

THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS IN A MANAGER WORK IN XXI CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

In the article there has been made an attempt to show important skills a 21st century manager ought to be characterized by. There has been presented the results of some research done on managers and or students studying management in Poland and in Hungary. The analysis follows that a 21st manager ought to possess, first of all, the skills of communicating, employee motivating, decision making. He should also know how to plan and organize.

KEY WORDS

manager skills, 21st century manager

1. Introduction

Employees' and manager's initiative, engagement and creativity decide about the success of the contemporary firm and its competition. Managers' task is to continuously stimulate the employees to cooperate creatively while solving the problems. They ought to help the personnel in showing their active involvement, ensure psychological freedom of action, inform properly and continuously increase their intellectual standards. It means that managers must substitute their power and authority for personal qualities, keeping in mind that effective action increases power. They have to act more as a leader rather than a manager, because a leader is a man, who by the use of word and good example influences their followers and thanks to it gains power (not by the use of force).

Manager – a leader must have particular abilities and features of character to influence their co-workers' thoughts and feelings and stimulate their energy and initiative. The manager is a person whose basic task is to realise managing process – realise a set of actions influencing organisation's store (human, material,

financial and informative) which allow achieving organisation's aims in an efficient way [1].

Manager, in order to achieve a success in his job, must be the possessor of the particular qualifications.

F.W. Taylor (1911) paid a lot of attention to the management skills. H. Favol distinguished the managerial skills from the technical skills. R.L. Katza created one of the most popular divisions of managerial skills. He distinguished three basic groups of skills:

- Technical skills include knowledge about the methods, processes, procedures and techniques which are used to realise specialist / technical activities, and also an ability to use the tools and equipment connected with that activity in an effective way,
- Social skills (interpersonal) include knowledge about human behaviour and interpersonal relations, the ability to understand feelings, patterns of behaviour, and motivation on the basis of what they do and say, an ability to communicate in an easy and clear way, and the ability to establish proper relations and cooperation,
- Conceptual skills – general analytical skills, logical thinking, proficiency in formulating ideas and coping with complicated relations, creative way of solving problems, an ability to analyze trends, forecasting the changes, noticing the chances, inductive and deductive thinking [2].

It is important to highlight that all these managerial skills are indispensable in an efficient managing, but their relative meaning for a particular manager depend on his position within the organisation.

P. Kotler strongly marks that all managers should be the leaders but most of them are administrators, who devote too much time to budget, organisation charts, costs, etc. In order to become a leader, managers must

devote more time to people, spend time on looking for possibilities, realising their visions and pointing aims [3]. The human factor gains more and more significance in manager's job, and the manager skills connected with the relations between the manager and the employee will have a key significance in the future (what is confirmed by the research).

The aim of this article is to state what are the key manager skills in the 21st century, taking into consideration interpersonal skills (the significance of the contact with other people and the way of influencing them).

Managing practice shows that the manager must be the possessor of different kinds of personality features and skills, which are often presented in the literature as personal and interpersonal skills. Personal skills characterise the person, while interpersonal skills appear in direct contact with others.

Personal skills include (4) e.g.:

- awareness development – awareness improvement, identification of person's weak and strong points, the ability to gain knowledge and using it in practice,
- stress directing – is connected with the ability to deal with stress, identification of stresses and their elimination.

The ability to manage the stress is also connected with managing the time, assigning aims and the balance of activities which are realised,

- creative problem solving – is connected with the change in thinking habits, the ability to join properly rational and creative thinking, and also the ability to create innovations,
- foreign languages communicating ability– it is an important skill, especially when we keep in mind the globalization and the extension of the European Union.

While stating interpersonal skills it is important to pay attention to another person, contact with this person and the way we influence him. Manager's interpersonal skills include [4]:

- communication – the ability of efficient listening and speaking, the ability to improve others by shaping proper behaviour patterns and advising co-workers. Communication is also connected with influencing other people taking part in this process,
- power and influence acquiring– the ability to use your own knowledge, using the social influence and acquiring respect of others,
- employees' motivation is connected with raising the standard of organization's efficiency by proper usage of human potential, understanding of the motivation process and employees' needs, making the diagnosis about reasons of low efficiency and dealing with weak workers,
- efficient delegation – possessing and realising the delegation skills, the ability to evaluate which decisions and tasks should be made individually, and which should be made by the group.
- conflict directing – the ability to identify the source of conflict, dealing with emotions while being in trouble, the

way of having a good relation with others, the ability to stand the test of criticism,

- group work skill – the ability to organise and conduct meetings, playing the part of meeting's chairperson, an efficient way of using the technique of group decision-making.

2. Characterization and environment research

The results of researches conducted in two partnership colleges cooperating with each other on the basis of Socrates – Erasmus programme were used at work in order to realize stated at the beginning aim. In Poland the researches were conducted at University of Rzeszów, and in Hungary – at Szent Istvan University. Polish group of students consisted of 62 people, while Hungarian – 71. 65% of Polish students claimed that they have an experience of being a manager. Polish population being under examination declared possessing good knowledge in the field of management (they were marked with school marks, scale from 1 - unsatisfactory to 5 - very good). Hungarian students subjectively evaluated their management knowledge at 3,23. 47% of Hungarian students declared that they have an experience of being a manager, about half of them (50%) were employees.

These research results were compared with the opinions of managers from Poland and the United States of America and then were published in the trade magazine.

Students, who study management or were just to graduate from their colleges, were asked several questions about the vision of manager in the 21st century.

Questions which dealt with estimating skills included three aspects:

- recognising the skill structure at each management level,
- determining the significance of particular skill type and pointing out the most important skill type within that group,
- determining the skills deciding about the management success.

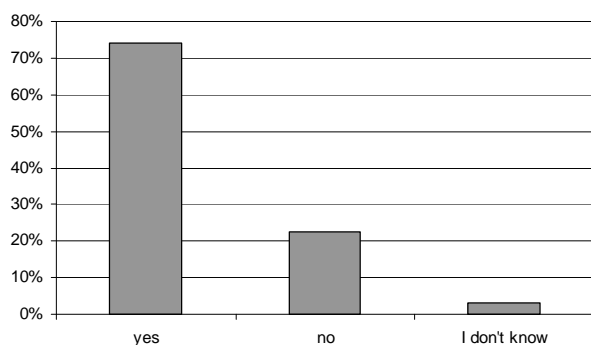
3. The skill structure at each management level

Katz claimed that the change of management level is combined with the change of skill significance (which are often labeled as competences). Technical skills, directly connected with the work performed, and partly interpersonal skills (mainly connected with relations among people within organization) are the most important in the case of basic management level - experts. According to this theory specialists should principally possess technical skills and some interpersonal skills (which are not so significant as technical skills).

Their superiors should be especially characterized by interpersonal competences. Additionally strategic skills appear. In other words, on one hand manager doesn't have to possess as good knowledge and technical skills as specialists, on the other hand manager should develop interpersonal and strategic competences in order to observe the organization as one unit.

The aim of observations conducted among students was to receive information if young generation notices the theories in practice and gain information about the structure of particular types of competences depending on management level. Among Polish students up to 70% of the people being examined confirmed the theory (fig 1) and they were sure that there are certain differences between manager's skills at higher or lower levels. Hungarian students came to similar conclusions.

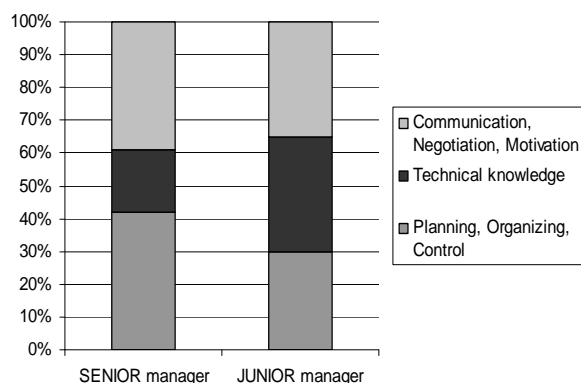
Fig.1 Do manager characteristics differ depending on manager position in an organization hierarchy



Source: own study

The division of skills into three groups was accepted in order to define the skill structure in different management groups (fig 2).

Fig 2. Define a percentage share of particular skills of senior and junior managers



Source: own study

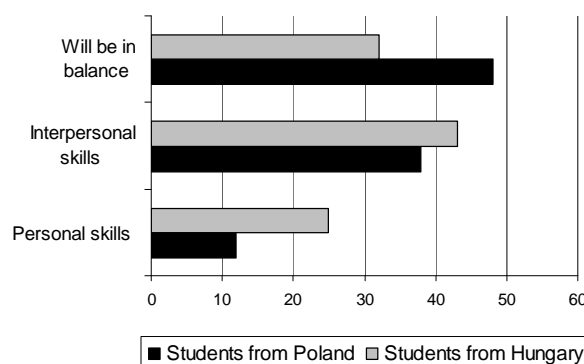
Social skills (among which communication, motivation and negotiation were emphasised), technical and conceptual skills (planning, organisation and control). Students declared significantly that technical skills are more important in the case of junior managers (about 18 % more) than in the case of senior managers.

This distinction was connected with the fact that more significance was admitted to social and conceptual skills among senior managers.

4. Recognizing the importance of different types of manager's skills

When we want to characterize the manager in the 21st century it's worth to give a good deal of thought to skills which manager should have in the future to realize properly the management function. Students were asked to determine the importance of manager's skills after dividing these skills into two groups – personal and interpersonal skills. The results of this inquiry are presented in figure 3.

Fig.3 The significance of particular skill type among managers in the 21st century

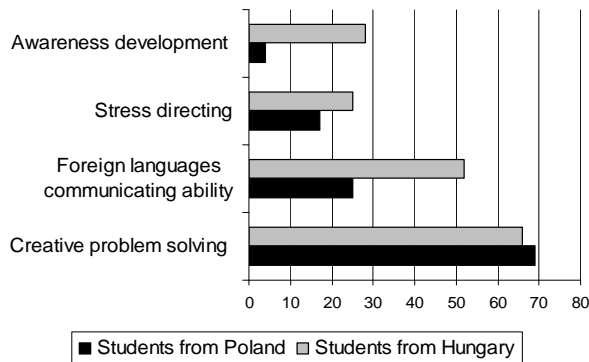


Source: own study

Almost a half of Polish students' equally treats enumerated skills, whereas Hungarian students indicate an increasing significance of interpersonal skills.

While deciding about the importance of different skills within a group, students expressed their opinion that the most important skill among personal skills would be creative problem solving (fig 4).

Fig.4 The most important future manager personal skills in the students' opinion

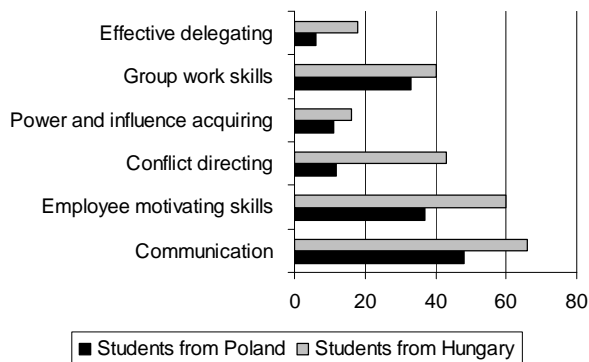


Source: own study

Both groups stated that stress directing skill is least important. The surprising fact is that Hungarian students, more than Polish students, attach more importance to foreign language communicating ability. But the idea of learning foreign languages by Polish citizens in Poland develops in a very dynamic way.

Communication skill were admitted as the most important among the impersonal skills (fig 5).

Fig.5 The most important future manager interpersonal skills in the students' opinion



Source: own study

Another high place among interpersonal skills reached (according to students) motivating of subordinates skills and group work skills. Students from Hungary paid attention to conflict solving skill. The rest of the skills were pointed by a very small percentage of tested students (lower than 20 %), what means that these skills are seen as less vital.

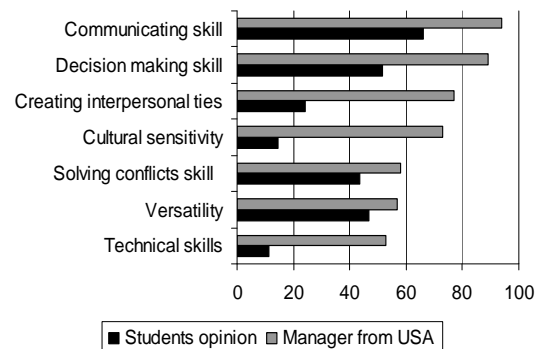
Stating the key manager skills was the subject of researches conducted in different areas and places. The most fundamental opinions were formulated by the practitioner environments.

In 1996 Anderson Consulting firm and the Economist Intelligence Unit conducted researches among managers in the United States of America. This researches were to establish which management skills will become

key skills to an efficient management in the future, in 2010. The same question was asked ten years later among students at University of Rzeszów. (fig 6)

Managers and students unanimously stated that in the future the most important for the manager will be communication and decision making skills. Much importance was also attributed to conflict solving skill and versatility. Students didn't see cultural sensitivity and creating interpersonal ties as important.

Fig. 6 Which of the skills will be the most important to effective management in 2010 ?



Source: own study, [6]

They also indicated other manager personality aspects such as: intelligence, flexibility and inclination to risk.

5. Manager skills influencing management success

The important factor of organization activities is its situation on the local and global market. While evaluating manager's work we should take into account the results of the organization managed by him. It is worth looking at the manager's characteristics through the success prism of an organization managed by him.

While analyzing manager's skills it is worth to check skills which are perceived as the most important in efficient management. There were undertaken some research among 100 senior managers in Podlasie, Poland [5]. This group of managers satisfied the condition of representative body considering their numbers and maintain the proportion of gender, age, job training at management post. Tested people expressed their opinions about the significance of particular management skills in practice by filling in inquiry sheet. Each skill was to be

labelled with numbers from 1 (the most important) to 10 (the least important). Closed questions included 10 skill types chosen on the basis of subject literature [6]. In 2006 the same research was done in Poland at University of Rzeszów. The students were asked to order the basic management skills according their importance. The results of this research are presented in fig 7

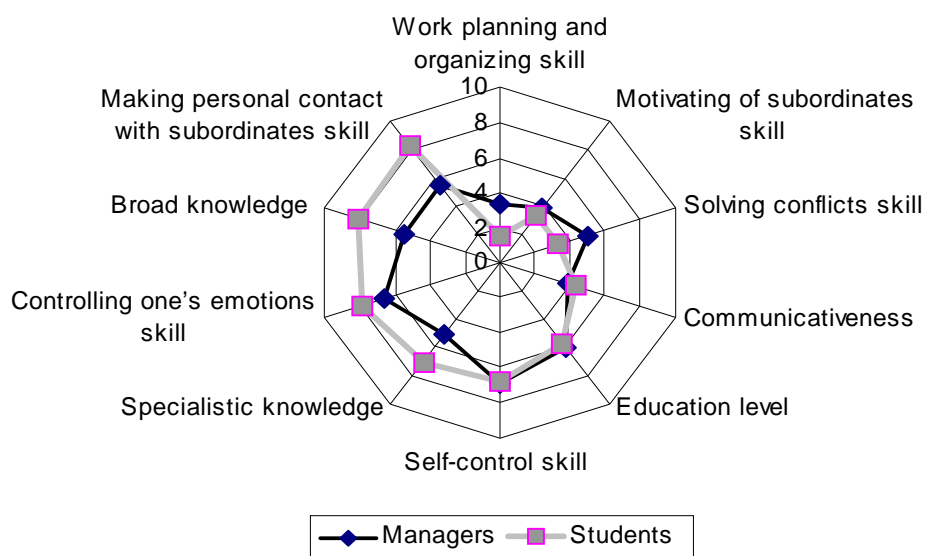
Both managers and students expressed opinions that within this collection of skills there is a group of skills which are more, or less important. What is more, their opinions converge.

Work planning and organization skills, motivating of subordinates skill, communication, conflict solving skill consist a group of skills which received up to 5 points, so these skills are considered as important by examined people. Other skills were recognized as less vital (from 6 to 8,5 points).

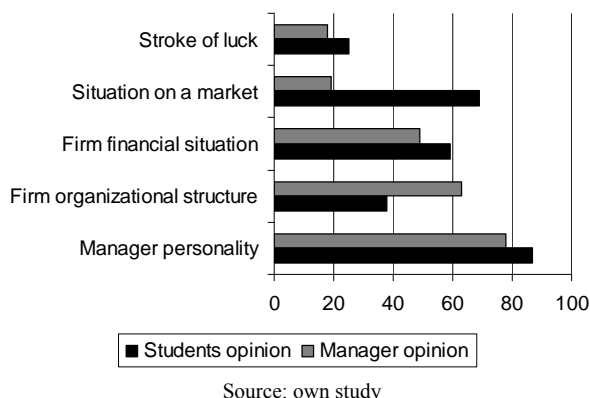
According to practitioners, the picture manager skills in the 21st century presents a significant difference between more or less important skills, while students claim that this difference is not so visible. In the opinion of students the difference between the most and least important feature is 4, in the opinion of managers from Podlasie this difference is even 7. Both for managers and students the most important feature deciding about the success in management is manager personality (fig 8).

Fig 8. The most important determinants of success in management discipline

Fig 7. The skills of a contemporary manager „Today”, in the opinion of managers and students from Poland.



Source: own study



Up to 80% of tested people paid attention to that fact. Over 50 % of managers decided that firm financial situation and firm organizational structure are also important. The biggest difference in managers and students' opinions about significance of determinants was when we look at situation on market. 70 % of students admitted it is important for the success of the organization while managers claimed completely different.

Conclusion

- The percentage share of particular skills of senior and junior manager in students' opinion is different. The change of competences, in students' opinion, ensues along with the change of management levels. The junior manager should have more technical skills than senior manager.
 - In the opinion of students the most important for the future manager will be interpersonal skills, among which communication, motivating subordinates skill and group work skill are considered as the most significant
 - Researches conducted at the end of the 20th century in the United States of America show that communication and decision making process will be the main management skills in the 21st century. This fact is confirmed by the researches undertaken in Poland and Hungary.
- Students realise that the manager especially should be communicative and able to make decisions. But they seem not to notice the significance of cooperation between manager and subordinate and underestimate the role of organisation culture in the management process.
- Manager, who wants to achieve success, should have the skill of planning and organising, skill of motivating subordinates and conflict solving skill. In order to achieve
 - a success you should have a personality, pay attention to aspects connected with proper firm organisation and financial situation.

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Languages: Polish, German, English

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