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## Emotional kindergarten: cross-cultural research about leadership of creative personalities

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### Abstract

Leadership is one of the oldest phenomena in the history of social sciences and management. Yet, as a research area still it has lots of virgin fields, one of them surely being the challenge of leading creative personality's in other words complex personalities. In art creating projects, such as dance performance projects, a choreographer realizes the creative process with his/her fellow artists e.g. dancers, light designers, sound designers etc., leading them towards a unique goal of the project. This research aims at bringing a better understanding of leadership challenges in such complex art creating projects. The curiosity of success in leading people, especially the people whose work is much related to their inner selves and emotions and understanding the needs of creative personalities and the leadership style required to move them forward are the very core of this paper. The background of the study, reasons behind the need of research, methodology with the first insights from the researcher's case study works and preliminary findings of the research is defined.

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## 1. Introduction

When we look through the history, it is possible to see that humankind has carried out studies and research about leadership from different perspectives and in different disciplines over the years. We can find studies focusing, among others, on leadership in psychology, sociology, military, politics and management. When we do a basic online scholar search with the keyword “leadership”, we can get around 2,000,000 related results. The number of studies about or around leadership clearly highlights the importance of the theme for the humankind. As mentioned above, there are multitudes of works about leadership, but yet there are still several virgin fields that none of the researchers or thinkers put his/her pen on the paper about. One of these fields is leadership styles used in complex art creating projects, specifically leadership styles of choreographers in contemporary dance performance projects. Furthermore, the question of whether or not they use one of the leadership styles already defined in leadership literature is also yet to be answered. One of the main curiosities that have led the researcher to and through this research is the leadership style focused on behavioural complexity of project teams. This research aims to bring an understanding of choreographers’ leadership styles used while leading creative personalities. Additionally, it intends to see whether choreographers use any of the defined leadership styles from leadership literature or if with this research we will be able to add one more leadership style to the literature. One of the dancers defines the environment in a dance creating project as “emotional kindergarten”. This cross-cultural PhD research project is aimed to understand the leadership styles of choreographers who are the leaders of these emotional kindergartens. Preliminary findings of the research from two case studies will be presented in this paper with the limitations of the research project.

## 2. Background and Case of Action

### 2.1. Leadership:

“The ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals” is one of many definitions of leadership (Robbins, 2005). The very question of how to do it better has been discussed through the history for ages, from Confucius to Plato, from Machiavelli to Lao Tzu (Collinson, 1998; Collinson, Plan & Wilkinson, 2000). However, as Bass underlines the word “leadership” did not appear until the first half of the nineteenth century whereas the English word “leader” has a history going back to the thirteenth century, which indicates the evolutionary change in the understanding of leadership through the years. He also mentions that leadership is a universal activity evident in the humankind as well as in animal species (Bass, 1990), and that might be the reason for leadership being one of the most examined social science phenomena. If we consider the vitality of leadership in effective organizational and societal functioning, this result should not be surprising to understand (Antonakis *et al* 2004).

### 2.2. Leadership in PM:

Literature of general management supports this thought by mentioning leadership among management success factors. Surprisingly in the project management field this thought has not found its own space yet. Although there are several researchers working on this area, it is not as prominent as it is in general management literature. There is only a small body of research that examines soft skills in project management (Kloppenborg & Opfer, 2002). Dulewich and Higgs, researchers from the project management field, highlight the importance of leadership in project management by naming it as one of the keys to a project success, for example project managers with outstanding leadership skills are more likely to lead their team to success (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). Some other works indicate the direct relationship between leadership style and emotional intelligence of the project leader, with the results of the projects. The research of Scott-Young & Samson (2004) has identified that people skills contribute to a project success more than technical issues. Similarly, Verma (1995) indicates that soft skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership, are vital parts of effective human resource management of projects and necessary to reach success. Likewise Slater touches upon the human factor of leadership from a different point of view. Arriving from the definition of leadership, he underlines the fact that leadership indicates

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