

Perception on leadership according to education: a comparison of Romanian and Czech managers

Mihaela Simionescu

Institute for Economic Forecasting of the Romanian Academy
13, Calea 13 Septembrie, Bucharest
Romania
e-mail: mihaela_mb1@yahoo.com

Anna Rybakova

Russian State Social University
Wilhelm Pieck str. 4/1, 129226 Moscow
Russian Federation
e-mail: anya_rybakova@list.ru

Abstract This paper studies the relationship between the perception of leadership and the level of education. The empirical study is based on answers to questionnaires provided by the managers 520 firms from Czech Republic and 524 Romanian companies.

Our results indicated that there are significant differences in the managers' opinions related to leadership perception. Most of the Czech managers in the sample considered professional knowledge to be a determining feature of a successful leader while most of the Romanian managers considered perseverance as determinant for a good manager. In both countries, there were not recorded any significant differences between managers with secondary education without GCE and post-graduate and between managers with secondary education having GCE and post-graduate concerning their perceptions regarding the key quality of a leader. However, it appears that the level of education influences the opinion on leadership in the case of Czech managers, but not in the case of Romanian managers.

1 Introduction

In general, it appears that organization's performance and development are correlated to management competency. According to Fu (2018), a competency quality model should focus on four key points: work quality standards, work quality key points, work level quality model and organizational quality set. There are significant differences between management and leadership that were explained by Zaleznik (1977) and Kotter (1990). The most important quality could be the fact that leadership competencies are related to the individual features of the people engaged in a job more than to technical duties of a job. Nowadays, leadership is considered at ore levels (organization, others and self) in order to help leaders to achieve a sustainable performance of the company in a dynamic environment (Strielkowski et al. 2017; Rosenbach 2018).

Academic literature makes distinction between ethical and unethical leadership, but this paper is solely and uniquely based upon the ethical perspective of leadership. The theoretical description of the leader focuses on this person's qualities and the relationship with the followers. These two dimensions should be combined as to ensure the achievement of the firm's strategic goals (Moskalenko and Yevsieieva 2015).

This study does not resume to this theoretical approach, since the leaders' competences are chosen on empirical basis made based on the opinions of companies' managers. The indicated features are selected from the theoretical ones proposed in the literature. The selected theoretical competencies of a leader were assessed by the managers from Czech Republic and Romania in 2018. These two countries represent an interesting comparative background of the European Union Member States from the 1st and 2nd waves of Eastern enlargement and differ in many economic and social aspects, as noted by many authors (see e.g. Čábelková et al., 2015; Šabić-Lipovača et al. 2016; or Simionescu et al. 2017).

Several qualities of a leader were considered in this study: perseverance, responsibility, intelligence, optimism, risk-seeking, professional knowledge, activity, aggressiveness, creativity, innovativeness, quality of education, decisiveness, and autonomy (Host'ovecký and Poláček 2016). The managers were asked to select the most

important characteristics that a leader should possess. The differences between managers opinions are evaluated according to the level of education.

The paper is organized as follows: after this brief introduction, the paper reviews shortly the literature and provides some insights into the leader’s competences. The next sections present the methods. Then, we present the data and conduct some statistical tests to reveal the main results. Last part of the paper concludes and provides results and implications.

2 Literature review

According to Western (2019), the new leadership focuses on two directions: the adaptation of leadership to economic, social and political dynamics and the development of a management/leadership based on actual trends suggested by management and business schools, consultancy, books etc.

The leadership definition changed over time. The leadership is described by Pondy (1978) as language game, but the studies of Conger (1991), Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) and Fairhurst (2005) highlight the importance of rhetoric and framing. In the 1920s, the leadership was considered as the ability to impose some values like respect, cooperation, obedience and loyalty to subordinates. Since the 1990s, the leadership reflects the relationship between leader and those people that are led in order to achieve the change required by mutual purposes (Antonakis 2017). In the initial approach, the leader is recognised by the ability to impress the people. The current approach focuses on the fact that the leader and his/her followers influence each other. Considering an organization with a complex structure, leadership is considered by Denis et al. (2012) as a plural phenomenon. There are differences between people regarding skills, preferences, and, position. However, Gronn (2009) explained that most of the people are motivated to achieve some collective goals. This implies the fact that leadership is at least shared (Pearce and Conger 2003) or partially distributed (Bolden 2011; Mailhot et al. 2016). In the opinion of Buckingham (2001), competencies of leadership should promote conformity rather than diversity. The qualities of a good leader should be based on more assumptions:

- the people have behaviours that could be learnt;
- people having the same role will act the same in a certain situation;
- the weaknesses improvement will bring the success in the job activities.

This leadership approach focusing on competencies helps the organization from two points of view, as Miller et al. (2001) explained: ensure the achievement of corporate values and objectives and enhance the employees’ performance by training and various human capital practices. Bolden and Gosling (2006) described in detail the concepts related to leader’s competences (Figure 1).

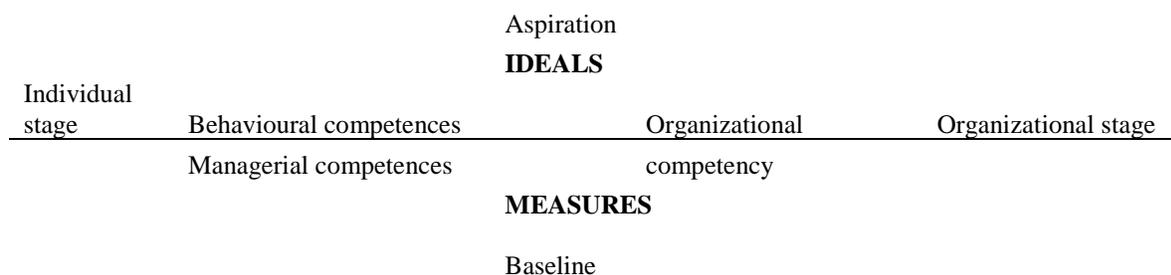


Fig. 1. The concepts associated to leader’s competences
Source: Bolden and Gosling (2006)

At individual level, Buckingham (2001) highlighted the companies’ efforts to support their employees in developing their strengths and differences as to focus on their results more than on their behaviours. Other studies in literature belonging to Hunt and Laing (1997) and McCall (1998) focused more on the success of a good leader even if she/he has some personal flaws that should be overcome.

Beside this individual approach, other studies analysed the leadership from organizational point of view. At this level, Salaman (2004) described four characteristics for leader competencies. First of all, the competencies description should take into account the measurement, comparison control, and regulation of the managers’

behaviours. Secondly, the competencies should be described in order to propose future improvements. Thirdly, a complete translation of competencies from strategy to manager and to organization is required. Fourthly, managers are forced to assume more responsibilities tasks were transferred from Human Resource experts to each employee. Salaman (2004) concluded that leadership should be described in a temporal and situational context. There are some organizational and cultural issues that could prevent the leader for achieving the firm's goals. In a social environment of leadership that is not well understood, the other factors have an essential influence that is neglected (nature of work, perception on legitimate authority, organizational system followers, cultural framework, managerial rewards and sanctions). Leadership is connected to a certain situation and could not be split into some components (Wood, 2005; Bolden et al., 2006).

This paper is consistent with actual tendencies from that literature that makes the transfer from the theoretical perspective related to leader's qualities to empirical description of leader's behaviour (Antonakis 2017). Empirical results from literature showed that a successful leader should be an ethical and effective person (Ciulla 2014). In some situations, the moral failures of a leader are cognitive, while in other cases are normative, but in the opinion of Price (2005) the moral failures are not intentional. Johnson (2017) made distinction between the ethical and unethical leadership. The ethical perspective of the leadership is defined by few elements (Antonakis 2017):

- The ethics of leadership process (command, control, participation);
- The leader's ethics when he/she is seen as person (self-knowledge, discipline, intensions etc.);
- The ethics of the relationship between leader and his/her followers (how these partners treat each other);
- The ethics of the leader's acts (what this person does nor not).

The second type of leadership is met in different situations: power abuse, inconsistency acts', hoard privileges, lack of responsibilities achievement, mismanaged information, betray or misplace loyalties (Johnson, 2017).

This paper considers the ethical perspective of the leader and her/his qualities as person and the associated acts. Moreover, we add to this approach the concept of innovativeness, a characteristic that was previously considered by Johnston and Marshall (2016). The education also contributes to the development of leadership abilities. In this context, Komives and Wagner (2016) consider that students should developed their abilities to conduct a successful leadership, even if their professors do not focus on this, considering only the critical thinking as important. The same vision is promoted by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) that proposed a leadership style in education by enhancing relationships and connections. Moreover, a sustainable leadership should be followed by keeping the authenticity of acts.

3 Empirical results: managers' opinions on leadership

The main aim of the empirical study is to assess the impact of education level on the perceptions of managers from a sample of Czech and Romanian companies regarding the qualities of a good leader.

The data are collected using questionnaires that were applied to Czech managers from 520 companies from different fields of activity and to Romanian managers from 524 companies. The data were registered in 2018 and the sample was randomly selected as to include companies of all sizes. Some statistical analyses were providing using SPSS 21. A qualitative variable denoted by "qualities" was considered with more variants representing the most important characteristic for a good leader in a company. This characteristic is subjective, and it is considered by each manager in the sample. The following variants were proposed for the leader's qualities:

- professional knowledge;
- perseverance;
- risk-seeking;
- activity;
- intelligence;
- creativity;
- innovativeness;
- responsibility;
- optimism;
- quality of education;
- decisiveness;

- aggressiveness;
- autonomy.

The following levels of education corresponding to the managers were considered (the last graduated studies):

- secondary studies without GCE;
- secondary studies with GCE;
- bachelor;
- master studies;
- post-graduate.

According to the results for Czech managers, 44.5% of these managers considered that professional knowledge is the most important quality of a leader. On the other hand, only 25.6% of the Romanian managers agreed that professional knowledge is the most important quality of a leader. Most of the Romanian managers (42.5% of them) considered perseverance as the determinant characteristic for a successful leader. We can conclude that education is the most valuable for Czech managers while Romanian people give more credit to an internal quality of the human being rather than professional experience.

About 40% of the Czech people with master considered professional knowledge as determinant for a good leader in a company. 35.4% of the Czech managers that appreciated the perseverance as the key quality of a leader had bachelor and 34.9% had master studies as the last graduated studies.

Most of the managers in the sample considered that professional knowledge should be the most important quality of a good leader in a company. Less than 10 managers considered that innovativeness, responsibility, optimism, quality of education, decisiveness, aggressiveness, autonomy respectively are determinant for a successful leader.

Moreover, 46.7% of the Romanian managers with bachelor studies considered perseverance as essential for a good leader and 23.5% of the people with master studies agreed that professional knowledge is the most important quality of a manager. Less than 20 Romanian managers considered innovativeness, responsibility, optimism, quality of education, decisiveness, aggressiveness, autonomy respectively as determinant for a successful leader.

We fix the null hypothesis that there are not significant differences between managers with secondary education without GCE and post-graduate concerning their perceptions regarding the key quality of a leader. Two non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W tests) are applied (see Table 1).

Table 1. Differences in leadership perceptions between Czech managers with secondary education without GCE and post-graduate

	qualities
Mann-Whitney U	4180.000
Wilcoxon W	1128.000
Z	-0.688
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.485

Source: Own results

According to Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W tests, there are not enough reasons to reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance (the asymptotic significance is 0.487, which is higher than 0.05). Therefore, we can state that there are not differences in perception about leader qualities between Czech managers with secondary education without GCE and post-graduate (Table 2).

Table 2. Differences in leadership perceptions between Romanian managers with secondary education without GCE and post-graduate

	qualities
Mann-Whitney U	430.000
Wilcoxon W	115.000
Z	-0.540

Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.346
------------------------	-------

Source: Own results

According to Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W tests, there are not enough reasons to reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance (the asymptotic significance is 0.346, which is higher than 0.05). Therefore, we can state that there are not differences in perception about leader qualities between Romanian managers with secondary education without GCE and post-graduate (Table 3).

Table 3. Differences in leadership perceptions between Czech managers with secondary education having GCE and post-graduate

	qualities
Mann-Whitney U	2280.000
Wilcoxon W	2973.000
Z	-0.44
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.672

Source: Own results

According to Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W tests, there are not enough reasons to reject the fact that there are not differences between Czech managers with secondary education with GCE and post-graduate concerning their perceptions regarding the key quality of a leader at 5% level of significance (the asymptotic significance is 0.672, which is higher than 0.05). See Table 4 for more details.

Table 4. Differences in leadership perceptions between Romanian managers with secondary education having GCE and post-graduate

	qualities
Mann-Whitney U	2207.000
Wilcoxon W	2838.000
Z	-0.580
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.844

Source: Own results

According to Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W tests, there are not enough reasons to reject the fact that there are not differences between Romanian managers with secondary education with GCE and post-graduate concerning their perceptions regarding the key quality of a leader at 5% level of significance (the asymptotic significance is 0.844, which is higher than 0.05). Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to check if there are overall differences between managers' perceptions regarding leadership according to level of education. The null hypothesis states that there are not significant differences between opinions according to level of education of respondents.

Table 5. Differences in leadership perceptions between Czech managers according to level of education

Chi-Square	14.222
Degrees of freedom	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.006

Source: Own results

According to Kruskal-Wallis test, there are significant differences between Czech managers' perceptions on leadership qualities according to level of education. For example, most of the managers with master studies

appreciated perseverance and professional knowledge as key points for a good leadership, while most of the people with secondary studies with GCE considered creativity as being the most relevant quality of a successful leader.

According to Kruskal-Wallis test, there are not significant differences between Romanian managers' perceptions on leadership qualities according to level of education. Most of the managers appreciated perseverance and professional knowledge as key points for a good leadership.

Table 6. Differences in leadership perceptions between Czech managers according to level of education

Chi-Square	6.43
Degrees of freedom	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.67

Source: Own results

4 Conclusions

There are various opinions in literature related to the competences that are necessary for a successful leader, but most of the papers reveal only the theoretical presentation of the leader qualities. Starting from some qualities presented in the theoretical approaches, our research empirically validated these features of leaders by considering the opinions of a sample of managers from Czech Republic and Romania. These managers had to select the most important qualities for a successful leader. There were significant differences between managers' opinions regarding leadership perception. Most of the Czech managers indicated that the professional knowledge is the most important quality of a good leader while most of the Romanian managers considered perseverance as determinant for a good leader. In a country like Romania with high corruption perseverance seems to be more important than experience. There are significant differences between managers' opinion about the most important characteristic of a good leader according to level of education only in Czech Republic.

However, our empirical research is limited by the selection of certain potential competences of a leader. The opinions of the leaders are also subjective. The list of qualities could be extended with other competences that reflect the relationship between leader and followers. Moreover, comparisons with managers from developed countries could be made by collecting similar data from other countries. The country culture might also influence the managers' opinions on a successful leadership.

References

- Antonakis J, *The nature of leadership*, 1st edn. (Sage publications, 2017), 438 p.
- Bolden R (2011) Distributed leadership in organizations: A review of theory and research. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 13:251–269. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2370.2011.00306.x
- Bolden R, Gosling J (2006) Leadership competencies: time to change the tune? *Leadership* 2(2):147-163. doi: 10.1177/1742715006062932
- Bolden R, Wood M, Gosling J (2006) Is the NHS Leadership Qualities framework missing the wood for the trees? In OBHC (eds.) *Innovations in Health Care: A Reality Check*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. https://www.academia.edu/17847714/Is_the_NHS_Leadership_Qualities_Framework_Missing_the_Wood_for_the_Trees. Accessed 28 March 2019
- Buckingham M (2001) Don't waste time and money, *Gallup Management Journal*, December 3, 2001. <https://lifework.arizona.edu/article/dont-waste-time-and-money>. Accessed 28 March 2019
- Čábelková I, Abrahám J, Strielkowski W (2015) Factors influencing job satisfaction in post-transition economies: the case of the Czech Republic. *International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics* 21(4):448-456. doi: 10.1080/10803548.2015.1073007

- Cashman K, *Leadership from the inside out: Becoming a leader for life*, 1st edn. (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017), 272 p.
- Ciulla JB (ed.) *Ethics, the heart of leadership*, 1st edn. (ABC-CLIO, 2014), 236 p.
- Conger J (1991) Inspiring others: the language of leadership. *Academy of Management Executive* 5(1):31-45. doi: 10.5465/ame.1991.4274713
- Denis J-L, Langley A, Sergi V (2012) Leadership in the plural. *Academy of Management Annals* 6:211–283. doi: 10.1080/19416520.2012.667612
- Fairhurst G (2005) Reframing ‘the art of framing’: problems and prospects for leadership. *Leadership* 1(2):165-185. doi: 10.1177/1742715005051857
- Fairhurst G, Sarr R (1996) *The Art of Framing: Managing the Language of Leadership*, 1st edn. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 213 p.
- Fu F (2018). Research on Enterprise Human Resource Management Competency Model. 2018 International Workshop on Advances in Social Sciences, IWASS 2018, pp. 1-4.
- Gronn P (2009) Leadership configurations. *Leadership* 5:381–394. doi: 10.1177/1742715009337770
- Host’ovecký M, Poláček M (2016) Communication skills as the competitive advantage of sellers. *Czech Journal of Social Sciences, Business and Economics* 5(1):18-26. doi: 10.24984/cjssbe.2016.5.1.2
- Hunt J, Laing B (1997) Leadership: the role of the exemplar. *Business Strategy Review* 8(1):31-42. doi: 10.1111/1467-8616.00005
- Johnson CE, *Meeting the ethical challenges of leadership: Casting light or shadow*, 1st edn. (Sage Publications, 2017), 552 p.
- Johnston MW, Marshall, GW (2016) *Sales force management: Leadership, innovation, technology*. Routledge.
- Komives SR, Wagner, WE, *Leadership for a better world: Understanding the social change model of leadership development*, 1st edn. (John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 496 p.
- Kotter JP, *How leadership differs from management*, 1st edn. (New York: Free Press, 1990), 240 p.
- Mailhot C, Gagnon S, Langley A, Binette LF (2016) Distributing leadership across people and objects in a collaborative research project. *Leadership* 12(1):53-85. doi: 10.1177/1742715014543578
- McCall MW (1998) *High Fliers: Developing the Next Generation of Leaders*, 1st edn. (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998), 272 p.
- Miller L, Rankin N, Neathey F (2001) *Competency Frameworks in UK Organizations*. London: CIPD.
- Moskalenko V, Yevsieieva I (2015) Effective leadership conflict management in food technology enterprises. *International Economics Letters* 4(2):91-102. doi: 10.24984/iel.2015.4.2.4
- Pearce CL, Conger JA, *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*, 1st edn. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003). doi: 10.4135/9781452229539
- Pondy LR (1978) Leadership is a language game. In: McCall M, Lonbardo M (eds.) *Leadership: Where else do we go?* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 87-99.
- Rosenbach WE, *Contemporary issues in leadership*, 1st edn. (Routledge, 2018), 320 p.
- Šabić-Lipovača A, Strielkowski W, Bilan Y (2016) Intertemporal substitution and labour supply of Bosnian SME's. *Amfiteatru Economic Journal* 18(43):634-653.
- Salaman G (2004) Competences of managers, competences of leaders. In: Storey, J. (ed.) *Leadership in Organizations: Current issues and key trends*. London: Routledge, pp. 58-78.
- Shapiro JP, Stefkovich JA, *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas*, 1st edn. (Routledge, 2016), 248 p.

Simionescu M, Strielkowski W, Kalyugina S (2017) The impact of Brexit on labour migration and labour markets in the United Kingdom and the EU. *Terra Economicus* 15(1):148-156. doi: 10.23683/2073-6606-2017-15-1-148-156

Strielkowski W, Tcukanova O, Zarubina Z (2017) Globalization and economic integration: the role of modern management. *Polish Journal of Management Studies* 15(1):255-261. doi: 10.17512/pjms.2017.15.1.24

Western S (2019) *Leadership: A critical text*, 1st edn. (SAGE Publications Limited, 2019), 240 p.

Wood M. (2005) The fallacy of misplaced leadership. *Journal of Management Studies* 42(6): 1101-1121. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2005.00535.x

Zaleznik A (1977) Managers and leaders: Are they different. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262152664_Managers_and_Leaders_Are_They_Different Accessed 10 April 2019