# DRIVING CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION: A PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO FOSTERING INNOVATION – INSIGHTS FROM THE SAINT-GOBAIN POLAND CASE STUDY

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**Purpose:** The aim of the article is to present the key stages of the organizational culture transformation process towards innovation within the Saint-Gobain Polska Capital Group, as well as to analyze the impact of these activities on the organization. The authors also strive to develop a theoretical framework for a model of organizational culture transformation in the context of implementing a culture of innovation.

**Design/methodology/approach:** How are the objectives achieved? Include the main method(s) used for the research. What is the approach to the topic and what is the theoretical or subject scope of the paper? The study was conducted using an inductive approach, employing a qualitative case study method. The Saint-Gobain Polska Group was selected as an example of a programmatically managed transformation. The analysis included participant observation, a review of approximately 250 strategic and project-related documents, as well as the direct involvement of one of the researchers in the transformation process. The article also draws on ethnography and a pragmatic research approach.

**Findings:** The research demonstrated that a programmatic approach to organizational culture transformation can effectively support the development of an innovation-oriented culture. Key stages of the transformation were identified, including: analysis of the organizational context, diagnosis of the initial state, establishment of vision and goals, employee education, creation of support and reward systems, progress monitoring, and iterative improvement. Additionally, a theoretical model of innovation culture transformation was developed.

**Research limitations/implications:** The main limitation of the study is the use of a single case study, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other organizations. The theoretical model requires further validation in different organizational contexts. The article highlights the need for future research on the programmatic approach to culture transformation in other industries and countries.

**Practical implications:** The research findings provide practical guidance for organizations planning to transform their culture towards innovation. These include, among others: the importance of leadership engagement, the integration of organizational values with transformation processes, the development of a network of innovation ambassadors, the involvement of customers in the innovation creation process, and the provision of consistent funding for innovation projects.

**Originality/value:** The article contributes new value to the literature by analyzing organizational culture transformation as a strategic program. It offers a comprehensive theoretical model of the transformation process, based on practical implementation in a large international organization.
**Keywords:** Innovation culture, cultural transformation, program management, organizational change.
**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

# 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic business environment, organizations are faced with the constant challenge of adapting to changing market conditions (Poi, Sorbarikor, 2022), technological advancements (Ibujés-Villacís, Franco-Crespo, 2022), and societal shifts (Gularso, Subekti, 2023). In such a context, an innovation culture has become a crucial factor determining the success of organizations (Hanifah et al., 2019; Madhou et al., 2022; Saihi et al., 2023).

Innovation culture refers to a set of values, norms, beliefs, and practices (Sugiarti et al., 2021; Lam et al., 2021) that facilitate the generation, development, and implementation of novel ideas (O'Hara et al., 2022; Seiler et al., 2022), as well as an organization's ability to embrace change and creatively solve problems (Trzeciak et al., 2022; Bansal et al., 2023) in an innovative manner. Establishing and maintaining an innovation culture necessitates the commitment of both leadership and all employees (Purwanto et al., 2023), along with the creation of suitable environmental and organizational structures (Azeem et al., 2021; Trzeciak, Banasik, 2022).

The transformation of organizational culture towards innovation offers numerous benefits for businesses. Firstly, it enables the organization to create and implement innovative products, services, and processes, thereby enhancing competitiveness in the market (Dani, Gandhi, 2022). As highlighted by Badir et al. (2020), innovation allows organizations to outperform competition, tap into new markets, and attract loyal customers. Secondly, an innovation culture fosters the creation of a work environment (Purwanto, 2020) where employees feel inspired, motivated, and engaged (Trzeciak, Banasik, 2022). Employees have greater freedom to explore their ideas, collaborate with others, and develop their skills (Obradović et al., 2021). This, in turn, leads to higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, and a greater ability for the organization to attract and retain talented employees (Srisathan et al., 2020; Cherian et al., 2021). Thirdly, an innovation culture is also associated with organizational flexibility and adaptability to changes (Hanelt et al., 2021). Organizations with an innovation culture are better prepared for unpredictable shifts in the business environment, such as the emergence of new technologies (Gligor et al., 2021), changing customer preferences (Kafetzopoulos, Katou,

2023), or growing competition (Poi, Sorbarikor, 2022). Through an innovative culture, an organization can swiftly respond to these changes, adjust, and leverage new opportunities.

Implementing an innovation culture is a comprehensive and demanding process. It requires engagement in changing employees' mindsets and attitudes (Srisathan et al., 2020; Cherian et al., 2021), as well as creating suitable structures (Park, et al., 2021), processes, and tools that support innovation (Trzeciak et al., 2022). There are various approaches and strategies that organizations can employ to implement an innovation culture (Nakagaki et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2019; Zabolotniaia et al., 2020), and the effectiveness of these actions can vary depending on the organizational context.

Furthermore, the current literature in this field primarily focuses on studying the analysis of the context of innovation culture in different economic sectors (Danks et al., 2017; Sipe, 2020; Sergeeva, Duryan, 2021), identifying factors influencing innovation culture (Hanifah et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2023), understanding the role of leadership in shaping this culture (Ramos-Garza, Ramos-Garza, 2019), relationships between organizational culture in general and innovation culture (Zheng et al., 2019; Lam et al., 2021), as well as the processes and stages related to building an innovation culture (Cândido et al., 2017; O'Hara et al., 2022). However, there is a lack of publication in the area of transformation conducted as a program (Gularso et al., 2023; Pineda-Celaya et al., 2023).

Considering the above, the purpose of this article is to present the key stages in the transformation process involving the implementation of an innovation culture within the Saint-Gobain Poland Capital Group, along with an analysis of the impact of these actions on the organization. The utilization of a global corporation as a case study in the article enables the presentation of practical examples and evidence of the effectiveness of the implemented stages of innovation culture deployment on a large scale. Furthermore, the authors aim to develop a framework for a general theoretical model for the transformation process in the context of implementing an innovation culture.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Theoretical foundations of the innovation culture implementation process

In the subject literature, numerous studies and publications regarding the implementation of an innovation culture within organizations can be found. Presenting the most important of these allows for the identification of key factors influencing the effective implementation and development of this culture.

As emphasized by Iranmanesh, et al. (2021), effective implementation of an innovation culture requires considering the organizational structure and management style. It is essential for the organization to have a flexible structure that enables the free flow of information and collaboration among different departments (Gong et al., 2020). Additionally, Peri (2020) highlights that reducing bureaucracy and hierarchy might be necessary to enhance decision-making speed and facilitate the free flow of ideas throughout the organization. An autocratic management style based on control and centralization can hinder creativity and innovation within the organization (Kashan et al., 2021). Instead, an open and supportive management style is needed, promoting employee participation, involving them in decision-making processes, and granting them the freedom to experiment and introduce innovations (AlMazrouei, 2023). Leaders should also demonstrate receptiveness to new ideas, support risk-taking, and encourage learning from failures. Creating open communication channels and platforms where employees can exchange ideas and opinions is crucial for fostering an innovative culture (Nugroho, 2023; Almerri, 2023).

Some publications also emphasize the significance of organizational learning (Ghasemzadeh et al., 2019; Haile, Tüzüner, 2022) and adaptive capabilities (Seiler et al., 2022; Ruhl, Lopez, 2023). Organizations that can swiftly absorb knowledge, analyze performance outcomes, and implement necessary changes are more inclined to foster innovation (Trzeciak et al., 2022). Developing these capacities requires conscious knowledge management, investment in employee development, and continuous process refinement (Zhao et al., 2021; Trzeciak et al., 2022b).

Research conducted in various organizational contexts (Hanifah et al., 2019; Sipe, 2020; Sergeeva, Duryan, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023) underscores the pivotal role of leaders in promoting an innovation culture. Leaders who provide support, inspire, and engage employees cultivate an atmosphere conducive to embracing new ideas and overcoming innovation barriers (Menon et al., 2023). Their example, support, and employee engagement have a substantial impact on fostering an open and innovative work environment (Ramos-Garza, Ramos-Garza, 2019).

An essential aspect of an innovation culture is also the encouragement of employee creativity (Danish et al., 2019; Nasifoglu Elidemir et al., 2020). Employees must be incentivized to generate new ideas and seek unconventional solutions (Lam et al., 2021). As highlighted by Afsar and Umrani (2020), establishing an environment where innovative thinking is rewarded and appreciated can boost motivation to contribute effort to innovative processes. Organizations should also invest in developing creative skills by offering training, workshops, and other tools that help employees nurture their innovative potential (Mikołajczyk, 2022).

Encouraging experimentation and risk-taking is one of the key elements in implementing an innovation culture (Giaccone, Magnusson, 2022; Graciano et al., 2022). Organizations that embrace the possibility of making mistakes as a natural part of the innovation process create an atmosphere in which employees feel free and ready to explore new ideas. Openness to

diverse perspectives and ideas is also crucial (Ramos-Garza, Ramos-Garza, 2019), as cultural and intellectual diversity within an organization can led to creative synergies and innovative solutions.

Other studies focus on the significance of creating appropriate mechanisms and processes within the organization (Gomes et al., 2020; Oksanych, 2022). Open communication channels, idea exchange platforms, and support for creative thinking and experimentation are essential for the development of an innovative culture (Nugroho, 2023; Almerri, 2023). Introducing such mechanisms can encourage employees to actively participate in innovative processes and unleash their creativity (AlMazrouei, 2023).

An essential aspect of implementing an innovation culture is also building suitable reward and motivation systems (Shaikh, O'Connor, 2020; Trzeciak, Banasik, 2022). Research indicates that rewarding innovation, both financially and non-monetarily, can significantly increase employee engagement in innovative endeavors and encourage them to explore new solutions.

### 2.2. Program management vs. transformation process

A literature review highlights that implementing an innovation culture within organizations is a multidimensional process that requires considering both cultural and structural aspects. A program is a group of interrelated projects (Frederiksen et al., 2021) that share a common pool of resources (Martinsuo, Hoverfält, 2018), work in a coordinated manner to achieve benefits (Fernandes, O'Sullivan, 2021), and are managed by a program organization to achieve one or a set of strategic objectives (Trzeciak, 2023).

Considering the above, the implementation of an innovation culture should be conducted as a program of strategic initiatives rather than a singular project. Firstly, such a transformation is not a one-time task (Hoback, 2018). It is a long-term process that requires systematic development and maintenance (Di Vaio et al., 2021). Secondly, implementing an innovation culture necessitates the involvement of numerous disciplines and departments within an organization (Martins et al., 2018). This primarily calls for coordinating different actions and engaging appropriate resources at various organizational levels. Thirdly, this kind of transformation demands the long-term commitment and support of the board of directors and executive management (Lang et al., 2018). This is also due to the magnitude of changes taking place within the organization. Effective implementation of an innovation culture should encompass its integration across all levels of the organizational structure (Chatzoglou, Chatzoudes, 2017). Fourthly, introducing an innovation culture requires time for the change to become widespread and enduring (Maier et al., 2018). Furthermore, this aspect also considers the activation of various reward and recognition mechanisms that sustain engagement and motivation within the organization (Shaikh, O'Connor, 2020). The conclusion is that implementing an innovation culture as a program of strategic initiatives enables a holistic approach that accounts for various organizational facets. This enhances the likelihood of success in the long-term transformation of organizational culture towards greater innovation.

# 3. Material and methods

The conclusions drawn from the conducted literature review underscore the need for conducting research in the area of cultural transformation towards innovation, especially when managed as a program. With this defined knowledge gap in mind, the article pursues the following objectives: presenting the key stages in the transformation process encompassing the implementation of an innovation culture within the Saint-Gobain Poland capital group and analyzing the impact of these actions on the organization.

*RQ1. What are the key stages in the process of cultural transformation towards innovation?*

*RQ2. What are the strengths and barriers encountered in the process of cultural transformation towards innovation?*

*RQ3. What implications do research findings provide for the theory and practice of program management?*

Therefore, due to the above, and the limited number of publications on the topic of cultural transformation managed as a program, an inductive approach was adopted, focusing on qualitative research involving a single case study. As emphasized by Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam (2018), designing a case study is particularly useful when a researcher develops a theoretical approach in a specific context. Additionally, a pragmatic approach (Dźwigoł, Trzeciak, 2023) and ethnography were utilized to objectively describe the reality underlying the research problem, characterized by the involvement of one of the researchers throughout the analyzed process. The detailed research process is presented in Figure 1.
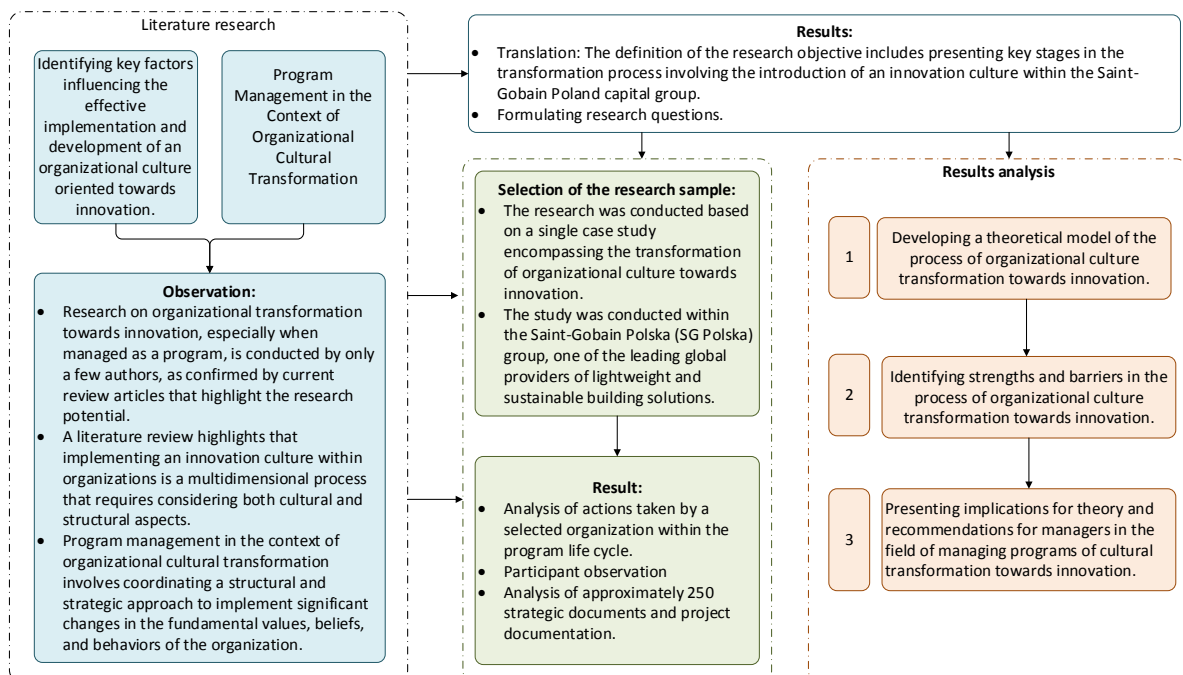


**Figure 1.** The research process.

Source: own work.

A case study encompasses a multi-faceted representation of the current situation within a specific organization (Abbate et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). It is treated as an individual case, allowing for the collection of all necessary information to facilitate in-depth analysis, formulation of options, decision-making, and justification thereof. It is worth noting that the objectives of single-case studies are completely different from those of entire populations or the samples they represent (Robinson, 2014). This approach to selecting the subject of study is referred to as purposive selection or theoretical case selection, forming the entire intellectual structure, model, and generalization proposals (Gurca et al., 2021).

This approach led to the exploration and interpretation of the chosen case study within the Saint-Gobain Poland (SG Poland) group, one of the leading global providers of lightweight and sustainable building solutions. The choice of the organization was based on several criteria. Firstly, the corporation recognized the need for adaptation to the changing business environment and initiated a transformation process aimed at creating an innovative culture at all levels of the organization. Secondly, Saint-Gobain in Poland is a corporation employing around 7000 people across 24 production facilities, underscoring the scale of implementation. Thirdly, the group's personnel policy is based on the open innovation model, which incorporates the 4 priorities of the OPEN strategy: career mobility, team diversity, employee engagement, and talent development. Lastly, the transformation of culture towards innovation was initiated at the global level, and similar transformational processes are being launched in all countries where the Saint-Gobain group is present (SG).

The collection and generalization of data relied on an in-depth analysis of actions taken by the selected organization within the program lifecycle. The researchers' activities included participant observation and the analysis of approximately 250 strategic documents and project documentation. Additionally, one of the researchers is employed by the studied enterprise and is directly involved in the creation and promotion of the culture of innovation across the entire capital group. Undertaking these actions provided a comprehensive view of transformational activities both at the operational and strategic levels.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. The identification phase in transformation process

The transformation program within the Saint-Gobain in Poland Group is a typical vision-oriented initiative. This means that it was initiated by the management in a "top-down" approach and focuses on a new business model, capitalizing on a significant emerging business opportunity. Accordingly, the primary transformation initiative undertaken by SG Poland was the adoption of the "Grow & Impact" strategy in 2021.

At the core of this strategy lies a well-established local business model that facilitated a profound shift in the organizational culture. The strategy prioritizes team accountability, operational results, and customer satisfaction as its central values. The new strategic plan "Grow & Impact" comprises six priority areas of action, through which Saint-Gobain aims to position itself in rapidly growing markets. These priorities revolve around providing solutions for sustainable development and efficiency to accelerate growth. Furthermore, SG seeks to achieve this growth through customer-centric innovations and harnessing the potential of data. Simultaneously, the company places a strong emphasis on extended social and environmental business responsibility (ESG) in decision-making and actions. Additionally, as part of the "Grow & Impact" strategic plan, the conglomerate supports teams responsible for these challenges, reinforcing a culture based on TEC (Trust & Empowerment & Collaboration).

In the context of the previous traditional approach, generating new ideas primarily relied on R&D teams, with their potential validation occurring in the final stages of the process. This often resulted in ideas that did not align with customer expectations. The adoption of the "Grow & Impact" strategy initiated the implementation of a learning loop, reducing risks, allowing multiple validation checkpoints, iterative cycles, gradual budget increments upon assumption approval, and validation through numerous experiments. Throughout the entire process, the customer is engaged from the inception of the innovation idea, a crucial factor in creating products and services tailored to their needs.

These actions formed the basis for the decision to initiate the transformation program, with the aim of transitioning the organizational culture into an innovative one. The pillars of this program include:

- Creating an innovation-enabling environment by engaging various individuals at different organizational levels who exhibit a positive attitude and willingness to transition towards a more innovative culture.
- Establishing a shared innovation language and understanding of innovation-related concepts to provide a common communication foundation for all participants.
- Reinforcing a customer-centric and value-based organizational culture to foster the creation of innovative solutions.

In this way, the program creates the conditions required to institutionalize innovation and align organizational practices with evolving environmental and customer needs.

## 4.2. The actions in the transformation process on global level

As a result of the adopted vision and transformation program goals, a program team was established at the global level, consisting of 17 individuals (Table 1). The primary objective of this team was not only to prepare the process but also to create a communication network for local teams in national branches, promoting an innovative culture.

**Table 1.**
*Roles and responsibilities in the global team.*

| Role in the process | Responsibility |
|---|---|
| Chief Innovation Officer | Provides a strategic vision and direction for the entire culture transformation process. Supervises the entire initiative, makes strategic decisions, and provides support from the highest level. |
| VP of Innovation Development | Provides a strategic vision and direction for the entire culture transformation process. |
| Innovation Development Manager (4 people) | Responsible for creating and maintaining the innovative community. Focuses on cultural aspects of the transformation process. Responsible for introducing new values and attitudes that promote innovation and encourages leaders to reinforce the culture of innovation. |
| Innovation Community Manager | Responsible for creating and maintaining the innovative community. |
| Leadership and Culture Manager | Focuses on the cultural aspects of the transformation process. Responsible for introducing new values and attitudes that promote innovation and encourages leaders to strengthen the culture of innovation. |
| HPS Communication Specialist | Ensures effective communication regarding the transformation and innovation process, both internally and externally within the organization. |
| Cross-Business Expertise & Support | Provides knowledge and support from various areas of operation to ensure that innovations are interdisciplinary and bring value to different fields. |
| Technology Manager | Takes care of the technological aspects of innovation, ensuring that tools and technologies are properly utilized to support innovative projects. |
| Gypsum Process Innovation Director | Responsible for the development of innovations related to production processes. |
| Sustainability Product Stewardship | Focuses on ensuring that innovations are aligned with the principles of sustainable development and positively impact aspects of sustainable business. |
| Adj. R&D Director | Supports innovation by directing research and development activities, ensuring that new ideas are thoroughly tested and developed. |
| Head of Innovation Management and Exploratory R&D | Supervises the entire innovation management process and exploratory research, contributing to achieving coherence and effectiveness in actions. |
| Director Customer Experience | Engages in supporting and maintaining a central customer focus in innovation design according to adopted learning loops. |
| Product Sustainability Manager | Takes care of aspects of sustainable product development. |
| Head of Digital Transformation Office | Coordinates the digital transformation process, impacting the implementation of modern technologies and the approach to innovation. |

Source: own work.

According to the authors, the assessment of these roles in terms of cultural transformation is positive, as each of them brings unique competencies, knowledge, and perspectives to the process. Their diverse skills, ranging from specialized to managerial, will provide comprehensive support for creating and embedding an innovative culture in the organization.

Subsequently, actions related to the development of the innovative project management process were undertaken, which currently consists of three key stages: Exploration, Development, and Concept/Development/Implementation. Each stage has defined goals and activities that lead to the effective creation of innovative solutions (Table 2).

**Table 2.**
*Stages of the process of innovative projects*

| The process step | | Purpose of the process | Actions taken in the process |
|---|---|---|---|
| Exploration | | Development of a potential source of ideas and concepts | Exploration of needs of target customer segments. Identification of strategic opportunities. Analysis of trends, technological breakthroughs, and social initiatives. Analysis of current and future regulations. Assessment of performance of sustainable competitive solutions. Assessment of performance and claims of competitor products. |
| Scoping | | Defining the project | Defining a multidisciplinary team to management of the project. Establishing a shared mission and goal for the team. Deeper analysis of customer needs. Designing a solution that meets these needs. Checking the alignment of the solution with the business model. |
| Conception / Development / Launch | Conception | Understanding precise customer needs and developing a solution project | Clarifying and understanding precise customer needs. Designing a solution that meets these needs. Verifying if the business model aligns with the developed solution. |
| | Development | Development, design, and optimization of the project | Confirming customer needs based on gathered data. Optimizing and scaling the developed solution. Validating the business model for feasibility. |
| | Launch | Introducing to the market | Full implementation of the solution at once. Staged implementation, where the solution is introduced gradually. |

Source: own work.

The above process allows innovative projects at SG to operate in learning loops consisting of a minimum of three stages. Each stage is guided by a checklist that includes mandatory and optional elements. This checklist is tailored to the project's nature and guides the transition to the next phase. Furthermore, this process is structurally organized, starting from exploring customer needs and market possibilities, through stages of defining and developing the solution, to its market introduction. An important aspect of the process is the consideration of sustainable development and adapting the checklist to the project's specifics, which aids in effectively managing the innovative project. As a result of the transformation team's efforts and the adopted process in 2023, a standard for managing innovative projects was created and is applicable across the entire group. This standard functions as a set of tools aligned with the Grow & Impact strategy, facilitating effective management and implementation of innovations within the group.

To support the development of innovation within the SG group, a comprehensive communication network was established at the central level. Within this network, individuals from different countries share information and knowledge, aiding in moderating and facilitating meetings in virtually every company worldwide. Additionally, communication channels were

implemented using the Yammer platform, enabling communication with employees in individual countries. In support of the initiative to promote the culture of innovation, a dedicated communication channel was established within the Teams platform. In this channel, members can share information about interesting innovations in Poland and around the world, as well as other relevant information for the community. This dedicated channel becomes a space for exchanging knowledge and inspiration in the context of developing an innovative culture within the organization.

In the subsequent global-scale initiative, the focus was on creating a cohesive central training program named "Innovation Catalyst." This program was structured to provide participants with comprehensive knowledge and skills crucial for developing an innovative culture. The program encompassed various training modules, including:

- Innovative Thinking: In this module, participants were provided with tools and techniques to enable creative and innovative thinking. Understanding the processes of generating ideas and ways to identify unconventional solutions was crucial for this training module.
- Innovative Tools: This module focused on acquainting participants with practical tools and methods that support the process of creating and developing innovative projects. These were concrete techniques that could be applied in practice.
- Innovator Handbook: The aim of this module was to familiarize participants with the entire process of managing innovative projects within the developed standard.
- Mindfulness: This module centered around mindfulness techniques that can aid in a more efficient and creative approach to work.
- Facilitation Methods: The final module concentrated on the art of effective meeting facilitation. Participants acquired skills in moderating innovative sessions, encouraging active participation, and stimulating creative dialogue.

The aim of the "Innovation Catalyst" program was to train participants from various countries in building an innovative culture in their respective regions. By combining these five modules, the program aimed to provide specific skills and inspiration that would encourage participants to take on creative challenges and introduce innovation in their areas of activity.

### 4.3. The actions in the transformation process on local level in Poland

For the purpose of implementing the program at the local level (SG Poland), a team consisting of 7 individuals was established (Table 3). Similar to the global level, in this case as well, the selection of the organizational culture transformation program team appears thoughtful and aligned with the objectives of promoting innovation. The team comprises individuals holding various key roles within the company, which could contribute to a holistic approach to driving innovation.

**Table 3.**
*Roles and responsibilities in the local team (SG Poland)*

| Role in the process | Responsibility |
|---|---|
| CEO of Saint-Gobain Poland & Ukraine | Supervises the entire initiative, makes strategic decisions, and provides support from the highest level. |
| HR Director Poland & Ukraine | Supervises the entire initiative, makes strategic decisions, and provides support from the highest level. |
| Brand, Communication & Digitalization Director Poland | Responsible for establishing and maintaining the community around the "Innovation Cube" portal, as well as supervising the work of the team responsible for program management at the Poland level. |
| IT & Digital Director | Responsible for the proper functioning and operation of the "Innovation Cube" portal. |
| Innovation Development Manager | Responsible for creating and maintaining the innovative community. Focuses on cultural aspects of the transformation process. Responsible for introducing new values and attitudes that promote innovation and encourages leaders to reinforce the culture of innovation. |
| People & Culture Development Manager | Responsible for the development of individuals involved in handling the ideas submitted to the "Innovation Cube" portal. |
| Brand & Communication Manager | Responsible for internal and external communication within the program. |

Source: own work.

In 2021, after adopting the Grow & Impact strategy and launching the transformation program as part of the central training program, training began for individuals who would serve as innovation catalysts in Poland. Currently, five individuals have been trained, tasked with supporting teams in achieving innovative products and services in an organized manner, utilizing dedicated tools, and overseeing the implementation of innovative projects. Additionally, one of these individuals was designated to create a community of promoters of innovation culture within SG Group Poland at a central level. The next two individuals support a separate business initiative called ImpactLab, which involves seeking new collaboration opportunities with customers within SG Glass. Lastly, the remaining individual will be engaged in the newly established organization, SG Solutions, which collaborates with clients in the market by offering them comprehensive solutions based on a full range of products available within the entire group, in an optimal configuration.

Simultaneously, work commenced on defining and refining a portfolio of projects aimed at achieving globally set goals. For each of these projects, a separate management team was assigned, possessing the appropriate competencies in the specified area.

### 4.3.1. Project 1: "Innovation Cube" – Supporting innovation and transformation in Saint-Gobain Poland

The "Innovation Cube" project is an initiative that constitutes a pivotal element of organizational transformation within SG Poland. Its goal is to create a dynamic SharePoint platform that enables every employee to contribute their ideas for small or medium-sized projects within the realms of digital and analog transformation. This innovative platform's purpose is not only to gather ideas but also to transform them into concrete projects, thereby fostering a culture of innovation and facilitating the formation of interdisciplinary teams. Collaborators known as "Innovators", or "Digital Transformers" play a crucial role as the first

point of contact for individuals with ideas. Leveraging their skills and knowledge, they assist in translating abstract concepts into project frameworks using the 3/3/3 methodology.

The "Innovation Cube" project also serves as a space for sharing knowledge, experience, and inspiration. It is a place where employees can draw knowledge from various fields, creating a dynamic community that supports innovation. Launched in November 2021, the portal enables the creation of constructive collaboration among employees from diverse fields and positions, fostering the development of innovative and interdisciplinary projects. The platform management team consists of individuals representing different companies within the Group. This diversity ensures ongoing platform development, considering a range of needs and perspectives. Team members communicate through a dedicated channel in Microsoft Teams and hold regular monthly meetings to discuss progress and challenges.

When assessing this project in the context of transformation, "Innovation Cube" plays a pivotal role in striving to create an organizational environment where innovation is valued and supported at various levels. By streamlining the process of idea submission, transformation, and realization, the platform fosters an active culture of innovation and lays a strong foundation for future transformational initiatives within Saint-Gobain Group.

### 4.3.2. Project 2: "Your Idea has Power!" – Supporting innovative projects and competition

The "Your Idea has Power!" project is an initiative developed after the introduction of the "Innovation Cube" platform. Its main goal is to systematize the process of launching innovative projects by utilizing standard procedures and dedicated tools. This project is a key element in fostering an innovative culture and supporting active transformation within the Group.

The project aims to provide a structured and organized path for implementing innovative projects. The submission procedure, based on the 3/3/3 methodology, ensures quick and effective decision-making regarding project implementation. At the outset, the decision to proceed with a project is made within 3 days, enabling a rapid response to new ideas. The subsequent 3 weeks allow for building the appropriate team and finding a sponsor, followed by 3 months for prototyping. An essential aspect is the guaranteed budget for intriguing projects, facilitating their realization. This budget is internally covered from areas related to the submitted ideas for innovative projects. Each company within the group has been obligated to allocate financial resources for project implementation under this initiative, including them in their annual financial plans.

The project's results are evident in the number of submitted and realized ideas (Figure 2). In 2021, 22 ideas were registered, with one being executed, and an additional 10 in 2022. In 2022, 29 submissions were received, of which 10 projects were completed. In total, over this two-year period, 21 projects were successfully finalized, underscoring the effectiveness and intensity of project actions in realizing innovative concepts. The remaining projects were either suspended or transitioned to the standard business project path. This transition was a consequence of exceeding the budget limits defined by the adopted procedure. These projects were implemented at the central level using additional funds.
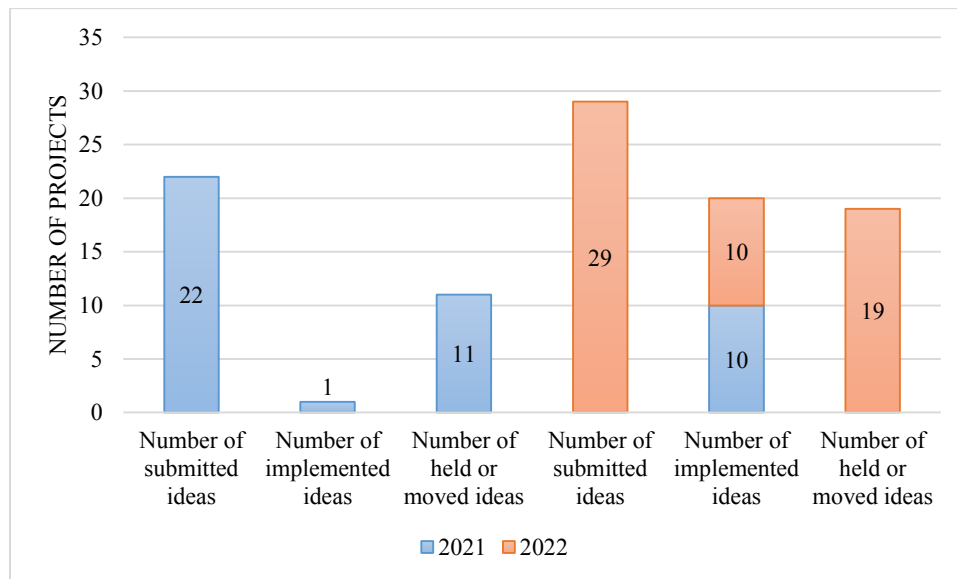
**Figure 2.** Number of submitted and executed innovative projects within the program.
Source: own work.

As part of this project, an additional initiative was undertaken, involving the preparation and organization of an internal competition in SG Poland called "Your Idea has Power!" This is an annual competition in which the best idea and its execution through the Innovation Cube platform are evaluated. In 2022, 15 ideas were qualified for the final.

The project achieves transformative goals by creating structures and processes that support the development of an innovation culture and the execution of projects with transformational potential. Providing financial resources from dedicated company budgets and organizing the competition further enhances employee engagement and fosters an atmosphere where innovation is valued and supported.

### 4.3.3. Project 3. "Innovation Culture Promoters Community"

The "Innovation Culture Promoters Community" project was launched in 2021 and is still ongoing. Its goal is to create an innovation-friendly environment by engaging employees at various levels of the organization in promoting an innovation culture. Currently, the promoter network consists of around 60 individuals who function as innovation ambassadors in their respective areas. Beyond their regular responsibilities, they engage in spreading innovative values and interact with other employees, sharing ideas for improvement and enhancement of work processes.

The initial group of promoters was selected through a survey distributed among employees, inquiring about their interest in participating in the program. Additional members joined the community upon learning about regular meetings, during which innovations were discussed, inspiring projects were presented, and experiences with external companies were exchanged.

The project envisions organizing regular meetings to discuss innovations, highlight interesting projects, and share experiences from other firms. The promoter group is expanded through access to additional training, both delivered by external experts and internal trainers from diverse fields.

Moreover, tools such as the HPS Innovation Playbook and MS Teams, along with regular newsletters and meetings, have been employed to ensure effective communication channels for the Innovation Promoters community. The Innovation Development Manager also plays a crucial role, supporting and nurturing this community's growth by allowing new members to join at any time. Members of the promoter community actively promote innovation by engaging in conversations with other employees about opportunities for improvement and facilitating work through innovative approaches.

The project contributes to creating an inspiring environment where experience and knowledge are shared. The overall assessment of the project is positive as it serves as a significant tool in supporting the organization's transformation towards a more innovative culture. Establishing a promoter network and organizing dedicated training positively impacts employee engagement in the innovation process. The project's flexibility in participation, allowing individuals to join, suspend, or withdraw their involvement, underscores its openness and adaptability to employees' individual preferences. These efforts contribute to the effective realization of the project's goal, which focuses on building a positive innovation ecosystem within the organization.

### 4.3.4. Other transformation initiatives

In addition to the main projects, several smaller yet equally significant initiatives have been launched to strengthen the customer-oriented organizational culture based on values, fostering the creation of innovative solutions.

Project: "Innovations Award" is an initiative involving participation in the biennial global competition of the same name, organized by the company's headquarters located in Paris. The aim of this competition is to identify and recognize the most innovative projects created within the Group's subsidiaries. The competition encompasses several categories, within which awards are given for innovations developed over the past two years. An international jury selects the best innovations, promoting knowledge exchange and inspiration among various subsidiaries within the conglomerate.

Project: "SG through the Employee's Eyes" focuses on organizing monthly, recurring webinars led by one of the culture of innovation promoters. During these sessions, an employee discusses their work and innovations in their field of activity. This project enables the sharing of knowledge and expertise of internal experts, contributing to the development of an innovation culture within the organization. The webinars serve as a platform to inspire employees and encourage them to undertake innovative actions.

Project: "Catalog of Innovation" is an internal library that gathers information about innovative products and services on a global scale, created by companies within the conglomerate. The catalog currently contains 280 innovations divided into 11 categories related to offered products and services. This project provides employees access to knowledge about innovations worldwide, supporting knowledge transfer and aiding the development of innovative solutions within the conglomerate's subsidiaries.

Project: "SG's Space in the Copernican Revolution Employee" was created to highlight innovations developed by the group. The projects within this space aim to exchange knowledge and experiences with different communities and support sustainable development, aligning with the conglomerate's overarching goal: "Making the world a better home".

## 5.  Discussion

In the following discussion, based on the conducted analysis, a proposal for a general theoretical model of cultural transformation towards innovation is presented, and answers to the research questions are provided.

### 5.1.  Key stages of organizational culture transformation towards innovation

To better illustrate the dynamics of cultural change, a theoretical model of the organizational culture transformation process towards innovation has been developed. The model presents the subsequent stages of transformation, highlighting their interdependence and key factors influencing the effectiveness of the process.
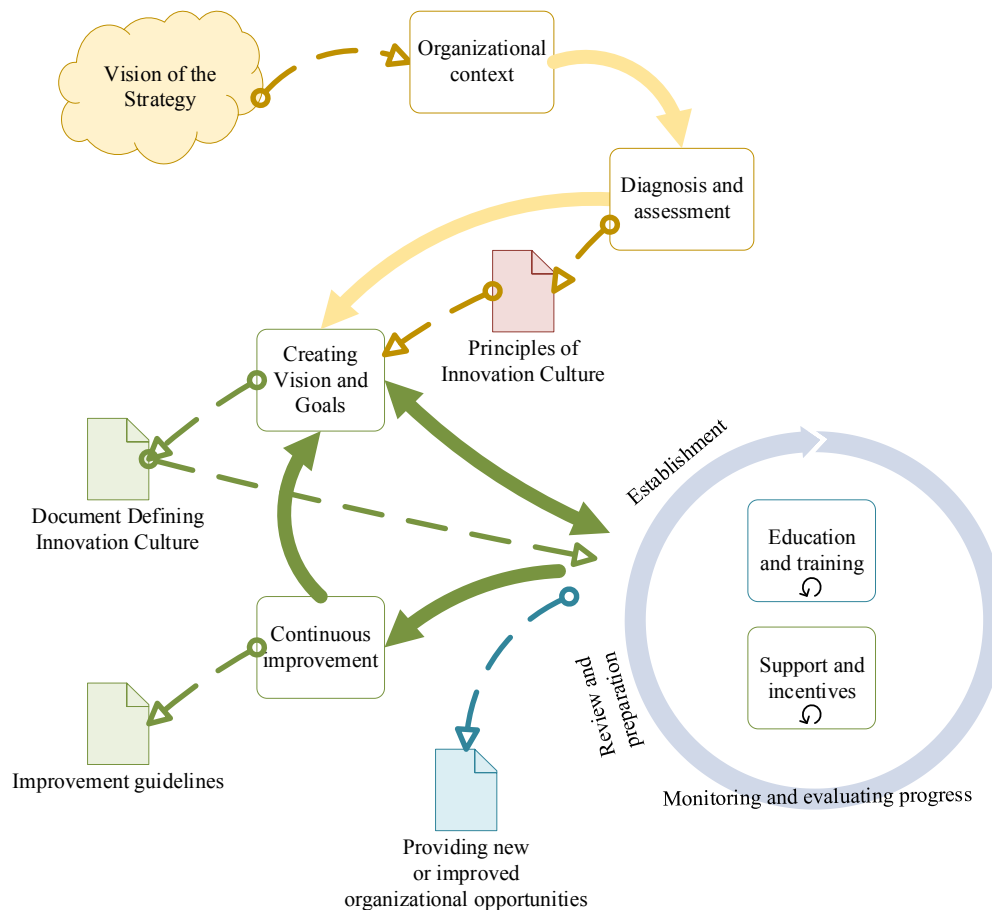
**Figure 3.** Theoretical model of the process of organizational culture transformation towards innovation. Source: own work.

The first stage of the model is the analysis of the organizational context. It is influenced by factors such as organizational structure, the current culture within the organization (Trzeciak, Banasik, 2022), leadership style (Purwanto et al., 2023), decision-making processes, personnel policies (Danish et al., 2019), and the external environment. Analyzing these factors allows for an understanding of the current framework and context in which the culture of innovation will be implemented. The transformation program in the Saint-Gobain Poland group was directed by a vision, established by the management, focusing on a new business model and utilizing existing business opportunities.

The next step involves conducting a diagnosis and assessment of the organization's current state in terms of innovation. This may involve analyzing organizational culture (Trzeciak et al., 2022s), structures and processes (Park et al., 2021), communication (Nugroho, 2023), employee engagement levels (Shaikh, O'Connor, 2020), and the availability of innovative resources (Lang et al., 2018). Diagnosis helps identify areas for improvement and set action priorities. Prior to embarking on the transformation, SG assessed its existing business model, and the way ideas were generated and implemented. The previous approach, based on R&D work and late idea validation, was revised in favor of a learning loop where the customer is engaged from the very beginning.

Implementing a culture of innovation requires a clear vision and defining organizational goals. In this step, a vision is defined that promotes innovation values (Lam et al., 2021) and outlines expected outcomes (Dani, Gandhi, 2022). Goals should be measurable, realistic, and aligned with the organization's mission. The goals of the program in the SG group include creating an innovation-friendly environment, introducing a shared innovation language, strengthening a customer-centric culture, and utilizing the full potential of data.

Implementing an innovative culture requires educating and training employees at various levels of the organization (Mikołajczyk, 2022). Training programs can cover creativity, problem-solving, innovation design, risk management, and team collaboration. Training should provide the tools and skills needed for generating and implementing innovative ideas (Almerri, 2023). For example, at the global level, the analyzed conglomerate introduced the "Innovation Catalyst" training program, encompassing modules related to innovative thinking, innovative tools, facilitation methods, and mindfulness. The training aims to provide participants with knowledge and skills to support the development of an innovation culture.

Organizations should provide support and incentives for employees engaging in innovative activities. This may include access to resources such as innovation budgets (Trzeciak et al., 2022s), experimental space (AlMazrouei, 2023), technological support (Haile, Tüzüner, 2022), and appropriate recognition and rewards for innovative achievements (Ramos-Garza, Ramos-Garza, 2019). Creating an organizational climate that promotes innovation and rewards risk-taking is crucial in this context. For example, SG Poland established a community of innovation promoters tasked with promoting innovative values and supporting innovation development within the organization. Additionally, the group organizes innovation contests and allocates a budget for implementing innovative projects, encouraging employees to actively participate in the entire process.

Monitoring and evaluating progress in implementing the culture of innovation is essential. This may involve tracking innovation indicators such as the number of submitted ideas, their implementation rate, and assessing changes in behaviors and organizational culture. Monitoring allows for identifying successes, challenges, and improvement opportunities. The "Innovation Cube" and "Your Idea Has Power!" projects provide the structure and processes for implementing innovative projects and monitoring their progress. The innovation promoter community regularly participates in meetings, sharing knowledge and experience.

Implementing a culture of innovation is an ongoing process that requires continuous improvement (Zhao et al., 2021). Organizations should respond to monitoring results, learn from their experiences, and adjust their actions (Seiler et al., 2022). Through an iterative approach, organizations can refine their approaches, processes, and innovative practices. SG Poland analyzes project results, measures effectiveness, responds to challenges, and adjusts its approach to innovation creation and management.

### 5.2. Strengths and Barriers in the Process of Transforming Organizational Culture towards Innovation

The implementation of an innovation-oriented culture has numerous benefits, such as increased employee engagement, the creation of innovative solutions, and a positive company image. However, there are several significant challenges, such as the need to avoid overreliance on specific individuals, ensuring an adequate number of idea implementers, and consistently maintaining engagement and motivation over the long term. Care for a flexible budget, internal communication, and support from leadership are crucial for achieving success in establishing an innovative culture within the organization. Below, we present the key strengths and barriers that arise in the process of implementing an innovation-oriented culture within SG Poland Group.

Key strengths of implementing an innovation-oriented culture:

− Dedicated personnel for idea management in each company: The presence of dedicated individuals in each company responsible for receiving, evaluating, and supporting idea implementation fosters effective management of the innovation process at the local level.

− Budget allocation guarantee for implementing good ideas: Providing a budget for the implementation of valuable ideas encourages employees to submit their innovative concepts, knowing that resources are available for their execution.

− Establishment of budget reserves at the company level: Having budget reserves for innovation at the company level allows flexible funding for innovative projects without competing for resources from the main budget.

− Engagement of group leadership and proper decision-making authority: Active involvement of group leadership in the innovation process and their support in key decision-making contributes to swift and effective innovation implementation.

− Open communication within the organization: Creating an open space for communication, idea exchange, and experience sharing among employees can foster the emergence of new innovative solutions.

− Building company trust through employee-generated innovation implementation: Implementing employee-generated ideas can enhance their sense of value and engagement in the company's development.

− Creating a positive image of SG as an innovative employer: Actively promoting innovation and enabling employee influence on the company's development can contribute to a positive perception of the company as an attractive employer.

− Opportunity to pass complex initiatives to the business: Allowing the transfer of complex yet promising initiatives to the business outside the innovation program can facilitate the development of projects that require larger resources.

Barriers to implementing an innovation- oriented culture:

- Dependency on individuals: Relying solely on individuals for the innovation process can introduce uncertainty and risk, especially if key innovation promoters leave the company.
- Relatively few catalysts of innovation compared to the total number of employees: If the number of people responsible for handling ideas is small, it can lead to delays in processing and evaluating submissions.
- Need for continuous engagement of promoters: Maintaining consistent engagement of innovation promoters can be challenging, particularly for employees with multiple responsibilities.
- Ensuring a continuous flow of ideas: Requiring a constant stream of ideas can be difficult to sustain over the long term, especially if motivation or suitable incentive mechanisms are lacking.
- Lack of PgMO for program management support and organizational dispersion: The absence of a Program Management Office (PgMO) can hinder program-level coordination, and organizational dispersion can lead to decreased efficiency.
- Insufficient access to appropriate financial resources: A lack of adequate funding can limit the implementation of innovations despite promising ideas.
- Time limitations: Demanding quick results can lead to hasty decisions and the implementation of inadequately thought-out innovations.
- Conflicts between projects: Simultaneous execution of multiple innovation projects can lead to conflicts related to resources and priorities.
- Cultural resistance: If employees are not accustomed to an innovation culture, it may take time and effort to change their mindset and approach to work.
- Excessive bureaucracy and formalism in the process: Too many procedures and formalities can discourage employees from participating in the innovation process.

The analysis reveals that while the SG Poland Group benefits from strong enablers of innovation, overcoming persistent barriers is essential to ensuring the durability and scalability of the cultural transformation process.

### 5.3. Strengths and Barriers in the Process of Transforming Organizational Culture towards Innovation.

The conclusions drawn from the conducted case study analysis and the ensuing discussion have a significant impact on both the theoretical and practical domains. The theoretical aspect primarily centers on two key elements.

Firstly, it addresses the identified knowledge gap concerning cultural transformation managed as a program. The analysis results revealed that the transformation program at SG Poland adopted a typical approach, driven by a vision and initiated top-down by the

management, primarily focusing on a new business model. A substantial component of this transformation was the "Grow & Impact" strategy, grounded in customer-centric values, achieved operational results, and sustainable development. The transformation process is consistently conducted on both the global and local levels, with the undertaken actions centered around establishing an innovation-friendly environment, promoting a shared innovation-related vocabulary, and reinforcing an organizational culture built on values and active employee engagement.

Secondly, derived from the case study analysis, the theoretical model offers a comprehensive framework that organizations can utilize to guide the transformation of their culture towards innovation-fostering. Each of the outlined stages provides distinct tools and methods that organizations can tailor to their specific needs. Through consistent implementation of this model, organizations can effectively achieve their intended goals related to promoting innovation.

The introduced actions, processes, and initiatives have contributed to the creation of a more innovative organizational culture and supported the transformation at SG Poland. Consequently, this study provides practical implications in the form of valuable insights for other organizations pursuing similar transformation processes based on innovation:

- Programs of such significance and scale require support and commitment from top-level management. Decisions and actions taken must align with the company's vision and strategy.
- Ensuring that company values such as responsibility, trust, and collaboration are integrated with transformation processes will be crucial in establishing a lasting foundation for innovation.
- Engaging customers in the early stages of ideation for innovations helps avoid designing solutions that do not meet their expectations.
- A validation and iteration-based approach enables swift adaptation of projects to evolve market needs and customer demands.
- Establishing a network of innovation ambassadors to support and promote the culture of innovation within the organization is important. Employees involved in innovation programs can serve as examples and inspiration for others.
- Establishing metrics and success indicators for the transformation program is essential. Regularly monitoring progress and outcomes ensures that the program yields the desired results.
- Creating spaces for sharing knowledge and experiences across different departments and subsidiaries within the group accelerates the pace of innovation and avoids redundancy.
- Ensuring continued access to financial resources for innovative projects is crucial. Financial support is essential for project realization, and its consistent availability motivates employees to submit ideas.

– The transformation process and building an innovative culture are long-term endeavors. Persistent commitment and a drive for improvement are key to achieving sustainable outcomes.

In general, sustaining and advancing the transformation program requires a cohesive approach, engagement from the entire organization, and a flexible approach to creating and managing innovative projects. Upholding an innovative culture demands both the courage to take risks and a continuous commitment to refinement and adaptation in response to the evolving business landscape.

## 6. Conclusions

The aim of the article was to present the key stages in the transformation process involving the implementation of an innovative culture within the Saint-Gobain Poland group and to analyze the impact of these actions on the organization. The set goal was achieved based on the conducted case study analysis. Furthermore, the literature review conducted allows us to observe that implementing an innovative culture in organizations is a multidimensional process that requires consideration of both cultural and structural aspects. Understanding the theoretical foundations and scientific evidence of the effectiveness of various strategies and practices provides a significant basis for further research and actions in the field of innovative culture. However, it should be noted that each organization is unique and requires an individual approach to implementing an innovative culture. Properly adapting strategies and practices to the organizational context and considering the specific needs and goals of the organization are crucial for achieving success in fostering an innovative culture.

The transformation process within the Saint-Gobain Poland group is well-organized and encompasses a variety of initiatives that support the development of an innovative culture at both the global and local levels. Establishing project management structures for innovative projects, introducing training programs, and initiatives like "Innovation Cube" and "Your Idea has Power!" aid in effectively identifying, nurturing, and implementing innovations. The introduction of communication platforms also fosters knowledge exchange and inspiration. However, a crucial aspect will be monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of these transformational actions in the long term to ensure sustainable achievements and the continuity of the innovative culture.

The authors also acknowledge limitations in the decision-making process regarding the research. Firstly, due to the specific research gap, an inductive approach based on a single case study was adopted, which allowed for operationalizing the results obtained during the literature analysis and was confined to a single organizational context. Secondly, the developed model relied mainly on theoretical aspects that require validation. Therefore, further research is necessary to enhance and expand the developed model.

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