialogue, responsibility, and the joint creation of public value. These principles ensure the development of public administration in a direction that is people-centred and takes into account the interests of the people.⁵ At the same time, factors of institutional mistrust remain, associated with bureaucratic inertia, fragmented feedback, discrepancies between citizens' expectations and actual results, and insufficient interdepartmental coordination.

MAIN PART

Leadership is critical in shaping the personal identity of a civil servant. Leadership is a combined manifestation of character and action that inspires responsibility, unites people around a common goal, and directs them toward innovation. There are several types of leadership. While for some individuals it is viewed as an innate quality, others operate within the framework of appointed, learned leadership. Today, flexible, innovative, initiative-driven, and highly professional transformational leaders are crucial for enhancing the quality of dialogue between the state and society in line with modern demands.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the significance of transformational leadership in enhancing the personal and professional identity of civil servants and to outline the paths for developing this form of leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Leadership and Its Theoretical Evolution: The concept of "leader" is considered a multifaceted and dynamic category in the social sciences. In the literature, this concept is closely linked to concepts such as "manager," "leader," "innovator," "influential person," and "supporter." Since the early 20th century, Western scholars have begun to study leadership not only as a personal trait but also as a mechanism of social influence.⁶ These studies demonstrate that the concept of leadership has deepened in content over time and has become an important component of management philosophy.

The evolution of leadership demonstrates the need to consider it as a phenomenon not limited to formal authority, but based on values, influence, and social responsibility. Furthermore, this approach creates a theoretical prerequisite for the emergence of transformational leadership.

Personal and motivational aspects of leadership: Meneghetti describes a leader as someone capable of shaping functions, effectively organizing relationships, and focused on results.⁷ Conversely, Kovi (2018) defines leadership as a process of unlocking people's potential, inspiring them, and developing their inner values. These views demonstrate that a leader's influence is exerted not only through managerial command but also through psychological and motivational mechanisms. These studies demonstrate that the primary power of leadership lies in awakening people's intrinsic motivation and building trust. This is especially important in public service, reinforcing the value of serving citizens rather than formal instructions.

⁵ Memlekettik qyzmetshinin kasibi-bolmystyq tylgasyn zhetildiruge bagyttalghan kadamdyq zhospar. - Astana: Memlekettik kyzmet ister agenttigi, 2024 zh. - 48 p [A step-by-step plan aimed at improving the professional and ethical conduct of a civil servant. Astana: Agency for Civil Service Affairs, 2024. 48 p].

⁶ Piter G. Northaus. Keshbasshylyk. Astana: SAGE Publications, 2018. – 528 bet

⁷ Manegetti A. «Psihologija lidera» // <https://www.litres.ru/book/antonio-menegetti/psihologiya-lidera-11792946/>

Therefore, the philosophy of people-centred management underlies transformational leadership.

The context-dependent nature of leadership: Gandapas (2023) notes that there is no universal leadership model; the effectiveness of each leader depends on their style of exercising power and their personality. Conversely, Northaus (2018) systematises his models, defining leadership as the process of influencing people to achieve a common goal. These definitions demonstrate that leadership is not a static phenomenon, but one that adapts to the situation. The authors' conclusions provide grounds for considering leadership as a flexible, adaptive management tool. This is especially relevant in the context of changing social demands and institutional reforms in the civil service system of Kazakhstan.

Situational effectiveness and management style: Fiedler's situational theory proves that leader effectiveness depends on the level of task and relationship orientation. Fiedler's research demonstrates that there is no single effective leadership model and that a leader's style is determined by the specific situation. This approach justifies the non-universal nature of management decisions. The author concluded that standardised approaches to management in the civil service are limited. Each management situation requires individual analysis and flexible leadership solutions. In this context, transformational leadership is viewed as a practical mechanism for effective adaptation to a changing environment.

National Context and the Value Dimension: Kazakh researchers Sh. Mukan explains leadership through action and social responsibility.⁸, while K. Zholdybayuly describes a leader as a morally mature individual, capable of sensing the emotional state of the team and grounded in humanity.⁹ These views indicate that the moral and humanistic aspects of leadership predominate in Kazakh society. The concept of leadership in the national ideology aligns with the value foundation of transformational leadership. This indicates that a civil servant is not simply an administrator, but a person who builds public trust. Consequently, the cultural context strengthens social acceptance of the implementation of transformational leadership.

Functional Content of Leadership in Public Administration: One of the latest studies (Kosherbaeva and Bokaev, 2024) systematised the functions of strategic forecasting, policy implementation, organizational effectiveness, and accountability of public sector leaders. This demonstrates that leadership is not only management but also a comprehensive activity aimed at achieving social results. Consequently, leadership in public administration expands the scope of responsibility. This requires leaders not only to possess professional competence but also to be able to manage change, thus reinforcing the relevance of the transformational leadership model.

The literature review reveals that leadership is more a matter of social influence, a value orientation, and a process aimed at change than a personal trait. Transformational leadership is described as a modern model that systematically implements this process. In the context of public administration, it allows, in addition to improving management effectiveness, to strengthen the principles of transparency, accountability, and citizen focus. Thus, the theoretical foundations discussed serve as a methodological basis for formulating the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

⁸ Mukan Sh. Koshbasshylyk. -Almaty: «Mazmundama» qogamdyk qory, 2020. – 300 b

⁹ Zholdybauly K. Kemel adam. - Almaty: «Samga» baspasy, 2022. -376 p.

METHODOLOGY

To empirically verify our hypotheses, a study using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was conducted in an educational and practice-oriented environment, including professional development courses, thematic seminars, and extracurricular activities for civil servants. The study is based on the results of three surveys, two questionnaires, three case studies, and a SWOT analysis. The surveys were conducted among participants in training and retraining programmes for civil servants representing various government agencies and levels of government. Participants had varying levels of management experience, functional responsibilities, and professional experience, ensuring a diverse sample population and thus increasing the representativeness of the results.

The authors developed questionnaire instruments based on the key components of transformational leadership identified in the theoretical analysis: value orientations, behavioural manifestations, and management competencies. Questions included both closed-scale items (assessing the degree of leadership qualities, management styles, and readiness for change) and open-ended questions designed to elicit respondents' subjective perceptions of the role of a leader in public service.

Case studies were used to analyse practical management situations in which participants demonstrated decision-making, change management, and teamwork skills. SWOT analysis was used as a tool for collective reflection and assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of leadership practices, as well as external opportunities and risks in the context of implementing the principles of a "listening state."

Data collection was conducted in person during training sessions and seminars, ensuring a high level of participant engagement and enhancing the reliability of responses. Processing of quantitative data included summarising, grouping, and comparative analysis of responses. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify stable semantic categories and recurring patterns of behaviour. To distinguish leadership types and identify personality-based leadership traits, synthesis and analysis methods were employed. While examining responses from civil servants, particular attention was given to complex dual-content answers concerning "leadership and positional authority". Comparative evaluation was applied when assessing personal qualities related to leadership, especially when analysing similar but differently expressed viewpoints.

DISCUSSION RESULTS

Today, the quality and efficiency of the public administration system largely depend on its personnel. From this perspective, developing leadership qualities among civil servants is crucial. Civil servants must not only be leaders in a general sense but must become transformational leaders — capable of making responsible decisions, guiding change, and promoting progress — while upholding human and ethical values often overlooked in daily professional life. The ability of civil servants to manage change and act proactively is vital for the future of society.

Transformational leaders can be regarded as reformers who create and establish a clear organisational concept, empower followers to achieve high standards, inspire trust, and give meaning to organisational life. The advantages of transformational leadership include:

- continuously generating and promoting new ideas;
- consistently motivating their team;

- balancing short-term views with long-term goals;
building trust within the team;
- valuing qualities such as loyalty and responsibility while emphasising high emotional intelligence (EQ).

Transformational leadership is grounded in principles of democracy, effectiveness, transparency, and responsibility. In this article, the evaluation and identification of transformational leadership are presented based on research and experience gathered during seminars and retraining courses for civil servants held at the East Kazakhstan branch of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Table 1: Transformational leadership styles

Idealised influence (characteristics):	I will sacrifice my own interests for the good of the group.	0 1 2 3 4
Idealised influence (behaviour):	I think about the moral and ethical implications of decisions.	0 1 2 3 4
Inspiring motivation:	I speak with optimism about the future.	0 1 2 3 4
Intellectual stimulation:	I think through the main points several times to make sure they are valid.	0 1 2 3 4
Taking into account individual interests:	I help develop the strengths of others.	0 1 2 3 4
Transactional leadership styles		
Conditional reward:	When the goal is achieved, I clearly state what my follower can do and what to expect.	0 1 2 3 4
Management by features (Active form):	I am tracking all errors.	0 1 2 3 4
Passive/Closed Leadership Styles		
Management by Exceptions (Passive Form):	I wait until something doesn't go as planned before I act.	0 1 2 3 4
The principle of non-interference	I avoid making decisions.	0 1 2 3 4

Transformational leadership qualities within the civil servant competency clusters are assessed using indicators such as self-development, strategic thinking, systemic planning, change management, and effectiveness, as determined through surveys and comparative assessments. For example, the survey was administered to civil servants in managerial positions, and responses were analysed according to scores related to three types of leadership (see Table 1).

From the 25 respondents who participated in the survey, we identified only 8 individuals who demonstrated characteristics aligned with the transformational leadership style. Thirteen respondents showed tendencies closer to transactional leadership, while 4 responses reflected a closed leadership style (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Survey results

The results indicate that respondents displayed behaviour more rooted in established habits than in openness to change. Due to bureaucratic structures and hierarchical management mechanisms, transactional leadership is more common in public service compared to private organisations. Since many civil servants are deeply accustomed to such practices, they seldom consider transitioning to innovative processes. Therefore, it can be concluded that transformational leadership skills among civil servants must be developed through various interventions.

Another research project focused on assessing the transformational competencies of managers in public service and their willingness to implement changes. The study was conducted in two stages (initial and final diagnostics).

The total number of respondents were 60 managers, 56% of whom had recently been appointed. Participants included 8 rural district akims, 7 deputy heads of departments, and 45 division heads. The initial diagnostic tool (entry diagnostics) involved self-assessment of change management skills based on specific criteria. In the second stage (exit diagnostics), we assessed the level of their change-management competencies in accordance with the provided criteria (Table 2).

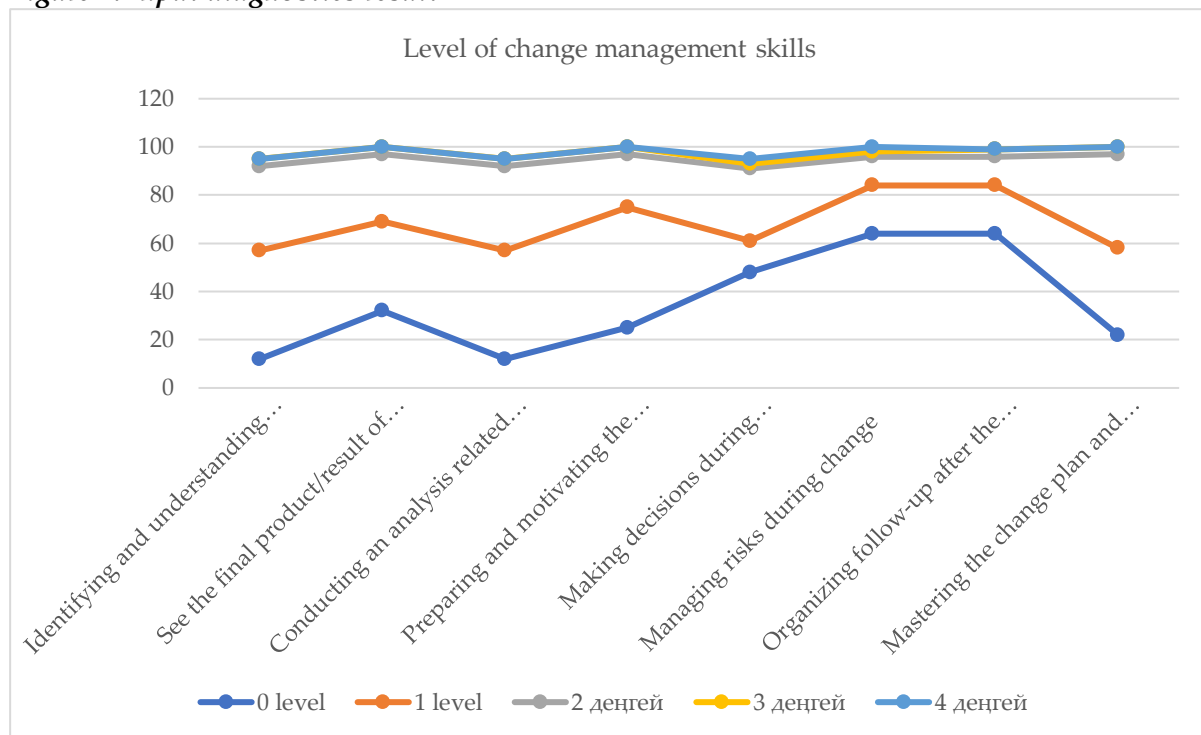
Table 2: Change management skills

Level	Experience	Description
0 level	He has neither knowledge nor skills.	The leader has no intention of making changes and lacks the knowledge.
1 level	Knows	The leader has theoretical knowledge of change management.
2 level	Have basic experience	The leader has experience and knowledge in making changes.
3 level	Have basic experience	The leader has personal experience and knowledge in making changes.
4 level	Has its own system	The leader has an effective algorithm for making changes and can teach

The results of the initial diagnostics revealed that managers lacked skills and knowledge related to decision-making about the necessity of change (34%) and visualising the expected outcomes of change (32%). Accordingly, we also evaluated competencies related to assuming

personal responsibility, setting clear goals, and striving for results. Any change initiative carries certain risks; however, in identifying and properly managing these risks, a lack of strategic thinking and decisive action — qualities inherent to transformational leadership — was observed (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Input diagnostics result

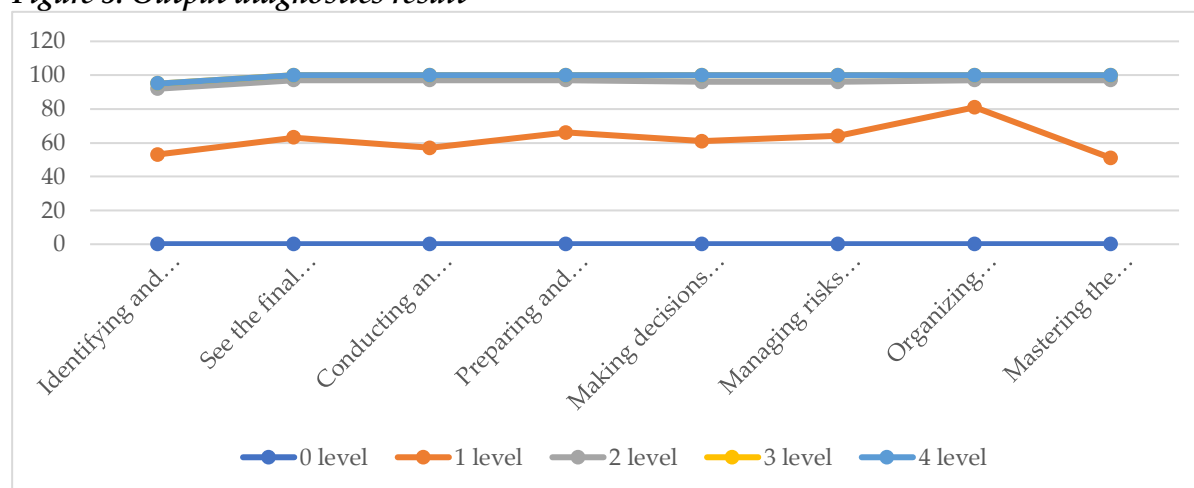


When identifying the level of civil servants' change-management skills, we also assessed the sustainability of change within the organisation, planning of actions following the change, and adaptation to new processes. According to the results depicted in table, the competencies "Managing risks during change" (60%) and "Organising post-change follow-up" (64%) were rated at a basic level. Although managers possess theoretical knowledge, they lack practical experience in applying this knowledge in their professional environment.

To develop these competencies, the following learning activities were included in the training content:

- conducting methodological and diagnostic surveys to assess transformational leadership competencies among managers in training programmes and seminars;
- providing learning mechanisms related to implementing and managing organisational changes, supported by practical assignments and case studies;
- enabling managers to competently design change implementation algorithms within their organisations, establish proper communication, and learn tools for identifying and managing risks;
- requiring newly appointed managers to use the "Change Management" workbook to propose practical solutions to specific organisational problems within a 20-hour academic period;
- administering final diagnostics and interviews to analyse how much practical experience and knowledge the participants gained.

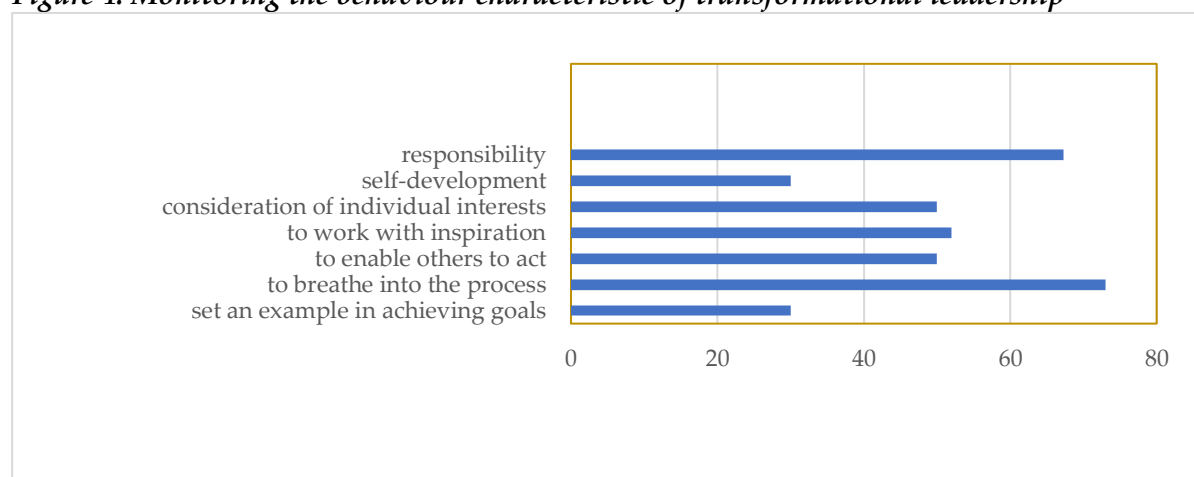
The outcomes of these planned activities are presented in Figure 3 through the exit diagnostics.

Figure 3: Output diagnostics result

The 120 hours of training — including professional development activities, practical sessions, and targeted competency-enhancement exercises — showed results. As illustrated in Figure 2, managers demonstrated increased readiness for change; indicators related to knowledge and conscious application of change practices improved significantly, with no respondents scoring at the zero level. Practical application of acquired knowledge increased by approximately 24–27% (Levels 1–2).

Interestingly, Level 4 indicators, present in the entry diagnostics, were absent from the exit diagnostics. This suggests that during post-training interviews, respondents realised they had previously overestimated their competence and thus provided more accurate evaluations in the exit diagnostics. The training content contributed to raising their competence to Level 2. Achieving Levels 3–4 would likely require organising systematic post-training support (“in the production environment”).

Continuing the research, we also conducted observational assessments of transformational leadership behaviours among civil servants. Analysis of results from 27 managerial participants involved in a training exercise (Figure 4) showed that significantly more attention should be devoted to exercises designed to strengthen transformational leadership skills.

Figure 4: Monitoring the behaviour characteristic of transformational leadership

Considering the results of all conducted activities, we concluded that managers’ ability to resolve issues effectively is strongly correlated with their transformational potential. Observations confirmed that weaknesses in modelling positive behaviour, self-development, and working with inspiration negatively affect daily work processes. Transformational

leadership in public service helps compensate for limited state resources, supports addressing economic crises, and prevents unnecessary expansion of social-service categories and functions.

CONCLUSION

At the current stage of development, transformational leadership can be regarded as a form of influential leadership. Its significance lies in the fact that employees are able to see the outcomes and benefits of their contribution to common goals, strengthen the results and quality of their work, and maintain cohesive teamwork. Based on the research findings discussed above, we summarise our perspectives on the development of transformational leadership qualities and skills among civil servants as follows:

1. First, leaders must internalise and embody mechanisms for adapting to change in both their personal and professional lives.
2. Second, they must study their employees well and invest in nurturing their positive qualities. This step is essential for preparing future successors in transformational leadership.
3. Third, to become a role model, a leader must exhibit high moral values and unique individual abilities recognisable by others.
4. Fourth, as observed during practical exercises, many managers fail to recognise the need for adaptability due to heavy involvement in daily operational tasks. Therefore, along with training, it is necessary to introduce consulting support within organisations implementing change.
5. Fifth, to enhance transformational thinking and other leadership models, training programs, seminars, and workshops must include methodological content aimed at developing relevant skills and competencies. Such initiatives enable leaders to self-evaluate, acquire new skills, refine existing ones, and utilise opportunities for personal growth.

The importance of transformational leadership in improving the professionalism and personal identity of civil servants will continue to grow. Transformational leadership develops through moral qualities such as integrity, honour, and humanity, combined with years of accumulated experience.

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