

DETERMINANTS OF LEADERSHIP AS REFLECTED IN THE SUBJECT LITERATURE AND IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN POLAND

DOI: 10.26399/meip.4B(79).2023.41/k.adamiak

INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays a key role in education, particularly regarding changes in the environment and those resulting from solutions imposed by the legislator. The number of educational system establishments in Poland, as well as the significance of the functions they perform – namely, care, education and upbringing – confirm that issues related to the management of these institutions, as well as their human capital, are of considerable importance. The management method applied in educational establishments should be the result of informed decisions and actions, supported by an adequate level of knowledge among decision-makers.

The purpose of this article is to present the results of a literature review within the scope of leadership and its determinants, and to introduce a tool for studying leadership in educational system establishments.

Despite various papers published in recent years, leadership has not been subjected to in-depth analysis. This situation encourages an exploration of the subject and an examination of those holding management positions, as well as those subject to the management process in educational institutions.

The aim of the study undertaken is to attempt to fill the existing cognitive gap through the identification of the subject and the preparation of further studies in this area. The survey is a pilot project aiming to verify the assumptions concerning

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leadership in education and to validate the proposed research tool in terms of its coherence and the thematic scope of the issues addressed.

Following the verification of the tool, the survey will be continued with further groups of entities and, based on the results, recommendations for the educational sector in Poland will be developed, including reference to educational systems in other countries.

LEADERSHIP AND ITS DETERMINANTS AS REFLECTED IN THE LITERATURE

The concept of leadership is very broadly described and, due to the presence of this phenomenon in various disciplines of science, no single coherent approach to the issue exists.

The aim of the study presented below is to attempt to explore and structure the available knowledge in this area.

Leadership has been the subject of numerous authors' considerations for many years. Consequently, it is possible to find many attempts aimed at defining the term 'leadership'.

The author analysed the literature available in Poland in the area of management and, on the basis of this analysis, created a compilation of 68 definitions. The individual authors' statements were categorised into subgroups according to observed similarities. A review of the literature indicates that even within a single discipline, such as management and quality sciences, the perception of the phenomenon concerned is extensive and highly diversified. The ambiguity in the perception of leadership consequently creates a problem in measuring leadership effectiveness within an organisation. A list of factors underpinning the selection of persons for management positions, as well as the evaluation of their performance in managing the subordinate entity, is not available.

The literature review performed indicates that the concept of leadership is treated as commitment, self-creation, measure taken, action, empathy and ecology, evolution, harmony, hierarchy, interaction, direction and influence, mobilisation, motivation, impact, persuasion, desire, process, relationship, attitude, art, direction, skill, value, insight, knowledge, connection, authority, influence, event, and management. Most commonly, according to the definitions cited by the authors, leadership is defined as a certain type of influence, as highlighted, among others, by the following authors: J. MacGregor Burns (1994), R. Tannenbaum, R. Wechsler and Massarik (1961), D. Katz and R.L. Kahn (1979), G.R. Terry (1960), H. Koontz and C. O'Donnel (1959), L.R. Pondy (1978), S.P. Robbins, T.A. Judge (2012), M. Smith (1998),

J.C. Maxwell (2013). Among Polish authors, leadership in the form of influence is defined, i.a., by L. Kanarski, R. Pęksa and A.Cz. Żak (1998), P. Kopijek (2003), S. Lachiewicz (2007).

Leadership as a process is the second most common approach. This concept is construed in such a way, among others, by the following authors: P.G. Northouse (2020), L. Smircich and G. Morgan (1982), M. Uhl-Bien (2006), P. Żukiewicz (2011), R. Wróblewski (Wyrębek, 2016), J. Boguski (2003), R. Griffin (2004).

The most original understanding of leadership is represented by L.J. Krzyżanowski (Bombała, 2010), who believes that leadership is an element of sustainable development, which aligns with the current approach adopted by many organisations.

The foregoing definitions can be divided into several groups, in terms of diversified approaches to leadership:

1. leadership as domination;
2. leadership as a change;
3. leadership as a feature of a person being a leader;
4. leadership as a bilateral interaction;
5. leadership as an overarching phenomenon;
6. leadership as a phenomenon originating from a superior individual and simultaneously affecting a dependent individual.

The author classified definitions that describe leadership as hierarchy, authority, and persuasion under the first understanding of leadership as domination. In this approach, leadership is an autocratic solution originating from a person holding a superior position, with power directed towards subordinates. Leadership is something imposed, which the subordinate is compelled to accept. It is a unilateral relationship, oriented towards the accomplishment of the supervisor's interests and assumptions. The subordinate is a passive element, forced to adjust to existing conditions and communicated rules. The subordinate has no influence on the method of implementation of the management process within the organisation.

The second approach, i.e. leadership as a change, is expressed in terms such as evolution, process, and action. This group of terms can be interpreted as abandoning the *status quo*. Leadership is a change which is evidently driven by specific objectives. According to this approach, leadership plays a fundamental role in the development of the organisation. It is also a stimulus for the improvement of the existing status of the organisation and its processes.

The third approach comprises definitions of leadership as commitment, empathy, harmony, desire, skill, insight, and knowledge. In this group of definitions, the authors highlight that leadership is a feature linked with a superior person: – a leader. The leadership relationship originates from a superior person and is addressed to a team of

individuals who report to the leader. According to this approach, it is evident that the authors emphasise the role of a leader who is the initiator of such a relationship and on whom the leadership in the organisation depends. A leader is a person aware of their position and ready for self-improvement. The qualities of a leader are both inherent and acquired through the advancement of their skills.

Another approach, visible in the literature, is the perception of leadership as a bilateral relationship. In this context, a team emerges alongside the leader, which also shapes and influences leadership. According to this approach, the authors present leadership as activity, interaction, mobilisation, motivation, harmony, impact, relationship, attitude, direction, coordination, link, and influence. Leadership is directly addressed to the audience, most often to subordinates. The terms used indicate that both parties are engaged in the relationship and are equally important in developing behaviour in the organisation.

A different approach is represented by authors who have defined leadership as an art or an event. This interpretation indicates that the phenomenon of leadership is something overarching, featuring a high degree of sophistication. This is the next stage in the initiation and improvement of the human resources management process.

Interpretations of leadership at the intersection of the aforementioned categories also appear, such as perceiving leadership as a value and motivation, i.e. something that originates from the outside and simultaneously affects others. This category underlines the multidimensionality of leadership.

Based on the literature review presented, the author defines leadership as one of the functions of management, which is a process aimed at the accomplishment of the mission, vision, strategic goals, building organisational culture, and motivating subordinates to perform assigned tasks effectively. It is important that leadership occurs in all types of organisations, whether the activity is carried out to gain profit or for other motives.

Continuing this issue, it is important to consider determinants that will shape leadership and whether it is possible to create a closed list of determinants to facilitate the assessment of leadership and identify persons who will be most suitable to fulfil this role.

The determinants were divided into two groups: internal and external. Internal determinants include those related to the leader, the organisation, and the team. Determinants related to the leader are understood as skills, knowledge, personality features, and experience. In most cases, these aspects depend on the individual leader, which means that they can be shaped and developed by that person, except for those personality features that are inherent. Everyone has an impact on what kind of leader they are and may continuously develop and improve their skills.

Determinants related to the organisation, such as the mission, organisational structure, business model pursued in the organisation, organisational and legal personality of the entity, or the ownership structure, are also important elements that affect the type of leaders in the organisation. These elements are imposed on or created by the leader, depending on the history of the organisation and the leader's position and impact on the overall management process.

In the author's opinion, leadership is a bilateral relationship; therefore, the determinants also include elements related to the team, which can significantly affect the type of leadership in the organisation. This group includes relationships with the team. Leadership will develop differently when acceptance from the team is maintained, whereas it will develop differently if the team does not accept the leader. It is also important that if the team comprises persons with experience and knowledge, they can be actively involved in the management process, whereas the leader can delegate responsibilities and grant powers in order to implement the management process.

In the second group of determinants, external factors independent of the organisation and its persons were identified. The determinants were divided according to the macroeconomic and microeconomic environment. In the macroeconomic environment, leadership can be affected by political, economic, sociological, and technological factors. Their significance will depend on the influence of the macro-environment on individual organisations. The power to influence the functioning of these factors will also translate into leadership. For example, in a crisis situation, other leadership qualities will be significant and necessary compared to a stable and predictable economic situation.

The micro-environment also affects leadership models in organisations. Competing organisations are considered in the context of the micro-environment, since leadership affects the motivation level of the team and is part of the organisation's strategy; therefore, the leadership models of the competition will have an impact on other market players and their behaviour. Suppliers, customers, and business partners also feature in this group of determinants. As in the case of organisational behaviour, entities within the company's immediate environment have an influence on developments in the organisation's management model, and consequently, the leadership model. The following is a summary of the determinants that can affect the leadership model used in an organisation.

Table 1.
Determinants shaping leadership

Types of leadership determinants		
Internal	Related to the leader	Skills, knowledge, personality features, experience
	Related to the organisation	Mission, organisational structure, business model, organisational culture, legal personality, ownership structure
	Related to the team	Team accepting the leader, team not accepting the leader
External	Related to the macro-environment	PEST (political, economic, sociological, technological)
	Related to the micro-environment	Porter's five forces (competition – current and future, suppliers, customers, business partners)

Source: Own study.

According to the author, the above classification of determinants enables the identification of the multidimensionality of aspects affecting leadership and emphasises the fact that it is not only the leader and persons managing the organisation who have an influence on the type of relationship between the leader and the team, but also elements of the macro- or micro-environment. It is also important that the team itself and the organisational culture drive the development of some leadership qualities. The above summary can be used to prepare a list of factors for the assessment of leadership in an organisation.

As mentioned before, leadership qualities will also be developed through the nature of the organisation. It is therefore important to examine developments in this area in educational establishments in Poland.

EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN POLAND

The Polish system of education consists of pre-school education, primary, lower secondary, and middle secondary education for children, adolescents, and adults.

The foregoing description allows the breakdown of the entities into two categories:

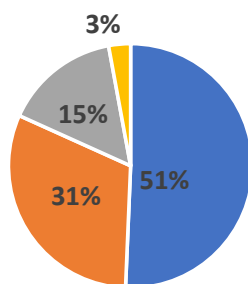
- kindergartens and nurseries – childcare and upbringing institutions;
- schools – educational and upbringing institutions.

Referring to data from Statistics Poland, in the 2020/2021 school year, 22,500 establishments in Poland conducted activities in the scope of pre-school education. This group included 13,800 kindergartens, 7,300 pre-school units in primary schools, and 1,400 pre-school points. In the 2022/2023 school year, 6,819 secondary schools

for young people (excluding post-secondary schools), 3,167 general secondary schools, 1,861 technical secondary schools, 55 general art schools, 118 schools providing an art education programme, and 1,287 post-secondary schools existed. Summing up, 35,807 educational sector establishments in Poland operated. The percentage distribution of individual establishments is presented in the chart below.

Figure 1.
Distribution of educational establishments in Poland
in the 2022/2023 school year (%)

Percentage distribution of educational establishments in
Poland in the 2022/2023 school year



■ Pre-school establishments ■ Primary schools ■ Secondary schools ■ Post-secondary schools

Source: Own study based on: Statistics Poland, Statistical Office in Gdańsk, 2023.

The data presented above indicate that pre-school establishments constitute half of the educational sector. This group includes both private and public entities. Taking into account the criterion of the number of employees in the organisation, these establishments are mostly small or medium-sized. Primary schools represent the second largest group of establishments. The considerable disparity in the number of both types of establishments results from their different sizes. Pre-school education establishments, often private, enrol small groups of children, in contrast to primary schools, where large public establishments prevail. Secondary schools account for 14% of educational establishments in Poland.

The number of educational institutions is very high and plays a key role in the development of the education level of Polish citizens; therefore, research within this sector is very important.

ORGANISATION OF OWN RESEARCH

The issues related to leadership in these establishments are very important and have not been subject to studies so far. The author attempted to explore the issue of leadership in the establishments indicated.

The study was performed on a pilot basis and conducted on a subjectively selected group of people who held management positions or were planning their professional development in management positions.

The questionnaire, once amended accordingly, will be used to survey managers and directors of educational entities in order to explore the concept of leadership within a representative group. The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions. The first five questions were demographic; the next five were substantive questions concerning leadership and the leader in the represented educational institutions. The questionnaire was completed by 18 people.

FINDINGS OF THE PILOT SURVEY

Three directors and 13 teachers took part in the survey. The remaining two persons indicated that they held another position not listed among the response options. All individuals hold, or aspire to hold, management positions, thus demonstrating an appropriate understanding of the issue of 'leadership'. The percentage distribution of responses is shown below.

In this question, it was also possible to choose the answer indicating that a person was a manager or an administrative employee. There were no representatives of these two groups among the respondents. The lack of administrative staff is a negative aspect of the results of this pilot study, as representatives of this group are significant from a leadership point of view. The lack of persons holding mid-level management positions may result from the fact that this level of management rarely occurs in educational institutions. In the majority of establishments, a flat organisational structure prevails, consisting of a director level and teachers and other administrative staff who report directly to the director or deputy director.

One of the questions included in the survey referred to the seniority of respondents. The longest occupational experience indicated was 42 years. The average for the respondents was 20 years. Based on the results of the pilot survey, it is apparent that a large group of employees in this sector with very long experience of working in education is likely to exist.

Among the respondents, 10 out of 18 persons had experience working outside educational entities. This is very good information, since it is likely that these people are aware of how the management process operates in other sectors, whether from the executive perspective or from the participant's perspective.

The vast majority, i.e. 94% of respondents, were employed in private establishments, although the survey was sent to a similar number of private and public entities. More persons from public units completed the questionnaire. The responses received originate mainly from primary school employees.

The substantive part starts with a question asking for the respondent's own definition of the term 'leadership'. Only one of the respondents wrote that he did not know what the term meant.

In response to this question, the following terms were formulated, divided into two groups by the author:

- first group – leadership understood as: directing, leading, managing, assigning tasks, coordinating, controlling;
- second group – leadership understood as: dominance, command.

The first group of terms is very general and defines leadership in the context of the management process. According to this approach, leadership is of a democratic, even partnership-based, nature. The second group comprises autocratic terms, where leadership is a kind of power over others. Recognising leadership in a democratic way was indicated by 88% of respondents. The above-mentioned terms indicate that the respondents are familiar with the concept of 'leadership' and mostly perceive this issue from the point of view of a democratic phenomenon.

The survey also aimed to verify how the determinants of leadership are perceived.

The author asked for an evaluation of the individual determinants. The following determinants were assessed: related to the leader's character traits, related to the organisation represented, related to the team where the leader works, related to the macro-environment, and the micro-environment. Factors related to leadership qualities were identified as the most important. Team-related determinants were mentioned in second place in terms of significance. The answers provided indicate that, for respondents, the person performing the function and those working with them have the greatest influence on leadership. Organisational factors and external aspects appeared to be less important.

A very important finding of the pilot survey is that the respondents realise that leadership is very important and affects the way the entity is managed. In addition, the level of knowledge in this area is higher than it seemed before the survey. They are also aware of the multidimensional nature of the term 'leadership'.

One of the subsequent questions in the survey referred to the leadership style. Respondents were asked to assess what leadership style is used in the establishments

they represent. To answer this question, a breakdown was quoted according to R. Lippitt and R.K. White, who indicate three types of leadership:

- Autocratic – a leader takes decisions independently, without consulting their co-workers; power and responsibility are centralised; the leader maintains a distance from the team.
- Participative – a leader consults with the team on the decisions made; a leader motivates and is supportive of the team.
- Non-integrative – a leader is passive, does not intervene, does not motivate and does not control the work of the team.

The classification indicated was supplemented with the response that the establishment has a mixed model of leadership style.

Respondents recognised that the participative leadership style prevailed, as indicated by more than half of the respondents. None of the respondents chose the answer that the leader was passive and not involved in the management process.

Another question asked what role leadership plays in the organisation. The question was phrased in this way to check the actual situation in terms of leadership in the establishments surveyed and the level of awareness and knowledge of persons taking part in the survey. The majority of respondents chose the answer that leadership was a part of the management process. Only one person indicated that nobody considered the governance method, including the leadership model.

Further questions addressed the issue of leadership. The first of these questions was intended to test the level of knowledge and awareness in this area and how respondents understood the term 'leader'.

When asked to provide a definition of a leader, 15 respondents gave their own definitions or explained how they understood the issue. The responses included such statements as:

- 'the person who indicates the direction of action and implements it together with the team';
- 'a person who is a formal or informal head of a team, the link integrating the team around a common goal, giving directions for action, managing, making decisions, taking responsibility for the team';
- 'gives direction, inspires, resolves, advises';
- 'a wise team leader';
- 'responsible for the target and other people';
- 'managing person';
- 'directs, monitors, supports, motivates their team, distributes tasks';
- 'a person who has authority, is respected but at the same time kind'.

The responses provided indicate that the respondents are well aware of the role of the leader in the organisation. The most common terms appearing include a managing and motivating person. It is important that the majority of respondents also included reference to the team in their definitions and identified the type of relationship linking the leader and the team.

The next question referred to the method a leader can use to prepare for their role. As part of the preparation, the leader should:

- 'recognise the team, its needs, establish a direction of actions adapted to the capabilities of the establishments';
- 'develop internal assertiveness, the ability to analyse and evaluate situations, interpersonal skills and delegate tasks; they should continue their education';
- 'gather experience, gain knowledge, analyse different situations and draw conclusions'.

Some of the responses are quoted above. Half of the respondents indicated how to prepare themselves to be a leader. It is worth emphasising that there was also a group of persons who claimed that it was impossible to prepare for this role because being a leader is linked to personality features and that it cannot be learned. Two respondents believe that the respondent should both 'take appropriate training, courses...' and 'should have certain predispositions and certain characteristics (e.g. the right personality)'.

The author also asked what qualities develop a leader. Respondents had a choice of the following characteristics: expertise, inherent features, professional experience, life experience, intuition, personality, charisma, authority, and emotional intelligence. All of these features appeared in the marked responses. All respondents indicated that professional experience and personality are the features that shape leadership. This is very interesting because it implies that the leader is shaping his or her leadership skills throughout his or her professional engagement.

The key issue is the measurement of a leader's effectiveness. The author has proposed a list of issues which can adequately represent the effectiveness of a leader. Among the ways listed, respondents indicated monitoring of team satisfaction, team performance, problem solving, business development, measuring employee engagement, job satisfaction, profits gained by the organisation, and task completion.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SURVEY

A very important finding of the pilot survey is that the respondents realise that leadership is very important and affects the way the entity is managed. In addition, the level of knowledge in this area is higher than it seemed before the survey. The survey questionnaire is structured correctly, and data can be collected in this form in subsequent studies. The role of the leader in the organisation is important for respondents, while the issue should be explored in more depth in future surveys.

It is very important to continue the research on the determinants of leadership and to determine which factors are most important in the context of education management. On the basis of the questionnaire formulated in such a way, it will be possible to determine how the effectiveness of the leader should be expressed and, based on the results obtained, it will be possible to identify indicators to measure it, which will express the key characteristics of the leader in the education system.

The considerable number of educational establishments and their fundamental role in the formation of human capital encourages the undertaking of in-depth research in this area and the identification of reference models useful in the management process.

CONCLUSION

The issue of leadership raised in the paper is undoubtedly up-to-date and highly relevant. It is important to continue research in this area. This article presents an in-depth analysis of the existing literature, based on which it was possible to formulate the determinants of leadership. Despite numerous studies on the scope of leadership, it is difficult to find a study that fully represents the approach of different authors to the concept of leadership. Selecting an executive is very difficult, while determinants confirmed by research that have a key impact on the selection of such an individual can significantly facilitate the search for the right people to perform key roles in an organisation.

The results of the survey presented do not provide a closer insight into the educational system in Poland; however, this is not their purpose. The aim of the pilot survey presented was to identify the level of knowledge in the field of leadership and to test the author's survey questionnaire, and both of these objectives were achieved.

The study is significant from the point of view of the development of the discipline of management science and quality research. It fills the gap in terms of an in-depth analysis of the literature on leadership. The choice of the education system as the focus of the survey is justified and important from the point of view of matching managers to the specific features of the sector.

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DETERMINANTS OF LEADERSHIP AS REFLECTED IN THE SUBJECT LITERATURE AND IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN POLAND

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present the results of a literature review within the scope of leadership and its determinants, and to introduce a tool for studying leadership in educational system establishments. The survey is a pilot project aiming to verify the assumptions concerning leadership in education and to validate the proposed research tool in terms of its coherence and the thematic scope of the issues addressed. Following the verification of the tool, the survey will be continued with further groups of entities and, based on the results, recommendations for the educational sector in Poland will be developed, including reference to educational systems in other countries. The study is of a testing nature and constitutes a starting point for research on statistically significant samples. The author is aware of the limitations of this study; however, the results indicate that the topic is important and warrants further research. The subject discussed is significant in the context of conscious and responsible management of organisation. The scope of the study is innovative, as no quantitative research on leadership models in education has been conducted to date. The article may serve as an inspiration and a guideline for conducting further research in this area.

Keywords: leadership, leader, leadership determinants, education system in Poland, management in education

CZYNNIKI DETERMINUJĄCE PRZYWÓDZTWO NA PODSTAWIE LITERATURY PRZEDMIOTU ORAZ W KONTEKŚCIE ZARZĄDZANIA EDUKACJĄ W POLSCE

Streszczenie

W niniejszym opracowaniu przedstawiono wyniki przeglądu literatury w zakresie przywództwa i jego determinantów oraz zaprezentowano narzędzia do badania przywództwa w placówkach systemu edukacyjnego. Badanie ma charakter pilotażowy i ma na celu weryfikację założeń dotyczących przywództwa w edukacji oraz walidację proponowanego narzędzia badawczego pod kątem jego spójności i zakresu tematycznego poruszanych zagadnień. Po weryfikacji narzędzia badanie będzie kontynuowane z kolejnymi grupami podmiotów, a na podstawie wyników zostaną opracowane zalecenia dla sektora edukacyjnego w Polsce, z uwzględnieniem systemów edukacyjnych w innych krajach. Badanie ma charakter testowy i stanowi punkt wyjścia do badań na statystycznie istotnych próbach. Autorka jest świadoma ograniczeń niniejszego badania, jednak wyniki wskazują, że temat jest ważny i zasługuje na dalsze opracowanie. Omawiana problematyka jest istotna w kontekście świadomego i odpowiedzialnego zarządzania organizacją. Zakres badania jest nowatorski, ponieważ do tej pory nie przeprowadzono żadnych analiz ilościowych dotyczących modeli przywództwa w edukacji. Może więc być inspiracją i zbiorem wytycznych do prowadzenia dalszych badań w tej dziedzinie.

Słowa kluczowe: przywództwo, lider, czynniki determinujące przywództwo, system edukacji w Polsce, zarządzanie w edukacji