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PSYCHOLOGICAL PREDISPOSITION AND LEADERSHIP COMPETENCES OF FUTURE POLISH SCHOOL HEADMASTERS – RESEARCH RESULTS

PREDYSPOZYCJE PSYCHOLOGICZNE I KOMPETENCJE
PRZYWÓDCZE PRZYSZŁYCH DYREKTORÓW W POLSKICH
SZKÓŁ – KOMUNIKAT Z BADAŃ

Abstrakt

W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań, stanowiące część większego projektu badawczego, którego inspiracją była krytyczna ocena jakości procedur konkursu na stanowisko dyrektora szkoły. Obecnie funkcjonujące rozwiązania, są nieadekwatne, brak jest kompleksowej wizji dotyczącej jakości przywództwa, zdolności poznawczych i pożądanego profilu osobowościowego dyrektorów polskich szkół. Głównym celem prezentowanych badań była empiryczna identyfikacja predyspozycji psycholo-

Abstract

The article presents the results of the research, which are part of a larger research project inspired by the critical evaluation of the quality of competition procedures for the position of school head. The currently functioning solutions are inadequate, there is no comprehensive vision regarding the quality of leadership, cognitive skills and the desired personality profile of Polish school heads. The main goal of the presented research was the empirical identification of psychological (personality and intellectual)

gicznych (osobowościowych i intelektualnych) i kompetencji menedżerskich nauczycieli – potencjalnych kandydatów na dyrektorów. W toku badań przeanalizowano profile 162 aktywnych nauczycieli za pomocą wystandaryzowanych narzędzi diagnostycznych i kwestionariuszy. W efekcie udało się zidentyfikować potencjał nauczycieli w zakresie wybranych predyspozycji i filozofii zarządzania.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

profil osobowości, potencjał intelektualny, kompetencje przywódcze, dyrektorzy szkół, filozofia zarządzania, polityka edukacyjna

predispositions and managerial competences of teachers - potential candidates for directors. In the course of the study, the profiles of 162 active teachers were analyzed using standardized diagnostic tools and questionnaires. As a result, it was possible to identify the potential of teachers in terms of selected predispositions and management philosophies.

KEYWORDS

personality profile, intellectual potential, leadership competences, school principals, management philosophy, educational policy.

1. Introduction

In present, the assumption that, based only on their formal qualifications, the teacher and the headmaster will successfully face the challenges of the modern organizational and non-organizational world and will meet the hopes rested upon them seems quite doubtful.

In order for schools to become modern organizations, one of the more significant issues to which, along with the adoption of a new educational law in 1991, particular attention was paid was the indication of the need for professional management (Ustawa 1991). While emphasizing the importance of a managerial function was a step in the right direction, it is regrettable that solutions proposed more than a quarter of a century ago remain almost unchanged to this day. In view of the new challenges faced by schools and the demands placed upon current school headmasters, deeper reflection regarding both the theory and practice of managing schools become essential. In connection with the above, issues related to the actual competencies possessed by school headmasters and their verification are fundamental and still valid.

The above-mentioned reform from the early nineties of the last century was dominated by the view related to the necessity of possessing managerial preparation in order to be a leader. Professional education in this area was deemed essential for headmasters, which was formally reflected in the regulation from 1999 (Rozporządzenie 1999). The possession of an academic degree in management or a certificate confirming the completion of a course in management for education was then introduced as a necessary condition for candidates applying for the post of a headmaster. The proposed educational framework programme of these activities focused mainly on organizational and

administrative matters. However, the adopted perspective, which did not differ significantly from approaches used in other countries, proved to be insufficient. Experiences of the following years have shown that, on its own, a simple transposition of theoretical knowledge in the field of organization and management into the area of education, without taking into account its peculiar nature and context, was not a completely successful experiment and that it requires deeper reflection and further profile solutions (Dorczak, 2015, 13, Szafran, 2019, 7-9). It seems, however, that there is no need to radically separate ourselves from the achievements and theorems developed previously as part of research on non-educational organizations. Still, the goal is not to use carbon copies in terms of organizational solutions, but rather, by taking advantage of the experience amassed by other fields of study, to enhance programmes related to education and training, as well as to increase the individual knowledge and practical skills of current and future staff tasked with managing schools. Critical remarks regarding the system of training managers for the educational sector necessitate taking a closer look at the predispositions and managerial competencies of future headmasters. Individual resources that could be a benefit to professional qualities in certain circumstances become significant here.

In a corporate context, a manager's competencies play a key role, they are defined and verified. It seems reasonable to adopt a similar approach to the requirements posed in relation to the highest position in the structure of a school.

The issue of competencies possessed by educational leaders seems to be important not only from the point of view of developing the theory but it is also of considerable practical value.

A pedagogical approach to the issues of leadership, management, the pursuit of improvement and adult education, or the relationships between education and economy is reflected in the works of many Polish researchers, however, the issue of studies and publications in the field of diagnoses related to the leadership competencies possessed by managers in education or analyses conducted in the context of how well the role performed by an individual suits their predispositions is not well-represented. While recent years do bring visible progress in this area - issues concerning the reality of school management, managerial talent, the category of educational leadership, the role and tasks of the headmaster are there to be found in the works of Polish scientists (Dorczak, 2012a, 2012b, 2009; Dorczak, Kołodziejczyk, 2015; Dzierzgowska, 2000; Elsner, 1999a, 1999b; Gawrecki, 2003; Gawroński, 2010; Gawroński, Stefan, 2008; Mazurkiewicz, 2011; Michalak, 2006; Komorowski, 2008; Król, Pielachowski, 1993; Kwiatkowski, 2004, 2006; Kwiatkowski, Michalak, Nowosad, 2011; Kwiatkowski, Madalińska-Michalak, 2014; Melosik, 2014; Nałaskowski, 2001; Pielachowski, 2009; Pyżalski, 2014; Rosalska, 2016; Szafran 2013, 2014, 2018, 2019; Śmietańska, 2016), the native literature and empirical legacy are still missing profile solutions, cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses with regard to the personality variables and leadership qualities demonstrated by current and future headmasters, as well as the relationship between these qualities and the effectiveness of management. In the long run, they would be helpful due to the possibility to

compare them, use them to improve the paradigm and model of selecting a professional headmaster and to design educational activities in line with the Polish reality.

Perceiving the headmaster as a professional “who, on behalf of the school’s owner (a self-government, a social organization, a natural person) is able to create conditions and inspire to creatively search for new methods and forms of the institution’s pedagogical and organizational activity, that is, to make decisions in a creative and independent manner with regard to the people whom he or she manages, as well as the way in which the school’s financial and material assets, for [which - J. S.] (...) they bear full responsibility, are used” is postulated, among others, by L. Gawrecki (2003, 10). Such a perspective places the headmaster in the contemporary model of educational leadership, in which focusing only on hard content as well as on organizational and administrative skills is rejected in favour of a broader perspective which takes into account the school’s peculiar nature and the multidimensional scope of competencies.

2. Methodological approach - review of positions

Recognizing the subjects associated with studies on the competencies of headmasters forms the basis for distinguishing the essential methodological approaches.

The normative approach defines a set of managerial competencies of headmasters by indicating a list of activities that should be performed by the person in charge of an institution. The available comparisons to a large extent determine a certain perfect state, but they often lack empirical references demonstrating the actual skills of headmasters (National Association of Elementary School Principals in partnership with Collaborative Communications Group, 2018). In Polish conditions, we still have not seen a coherent and universally binding professional standard of a headmaster’s qualifications which would be reflected in behavioural factors (Kwiatkowski, 2004, 26-32). When constructing model comparisons, it is worth remembering that the requirements related to competencies included in them should be realistic. The point is not to give up on the vision of high professional standards, but to make their achievement possible, otherwise, such a solution will lose its practical value. In functional terms, these types of behavioural models may be helpful as early as during recruitment processes (a task-based verification of skills), they may also set the direction of programmes designed to prepare headmasters and improve their competencies.

Typologies which are more focused on definitions also exist. The classification of Robert L. Katz (1974) or the model proposed by Thomas J. Sergiovanni (1984, 2001) may serve as examples here. There are also perspectives suggesting that it is difficult to develop universal competence standards, indicating that studies should take into account the local context and the needs of a particular school (Śliwerski, 2008). To a large extent, this seems justified because even the specificity of conditions prevailing in the institution itself is significant and has an impact on managerial activities, but in my opinion, this

does not exclude the need for the headmaster to demonstrate basic social competencies, to possess a specific personality or intellectual potential.

The leadership competencies of school headmasters are sometimes recognized by using psychological tools that measure personal properties and predispositions of a generalized character. However, in the current school reality, examinations of this kind are not used during diagnosis before entrusting the position to an individual. If they are applied, they are mostly used to analyse the work of active headmasters, and even then this is done to a rather limited extent. The lack of this type of examinations seems to be the result of the still rather superficial thinking in relation to the significance of leadership in education, both on the part of the authorities and the educational community itself. Profile analyses may prove to be a valuable tool because, as shown by D. Goleman's research, people performing managerial roles indicate not the traditional management skills associated with administration, for instance, but strategic thinking, social abilities, emotional intelligence and supporting the development of their inferiors as the key competencies of a leader (Goleman, 2004). Similar indications were made by the participants of the other research of when evaluating their current superiors critically (Szafran, 2019, 293-306). Therefore, it may be assumed that both headmasters performing a managerial role as well as potential headmasters see this problem similarly.

It is worth noting that the majority of cross-sectional studies indicate a small but significant influence of leadership on the educational results of students (Creemers, Reezigt, 1996). R. H. Heck and P. H. Hallinger (2010), who emphasize the procedural nature of the impact of leadership activities and postulate for longitudinal studies to be conducted in this area, are quite critical in their assessment. A long-term perspective offers the possibility of predicting cause-and-effect relationships between the headmaster's leadership competencies and various types of indicators informing about the quality of a school's operation more accurately. Focusing only on cross-sectional analyses means that the conclusions drawn may have a speculative character.

An important contribution to research on leadership competencies is brought by meta-analyses (Marzano, Waters, McNulty, 2005, Chin, 2007). Leadership competencies are independent variables, whereas dependent variables include the various aspects of a school's operation (these are usually reduced to students' educational successes which, according to the author, constitutes an excessive simplification).

The next group of measures used to analyse a headmaster's competencies are self-assessment and work evaluation sheets. In both cases, the goal is usually strictly practical. They are used to increase the headmaster's knowledge about the quality of his own work or, alternatively, they are a kind of report submitted to superiors, for example, to the leading or supervising body (Condon, Clifford, 2012; Heck, Marcoulides, 1996). It should be noted that a number of tools, particularly the ones used in local formative evaluation, are non-standardized, unreliable and inaccurate and, in many cases, their psychometric properties have not been specified at all. However, when planning to use the capabilities of this type of instruments, it is worth considering the possibility of using them not only to assess the work performed but also before, when selecting candi-

dates for managerial positions, for example in the analysis of the submitted documents, such as a summary of professional experience. Nowadays, the documents submitted mostly constitute a general formal requirement, not a real basis for analyses regarding the competencies and actual skills of candidates, as well as their achievements.

Based on methodological issues and research practice, an eclectic and obscure picture of problems associated with research on the competencies of school leaders is painted, leaving many ambiguities and much room for further empirical investigations and determinations. In the Polish reality, an additional methodological and procedural difficulty is not only the lack of a universal standard of a headmaster's competencies but also the distribution of priorities that indicate what is relatively the most important thing and what should be the basis for verification (Dorczak, 2012b). Therefore, a series of conducted research initiatives is based on certain universal assumptions, whereas the peculiar representation of the competencies possessed by an educational leader usually has an intuitive character. Nevertheless, each of these approaches finds its own application and may be a benefit not only to the development of knowledge but also practical solutions.

3. Inspirations, assumptions and research tools

Assuming that a school is not a place for a “managerial experiment” which may or may not succeed, in my analyses was focused on potential candidates for the post of a headmaster, rather than on individuals that already perform this function. It was assumed to be rational that the verification of professional competencies should start as early as at the competition stage. The research reflection was accompanied by the belief that the responsibility of a headmaster reaches far beyond the institutional boundaries of a given school and the extent to which tasks are accomplished depends to a significant degree on the competencies and predispositions of managers themselves. While selecting the subject of the research, adopting a broad perspective on the duties and functions of the headmaster as the person holding the most important post in the structure of a school emerged as vital. Specific competencies and personal predispositions may have a favourable influence on managerial ability or negatively affect the work of an organization, thus creating, together with the whole organizational context, a kind of conglomerate of interrelated and interdependent elements. It seems, therefore, that the research conducted and the results obtained from it may be a benefit to further analyses that fit the wider framework of structural functionalism, or the systemic view on education.

The impetus to undertake this research was given by the doubts associated with the managerial/leadership professionalism of current headmasters which, consequently, also resulted in queries being posed as to the reliability of the competition procedure for this post.

While there are strict verification procedures in place when applying for top managerial positions, in the field of education this is still a new, polarizing subject. The

issue becomes even more complicated when it is a specific headmaster of a Polish school or a potential candidate for this post who is the subject of analyses. Due to the lack of empirical data regarding the recognition and verification of the possession of the desired individual predispositions by people applying for a managerial position at school, the research project was rather challenging.

I focused on attempting to recognize the potential of future headmasters in terms of variables related to selected personal predispositions and managerial competencies. In my research, predispositions were understood mainly as a set of selected, relatively permanent internal features that are subject to external formation only to a limited extent and outline the characteristics of an individual in their psychological dimension (one related to their personality, intellect), whereas leadership competencies were reduced to those essential dimensions which are associated with the effectiveness and flexibility and of leadership philosophy. It is worth noting, however, that the narrow interpretation area adopted in the above-mentioned variables constitutes a certain simplification because, from the perspective of definitions of competencies and attitudes, these are often dimensions with unclear boundaries that overlap, condition and permeate each other.

Issues of the fundamental variables were resolved by reducing leadership competencies to general categories related to the philosophy of leadership that is based on the theory of D. McGregor (1960), as well as on the effectiveness and flexibility of a leadership style according to K. Blanchard (Blanchard, Zigarmi, Zigarmi, 2008; Blanchard, 2007), whereas the psychological predispositions of a candidate are based on the five-factor personality theory by P. T. Costa and R. R. McCrae (1992), communication styles (authoritarian-partnership) and intellectual potential based on the concept of Ch. Spearman (1923) and R. Cattell (1963).

The main research problem was to recognize what kind of human resources in the scope of given psychological predispositions and management potential are present in a modern school.

Among the subsequent research questions, there were also more detailed ones, some of them:

- a) what is the personality profile of potential candidates for a headmaster?;
- b) what intellectual and leadership capacities do the candidates possess?;
- c) which communication style do they prefer?;
- d) are they characterized by the desired level of leadership flexibility and which leadership style do they prefer?;
- e) do they effectively match a leadership style to a problematic situation and an employee's development level?;
- f) do they follow the X or Y philosophy in their approach to leadership?;
- g) are there any dependencies between the degree of career progression, personality predispositions and management philosophy?;

In the research procedure, the following standardized diagnostic tools were used in order to determine the personality profile and intellectual potential: the NEO-FFI

questionnaire, Delta and Raven's Progressive Matrices (standard version). To determine the philosophy and leadership predispositions in terms of flexibility, the effectiveness of a leadership style and a communication style, the following questionnaires were used: a questionnaire based on McGregor's X and Y concept; a questionnaire based on Blanchard's SLII; a communication style questionnaire.

The research group consisted of active teachers (aspiring to participate in a competition for the headship of a school in the future - a declaration of entry to the competition) who were students of post-graduate studies in the field of management in education at the Department of Educational Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The research started in 2015. The presented data covers the years 2015-2018 (data for 2019-2020 - under development).

The results of 162 people were analysed in the study on the profile of a potential candidate (the average age of the respondents was 37 years old, the level of professional promotion -fig. 1). Each of the respondents was diagnosed using all the questionnaires indicated above.¹

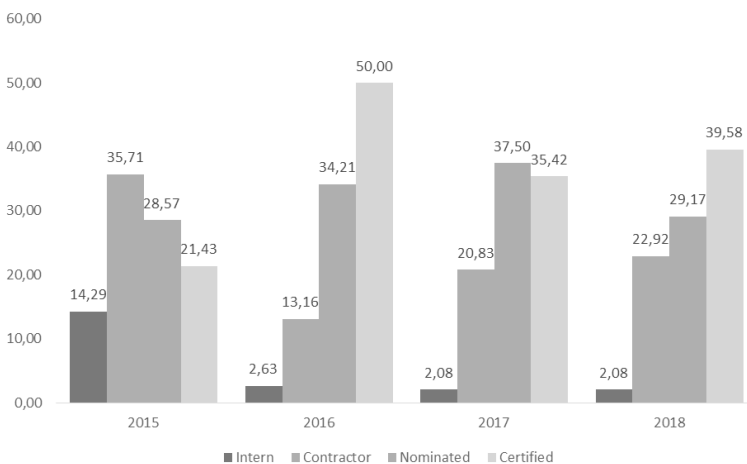


Fig. 1. Percentage statement - teachers with different degree of professional promotion

¹ It is worth mentioning here that, according to M. Adamiec and B. Kozusznik, the teaching community is aware of the fundamental expectations held with regard to school headmasters. In the research process, such a situation may give rise to concerns about the reliability of the obtained results and the utility of the tools used. However, the author's experiences show that both the current and future school headmasters theoretically (albeit at a high level of generality) know the desired model of a good leader, but only to a small extent are they able to apply this knowledge to everyday practice or use it as a tool for self-creation and managerial effectiveness. It also seems that they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to falsify the results obtained using standardized psychological tests. Doubts as to the possibility of the answers being subject to the respondents' manipulation, evoked by the experiments conducted by other researchers, seem to be unfounded with regard to the present studies. All the tests/questionnaires were filled in by the respondents as part of a self-diagnosis during didactical classes. Only after the fact did they learn about the possibility of the obtained results being used in an academic paper. Only the tools that the respondents voluntarily submitted for analysis were used to interpret the results. (Adamiec, Kozusznik, 2000, s.128).

Empirical research conducted in the field of social sciences and humanities usually constitutes an attempt to strike a balance between several methods. This case was no different. Although the goal of the adopted procedure was essentially to devise a typology of the research results, the statistics served not only to indicate some of the dependencies and distributions, but they were also of inductive value. While maintaining some rationality and criticism regarding the possibility of applying a permanent generalization and transferring the conclusions onto the entire population of potential headmasters, it seems that the research group may be treated as representative of the studied community.

4. Essential research conclusions

- a) The conducted analysis of the results obtained by the study group gives the following image of a candidate: average neuroticism, openness to new experiences and agreeableness, high extroversion and conscientiousness (fig.2, tab.1,2,3) (a descriptive interpretation may be found further down). The high score with regard to extraversion and conscientiousness allows us to look optimistically at the future managerial efficiency of candidates based on previous research. Only the average and not low result related to neuroticism may pose a certain personality problem in terms of carrying out the professional duties of a leader (however, a sten score of 4 is the lowest value in the range describing middle-aged people, which allows to assume that emotional reactivity in terms of being affected by negative emotions will not be a major obstacle in performing the function of a leader).

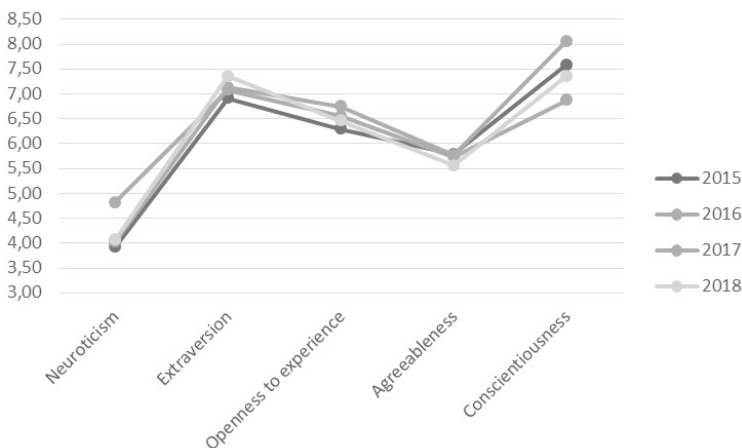


Fig. 2. Profile NEO – FFI - an average results

Tab.1. NEO – FFI – mean scores

Year		Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness to experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
2015	Mean	3,92	6,92	6,29	5,79	7,58
	SD	2,104	1,558	2,136	2,553	2,145
2016	Mean	4,82	7,08	6,55	5,74	6,87
	SD	2,335	2,019	1,969	2,075	2,495
2017	Mean	4,02	7,13	6,74	5,77	8,06
	SD	2,121	1,637	1,775	2,333	1,904
2018	Mean	4,06	7,35	6,46	5,56	7,35
	SD	2,177	1,720	2,240	2,500	2,311

Tab. 2. Personality traits - descriptive statistics

		Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness to experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
N	Valid	155	155	155	155	155
	Missing data	7	7	7	7	7
Mean		18,10	33,28	30,39	31,17	37,96
Std. Error mean		0,697	0,432	0,498	0,549	0,565
SD		8,672	5,379	6,203	6,829	7,032
Variance		75,205	28,932	38,473	46,634	49,453
Skewness		0,596	-0,016	0,047	-0,507	-1,211
Kurtosis		0,615	1,111	-0,506	0,005	2,484
Range		48	35	33	34	43
Minimum		0	13	13	11	5
Maximum		48	48	46	45	48

Tab. 3. Personality traits - descriptive statistics

		Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness to experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
N	Valid	157	157	157	157	157
	Missing data	5	5	5	5	5
Mean		4,21	7,15	6,54	5,70	7,48
Std. Error mean		0,175	0,139	0,161	0,187	0,179
SD		2,196	1,740	2,014	2,341	2,244
Variance		4,821	3,028	4,058	5,480	5,033
Skewness		0,376	-0,401	-0,292	-0,052	-0,722

Kurtosis	-0,411	0,122	-0,490	-0,749	-0,208
Range	9	9	9	9	9
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	10	10	10	10	10

An analysis of the averaged results obtained by using diagnostic questions from the Delta questionnaire indicates that the respondents are characterized by a stronger internal locus of control, however, the result is closer to the middle of the scale than its edge ($M=4,51$, $SD=1,837$). People who have an internal sense of control assume that actions taken are associated with specific consequences, therefore, the reality may be created and influenced. This is accompanied by the conviction that rewards depend on one's own activity and the level at which we perform our tasks. People with an internal locus of control are more resistant to social influences, less conformist and more independent; they make decisions more prudently. Due to the specificity of managerial tasks and functions, as well as the responsibility that should be assumed by a headmaster, a stronger internal sense of control seems desirable. Therefore, also in the area of this personality variable, the results obtained by the respondents fit the expected image of an effective educational leader.

- b) The analysis regarding the correctness and logic of thinking necessary for the efficient and effective fulfilment of essential managerial functions also brought positive results. The average percentile result obtained using the test of Raven's Progressive Matrices (at the level of 84,55) is evidence of the above-average intellectual abilities (fluid intelligence) of the study group (tab.4).

Tab. 4. Raven's Test – descriptive statistics

		Raven's Test	Raven's Test (centiles)
N	Valid	123	123
	Missing data	39	39
Mean		53,04	84,55
Std. Error mean		0,378	1,262
SD		4,193	14,001
Variance		17,580	196,036
Skewness		-0,831	-1,563
Kurtosis		0,629	2,960
Range		20	73
Minimum		40	27
Maximum		60	100

- c) In terms of the preferred communication style, the respondents obtained a centred result that does not allow to assign extreme values to them on a continuum stretching between the partnership and the authoritarian style. It seems that in

school leadership, the partnership style, conducive to a good mutual relationship between interlocutors, is more desirable, however, from a purely managerial perspective, it may be accepted that in some situations, when it is necessary to make unpopular, independent and firm decisions, a mixed style seems to be a rational solution. Creating a certain distance in the relationship (simultaneously avoiding being domineering and selfish), gives a headmaster the space to perform the managerial function more effectively.

- d) The results regarding leadership styles demonstrate that the respondents prefer the S2 style (many instructive and supportive behaviours) and the S3 style (few instructive and many supportive behaviours), where it is the latter that is represented the strongest. The over-representation of the S2 and S3 styles takes place at the expense of other styles (S1 - many instructive and few supportive behaviours, and S4 - few instructive and supporting behaviours), which is evidence of the limited managerial skills possessed by the respondents. According to the SLII model, which serves as the basis for the diagnostic tool, within the functional profile of an efficient leader, each of the above styles should occupy an equal place and be applied adequately to the situation associated with a task (analysed from the point of view of an employee's development/preparation). It is worth noting that in the study group, there were people who did not vary their approach for 20 situations (specific management actions) requiring different leadership styles. The analyses revealed that the S4 style is indeed poorly represented in the questionnaire containing managerial activities/decisions, but it was the S1 style that was chosen the least often (tab.5.6, fig.3). Based on this, one might conclude that the path to leadership professionalism requires a deeper reflection on the situational context of managerial decisions from candidates (taking into account the routine nature of the delegated tasks, as well as the employees' competencies) and the development of "neglected" styles in order to increase their own managerial potential and improve leadership skills. The obtained results also indicate the specificity of education, where the supportive dimension seems to be an indispensable element of everyday professional life. The difficulty in leaving room for independence to an employee, when they have high substantive and executive skills as well as a strong motivation, is present in the decisions made by people preparing for performing the role of a headmaster. The respondents lack leadership and managerial skills in identifying organizational contexts, as was also evidenced by further analyses.

Tab. 5. Leadership type – descriptive statistics

Leadership type		S1	S2	S3	S4
N	Valid	153	153	153	153
	Missing data	9	9	9	9

Mean	2,01	6,52	7,66	3,61
Std. Error mean	0,143	0,246	0,252	0,187
SD	1,773	3,044	3,112	2,318
Variance	3,145	9,264	9,686	5,372
Skewness	0,891	0,431	0,254	0,564
Kurtosis	0,690	0,029	0,452	0,010
Range	9	16	17	10
Minimum	0	0	0	0
Maximum	9	16	17	10

Tab. 6. Leadership type – mean scores

Year		S1	S2	S3	S4
2015	Mean	2,88	7,60	6,40	2,84
	SD	2,205	3,122	3,109	1,930
2016	Mean	2,24	5,70	8,68	3,22
	SD	1,706	2,634	2,759	2,029
2017	Mean	1,58	6,06	8,00	4,25
	SD	1,569	3,118	2,713	2,410
2018	Mean	1,79	7,12	7,14	3,67
	SD	1,612	3,041	3,536	2,514

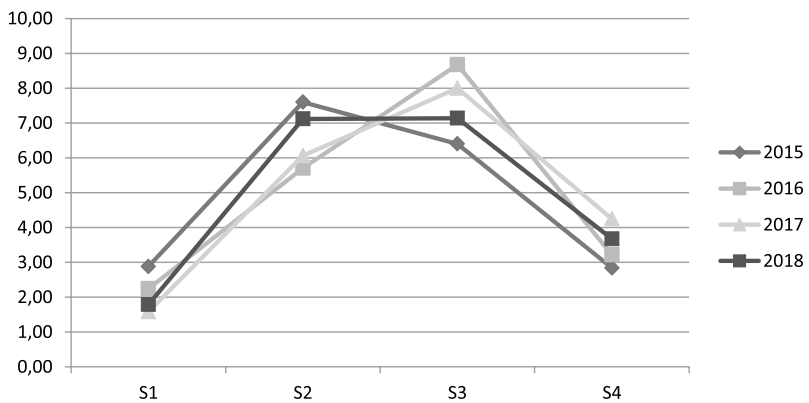


Fig.3. Profiles of average scores on the leadership styles questionnaire

e) As regards the variables describing the “efficiency” and “flexibility” of leadership, while the obtained results allowed to confirm some of the research assumptions, this is not anything to be pleased with as far as assessing the leadership competencies of potential headmasters is concerned. The obtained average score on

a scale describing the flexibility of styles did not reach the minimum required from effective managers. Also in the case of effectiveness, the average result amounting to $M=46,43$ is highly unsatisfactory from the point of view of professionally performing a managerial function in the future (tab.7). The results regarding the flexibility and effectiveness of a style also show that it is naive to assume that receiving a certificate of completion of studies or courses in the field of management in education translates directly into managerial skills and efficiency.

Tab. 7. Leadership efficacy and felvibility – descriptive statistics

		Leadership efficacy	Leadership flexibility
N	Valid	152	152
	Missing data	10	10
Mean		46,43	19,04
Std. Error mean		0,479	0,381
SD		5,903	4,700
Variance		34,843	22,091
Skewness		-0,656	0,142
Kurtosis		1,068	1,532
Range		35	33
Minimum		24	6
Maximum		59	30

- f) Analyses in the scope of the preferred management philosophy type X and Y indicate that the respondents prefer the Y philosophy (for X - $M=37,64$, $SD=10,686$ and for Y - $M=62,01$, $SD = 11,030$ respectively).
- g) It turned out that, contrary to predictions, along with the increase in the degree of career progression, the openness to new experiences also increases. Contract teachers also presented significantly higher results in terms of the X leadership philosophy than chartered teachers. On the other hand, chartered teachers definitely scored higher on the Y leadership philosophy than contract teachers. An approach consistent with the Y philosophy is the prevalent one in the entire study group, however, differences appear once the adopted philosophy is juxtaposed against the degree of career progression (tab.8,9). The obtained result may be explained in a variety of ways, for example in “young” teachers, in a situation of perpetual changes and constant pressure to increase their qualifications (that do not always translate into specific skills) uncertainty, dissatisfaction, disappointment or resentment may appear, as well as scepticism towards one’s own motives and the intentions and motivations of others. As a result, the respondents (when performing the role of a boss), projected their attitudes onto others, assuming that their inferiors do not want to, but rather have to, work. In practical terms, they will, therefore, choose control, orders, prohibitions, a greater formality of

relationships within the organization and a clearer division of tasks. On the other hand, the fact that the Y philosophy is more prevalent among nominated teachers may be the result of experience and the greater awareness of self in a professional role. The professionalization of occupational activities is accompanied by greater independence and autonomy. In addition, achieving a certain level of stability and a sense of security increases psychological comfort and allows one to gain more satisfaction from their work. The above considerations are only an attempt to interpret the obtained result and would require further empirical verification.

Tab. 8. Statistically significant variables – descriptive statistics

		Mean	SD	Std Error	95% mean confidentiality test		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
Age	Contractor	30,26	4,578	0,774	28,68	31,83	24	38
	Nominated	36,25	4,867	0,669	34,90	37,59	28	50
	Certified	43,05	5,690	0,729	41,59	44,51	34	57
	Total	37,62	7,205	0,590	36,46	38,79	24	57
Extraversion	Contractor	6,80	1,410	0,238	6,32	7,28	4	10
	Nominated	7,64	1,549	0,219	7,20	8,08	4	10
	Certified	7,18	1,937	0,248	6,68	7,68	1	10
	Total	7,25	1,712	0,142	6,97	7,53	1	10
Openness to experience	Contractor	5,66	1,862	0,315	5,02	6,30	1	9
	Nominated	6,76	1,802	0,255	6,25	7,27	2	10
	Certified	7,08	2,019	0,259	6,56	7,60	3	10
	Total	6,63	1,979	0,164	6,31	6,95	1	10
Leading philosophy type X	Contractor	41,63	9,923	1,677	38,22	45,04	17	64
	Nominated	36,73	9,652	1,352	34,01	39,44	12	58
	Certified	35,66	11,684	1,534	32,58	38,73	0	63
	Total	37,49	10,778	0,898	35,71	39,26	0	64
Leading philosophy type Y	Contractor	58,06	10,108	1,709	54,58	61,53	36	83
	Nominated	62,51	10,648	1,491	59,52	65,50	35	88
	Certified	64,21	11,687	1,535	61,13	67,28	37	100
	Total	62,11	11,146	0,929	60,28	63,95	35	100

Tab. 9. Levene's Test

	Levene's Test	df1	df2	P
Age	1,732	2	146	0,181
Neuroticism	0,195	2	143	0,823
Extraversion	3,192	2	143	0,044
Openness to experience	0,695	2	143	0,501
Agreeableness	1,276	2	143	0,282
Conscientiousness	0,790	2	143	0,456
Delta	1,830	2	142	0,164
Communication style		2		
Raven's Test	1,980	2	113	0,143
S1	2,131	2	138	0,123
S2	0,898	2	138	0,410
S3	0,998	2	138	0,371
S4	0,093	2	138	0,911
Leadership efficacy	1,209	2	137	0,302
Leadership flexibility	1,984	2	137	0,141
Leading philosophy - type X	1,198	2	141	0,305
Leading philosophy - type Y	0,673	2	141	0,512

The above conclusions require a further, in-depth analysis and may provide valuable inspiration for further research, opening new areas of scientific investigation.

Analyses show also, over the years, all the variables related to psychological predispositions and managerial competencies have retained a certain tendency. This allows to offer specific indications regarding the potential of future headmasters and to answer the question: What resources does a modern school possess in terms of staff in relation to psychological predispositions and leadership potential?

Summary

The descriptive interpretation of data obtained from the NEO-FFI and the Delta questionnaires suggests that the personal profile of a candidate for the post of a school's headmaster, based on averaged personality traits, is as follows: it is a person who is generally calm and balanced, but sometimes experiences anger, sadness and a sense of guilt. He or she is sociable, active, optimistic and enthusiastic. The person is a pragmatic but also has unconventional interests, they strive to maintain the balance between "attachment to the old" and "fascination with novelty," they are generally nice and friendly, but sometimes competitive. They are well-organized, meticulous and reliable, possess a strong will, are resilient in the pursuit of their goals. It is a person with an inner sense

of control, one who thinks their decisions through, is resistant to social influences, less conformist and more independent in their opinions and actions.

By extending this profile characteristic to include the other studied aspects, it may be stated that, in the scope of cognitive functions (correctness of thinking), he or she is a person with above-average capabilities in terms of intellectual abilities. In the communication style, he or she exhibits a rather variable approach, sometimes more authoritarian and sometimes partnership. They are closer to the philosophy of leadership based on the assumption that work is an important human need, therefore, the employee should be provided with the right conditions, have ambitious goals set for him, be supported, left a lot of freedom and motivation systems tailored to the individual should be used.

Essentially, it may be said that the above-mentioned conclusions on psychological variables and management philosophy show the desired, not to say, the model profile of a future headmaster. This positive image is somewhat broken when we interpret the candidates' leadership skills. As for the flexibility and effectiveness of their leadership style, the respondents did not achieve the sufficient level of managerial skills. This is evidence of the respondents' lack of leadership skills in the field of the indicated variables and the need for them to develop situational awareness and their own analytical and executive skills within selected leadership styles. Managerial efficiency as it is understood by K. Blanchard depends on the appropriate use of each style depending on the requirements of a situation and the capabilities of employees.

It is also worth noting that, when evaluating the psychosocial and leadership predispositions of their superiors, the vast majority of respondents was critical. There is no reason to assume that before 2015, when I started my research, candidates with a completely different profile applied for the position of a headmaster and that current headmasters differ significantly in this regard from the respondents. Of course, when comparing individual profiles, both in the case of the surveyed teachers and headmasters who already hold the managerial post, individual differences within particular dimensions may be significant, but it might be assumed that the average statistical image of these two groups would not be significantly different. Assuming that the psychological profiles of present and future headmasters are similar, it is worth paying more attention in subsequent research projects to the peculiar nature of a school and the situational aspect in an attempt to recognize those dimensions that may constitute an obstacle in unearthing and using the personality potential possessed by managers.

However, referring directly to the opinion of the respondents about headmasters and considering the poor results obtained in the SLII questionnaire by those who aspire to hold this post, one should approach the leadership skills of teachers-headmasters with some criticism and scepticism. The conducted diagnosis shows that the assumption made by educational authorities to associate managerial skills solely with the attestation of having completed a course or studies in the field of management in education, and the perception of competencies in this respect through the prism of formal qualifications is risky. The results also draw attention to the quality and method of teaching

future educational leaders and, additionally, they raise legitimate concerns regarding the credibility, reliability and validity of the competition for headship itself.

In principle, however, the image of a candidate based on psychological variables allows one to draw quite optimistic conclusions regarding the psychological potential of future headmasters. It should be noted that the presented profile interpretation concerns the averaged results obtained by the whole study group. Among the potential managers in education, there were people who achieved alarming results in dimensions crucial from the perspective of managerial efficiency – 10 sten in neuroticism or 1 sten in extraversion and conscientiousness. These are people with a very high emotional reactivity in the scope of negative emotions, who are very reserved in interpersonal relationships, poorly organized, lazy and impulsive in making decisions. Similarly, in the case of the internal and external locus of control, there were those who achieved very low or high scores, which, in the first case, could mean being excessively burdened by the responsibility and bearing high psychosomatic costs, and, in the second case, perceiving the effects of one's own actions through the prism of randomness. Also in relation to the issue of recognizing cognitive potential, where the mean result of the group was significantly above the average, there was a person with a score of 27 on the percentile scale, which, upon interpretation, situates them in the area of barely average intellectual skills (in terms logic/correctness of thinking). Furthermore, in terms of the flexibility and effectiveness of style, there emerged significant individual differences that had a fundamental impact on managerial performance. These individual profiles provide an important justification for the introduction of the above criteria into theoretical studies (a qualification framework) and competition procedures for prediction and screening purposes.

The conclusions drawn should contribute to a further reflection on the issues of leadership predispositions and competencies of the teaching community and its actual leadership skills. The research allowed to recognise the potential of the group and, consequently, to paint a statistically justified and rather positive picture of future educational leaders. However, it is important to remember that this model, theoretical set of properties, should be translated into educational practice, in which the verification of individual predispositions and competencies of candidates for the post of a headmaster will be a certain standard. It seems that if we want to talk about greater accuracy of the choices made and increased managerial efficiency, a deeper reflection on the formulation of requirements for headmasters and the professionalization of competition procedures is needed.

The responsibility born by the education system determines the need to undertake the issue of the quality of educational leadership, in particular, the competencies and predispositions of the management of Polish schools. The above issues go beyond the practice of individual institutions, which makes it necessary to take into consideration the broader, more universal context of a headmaster's everyday life.

Essentially, the presented contents may contribute to a reflection on the source of managerial success and become a starting point for analyses and discussions on the desired model of school leadership in Polish education. This is an important problem

because, as S. M. Kwiatkowski (2006, 37) emphasizes, despite the obvious importance of leadership (in education) it still remains on the fringe of pedagogical theories and, as shown by the author's professional experiences and school reality, everyday educational practice and policy.

The suggestion of creating standards with regard to personality and functionality that account for the headmaster's knowledge, skills and personality traits seems to be an appropriate recommendation. This seems necessary not only for formal reasons, for the purpose of developing a complete standard of the professional qualifications possessed by the headmaster of a school, or in order to create a model profile of an educational leader, but it should also be the starting point for a reflection on who should verify these standards and how.

Meanwhile, at school, it is still only everyday practice that verifies the basic skills and managerial effectiveness of an individual. Rarely do bad results trigger actions with a view to changing the state of affairs. It would be naive to expect that changes in the awareness of politicians and headmasters themselves will happen quickly, but caution in taking actions and thinking does not absolve us from reflecting on the need to improve existing solutions and eliminate flaws. Responsibility towards the organization's internal and external environment for the level at which the services offered are performed, or for optimizing the results of the institution's work by using all the resources properly, should form the basis of a headmaster's professionalism. In turn, the optimal disposition of human resources should start with a deliberate and long-term vision regarding personnel policies, including recruitment, selection, incentive processes, and end with a path of career progression based on the continuous improvement of oneself and others.

The presented considerations may act as an impetus to further analyses and discussions on the desired characteristics of school protagonists. They may also be a source of cognitive and practical inspiration for the development of training programs, as well as procedures and methods for verifying the potential of current and future school headmasters. Communities responsible and co-responsible for the condition of education, including educational policies and the vision of education, should make every effort to ensure that schools are headed by people who are prepared for performing this role as well as possible. The multiplicity of problems determined by social, cultural and economic changes, the volatility of conditions and the emerging financial and procedural difficulties should not absolve decision-makers or headmasters themselves of the responsibility for the quality of management processes and the shape of educational leadership. Good education, well-thought-out solutions and procedures for selecting a headmaster will create an opportunity to build professional management resources in education, giving hope for a better quality of management, both presently and in the future.

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