



Justyna Śmietańska

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1316-8470>

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland; e-mail: justynac@amu.edu.pl

Empirical Constructing of the Managerial Talent Category in Education

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Abstract

The article addresses the issue of modern management of educational institutions. The subject of empirical research was the category of managerial talent in education. Effort is made to present the indicated subject matter in a multidimensional and holistic manner, combining the category and advantages of quantitative research methodology, psychometric measurement, and qualitative research methods. The study group consisted of teachers and head teachers at Polish state schools (primary schools, junior high schools, upper-secondary schools). The head teachers were given in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) and psychological tests, and teachers responded to an Internet survey (CAWI). The main objective of the empirical research was to construct a category described as managerial talent in education. On the basis of the research, the characteristic components of this category were distinguished. Special emphasis was also placed on the pragmatic dimension of the studied phenomenon, the results obtained and conclusions drawn – for this reason the paper includes numerous reflections and practical implications concerning everyday educational life and modern education management

Key words: managerial talent, management of education, headmaster, modern school, educational institutions.

Introduction

The foundations of the changes taking place in Polish education are diverse. However, social expectations are a significant source of change. It is also assu-

med that leaders are among the basic factors determining changes in education. Leadership in education is of an interdisciplinary nature. Knowledge of educational leadership comes from various sciences, including the general theory of organization and management (Pocztowski, 2008; Robbins, 2010; Armstrong, 2010; Kwiatkowski & Michalak, 2010; Ingram 2011; 2016; Banaszak, 2019). A contemporary head of an educational institution should exhibit features proving his or her specific managerial talent and conduct practical management not only as a formal superior, but also as a leader who enjoys trust and personal authority (Mazurkiewicz, 2009; Kwiatkowski & Michalak, 2010, p. 7; Banaszak, 2013; 2016; 2019). An effective and modern head teacher should base his or her authority on personal competences and values which are recognized by staff, to minimize the need to exercise sanctions and formal powers (Stoner & Wankel, 1992, pp. 383–403; Mazurkiewicz, 2009; Banaszak, 2013, pp. 65–74; 2019). The modern head, in a dynamic manner and appropriately to observations made on a continuous basis, more often tries to apply management methods based on cooperation, counselling, collaboration and exchange of experience, thereby avoiding the use of directives or minimizing their impact. Despite the noticeable dynamics, the Polish school still requires a kind of innovative and effective change, mainly concerning the modification of ways of thinking and of perceiving its specific features and organization (Banaszak, 2015; 2017). One of the socially expected changes is modern educational leadership. Searching for talent among potential candidates for headships should therefore become a priority issue related to the functioning of modern schools, as their leaders are an important driving force for education.

Methodological assumptions of research on managerial talent in education

The basis for undertaking empirical research devoted to the issue of managerial talent in education was the dynamic and diverse social and organizational changes taking place and the specific nature of expectations towards contemporary educational institutions. Research was conducted in the period from March to June 2015 (preceded by a pilot project in January and February 2015). An attempt was made to identify the category defined as managerial talent in education – and consequently to distinguish its characteristic personal features, the level of selected psychological qualities, as well as a socio-educational and professional profile. To present the topics in question in a multidimensional and holistic manner, methodological triangulation was applied – combining the

resources of quantitative research, psychometric measurement and qualitative research methods (Śmietańska, 2016, pp. 153–161). Quantitative and qualitative approaches have a different understanding of the meaning of the research process, which from the point of view of practical research organization may be treated as an asset (Jick, 1983; Gephart, 1988; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2001; Babbie, 2013). As many researchers and theoreticians have observed, qualitative and quantitative methods can coexist and complement each other (Gephart, 1988; Shoda et al., 1994, pp. 674–687; Flick, 2007, pp. 154–157). One of the significant advantages of using such a differentiated methodological approach is the possibility of using the strengths of both approaches, i.e. meticulous measurement, control of quantitative orientation, and the deep analysis of the qualitative approach. It was assumed that “qualitative and quantitative methods should be perceived as complementary and not competitive” (Jick, 1983, p. 135; Flick, 2007, p. 154). One of the four research project types integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, proposed in the classification of Miles and Huberman, assuming simultaneous and continuous collection of both types of data at the same time, was applied (Miles & Huberman, 2000, p. 43; Flick, 2007, p. 157).

Several research procedures, techniques and tools were used in the research. The first technique consisted of in-depth individual interviews (IDIs), which constitute one of the basic techniques of qualitative research. Their principal aim was to obtain detailed opinions and information from persons meeting certain sample selection criteria. Individual interviews, forming part of the research procedure, were conducted with head teachers of state schools. The interviews were partially structured. The second technique was a survey in the form of a questionnaire, characteristic for quantitative research strategies. In the research concerning managerial talent in education, the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) type was used. The respondents of this survey were teachers at state schools. Additionally, in the form of a supplement to the survey, the head teachers also underwent the following standardized psychological tests:

- *NEO-FFI Five Factor Inventory* (Costy & McCrae);
- *Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) Questionnaire* (Endler & Parker);
- *LOT-R Life Orientation Test* (Scheier, Carver & Bridges)¹.

¹ *NEO-FFI Five Factor Inventory* (authors: Costy and McCrae) is a questionnaire used to diagnose personality features included in the popular five-factor model, referred to as the Great Five model. The questionnaire consists of 60 self-descriptive statements, the truthfulness of which

The selection of the surveyed population was dictated by the aim of the planned research. All survey respondents worked at a modern state school in Poland, thus they have a close connection with the main subject of research – managerial talent – but they observe the phenomena in question from different perspectives. The first group, among whom in-depth individual interviews were conducted (as well as complementary psychometric measurements), consisted of head teachers of state schools. In qualitative research, the selection of participants is always purposeful and subordinated to the subject of research. It consists in searching for those people who, due to their knowledge and experience, are able to provide the most relevant and comprehensive information in relation to the research questions (Silverman, 2012, pp. 272–273; Flick, 2007, p. 184). The research involved 18 head teachers (7 women and 11 men). All of them were the heads of state schools (primary, junior high and upper-secondary schools) in Gniezno district and the city of Poznań (Poland). All of the selected persons were in at least their second term as head teacher of the school. The second surveyed group consisted of teachers at state schools, including primary, junior high and upper-secondary schools. Arbitrary selection of respondents was applied. The final number of teachers completing the questionnaire was 264 (179 women and 85 men), including 114 teachers from primary schools, 63 from junior high schools and 87 from upper-secondary schools. Analysis of Central Statistical Office (CSO) data, which concerned the school year 2014/15, indicated that the total numbers of teachers at the selected types of educational institutions in Gniezno district and Poznań were as follows: for primary schools–

in relation to oneself is assessed on a five-point scale. These items form five scales that measure neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) Questionnaire (authors: Endler, Parker) is a questionnaire for diagnosing stress handling styles. The CISS consists of 48 statements concerning different behaviors that people may exhibit in stressful situations. Respondents determine on a five-point scale the frequency with which they take particular actions in difficult and stressful situations. The results are presented on three scales: SSZ – task-oriented coping; SSE – emotion-oriented coping; and SSU – avoidance-oriented coping. The last style can take two forms: ACZ – engaging in substitutionary activities; and PKT – looking for social contacts.

LOT-R Life Orientation Test (authors: Scheier, Carver, Bridges) is a questionnaire containing 10 statements, six of which have diagnostic value for *dispositional optimism*. Dispositional optimism is treated as a relatively permanent personality feature, i.e. a genetically determined element. Test results around 1–4 sten are treated as low, indicating a susceptibility to pessimism, while results in the range 7–10 sten are treated as high and indicate an optimistic attitude (Anastasi & Urbina, 1999; Hornowska, 2007; Psychological Testing Laboratory, 2019).

2949; for junior high schools – 1518; for upper-secondary schools – 1204. This gives a total population of 5671, and means that the study group of 264 teachers represented 4.7% of the population (Śmietańska, 2016, pp. 167; CSO, Education and upbringing, 2014/15).

Selected results of research on managerial talent in education

One of the areas of interest identified in the research was the assessment of the importance of a head teacher's specific competences in the eyes of teaching staff. In a questionnaire question on this subject, respondents were asked to rank the listed competences of a head teacher, making a subjective assessment of which of them are most important for a person holding that position. The proposed areas of competence were varied, and included: substantive and didactic competence for subject teaching, educational competence, competence in psychological and pedagogical assistance, leadership competence, competence in foreign language skills, competence in conflict resolution, competence in planning and school management, competence in interpersonal communication, competence in obtaining funds from EU sources, and competence in multimedia and IT knowledge. The results showed that in the assessment of the surveyed teachers the most important are competences in school planning, management and leadership. They clearly associate these categories with the position of head teacher. The importance of competences in conflict resolution, fundraising and interpersonal skills was also highly rated. In a sense, these tendencies reflect the specific functioning of today's schools: in particular, there is a worrying tendency towards the escalation of conflict situations. The head teacher's competence in conflict situations appears to be particularly important – both in the context of conflict prevention (here also the interpersonal competences of the head teacher, ranked highly by respondents, have an important role) and the subsequent management of a conflict in such a form that it can be resolved in a decisive and effective manner. Teachers also attached great importance to the ability to raise funds from additional sources. It should be noted that these sources provide today's schools with many opportunities to develop and improve their financial base.

It is notable that respondents less frequently ascribed importance to educational, substantive and didactic competences for subject teaching, as well as competences in providing psychological and pedagogical assistance. These findings can probably be explained by the fact that these categories are char-

acteristic for teachers in general and constitute areas of the respondents' own work. It may be suspected that staff perceive the head more as a "manager" who plans and organizes the school's activities, and to a lesser extent as a teacher and educator. As is well known, the head's number of teaching hours is lower by law than those of other teachers, and may be reduced further depending on the number of classes in the school and by decision of the governing body. It is also possible that a head may be exempted from teaching altogether (Ustawa o systemie oświaty, 1991, Art. 42, paras. 3, 3a, 6, 7). It is also worthy of mention that the surveyed teachers gave the lowest ratings for the usefulness of such competences of a head teacher as knowledge of foreign languages, multimedia and IT technology. This does not inspire optimism, and it is difficult to agree with such an assessment. International cooperation, exchanges between schools, and the implementation of programs such as Comenius and Youth for Understanding are becoming increasingly important. Moreover, IT technologies are commonly used in education – in the organization of teaching (programs, multimedia boards) or even in the form of an electronic grade book. What is more, most students use technology and multimedia freely and fluently. Perhaps this assessment by respondents results from the fact that very often in schools the head teacher delegates certain persons to perform tasks related to the use of information technologies, such as an IT or foreign language teacher, and therefore in the system of associations of the surveyed teachers, these competences (in the context of the other answers) are perceived as the least important for someone whose role is that of an education manager.

Respondents were also asked to assess the extent to which the indicated personal qualities or abilities are important in the role of school head teacher. The respondent's task was to assess each of the indicated features/abilities on a five-point scale (where 1 means completely unimportant and 5 means very important). The list included such features as entrepreneurship, communicativeness, empathy, determination, rhetorical skills, self-control, adequate self-esteem, self-confidence, ease of making contact, and extrovertism. The vast majority of respondents (over 70%) considered such features as entrepreneurship and communicativeness to be very important for a head teacher. The importance of such features as self-control, determination and ease of establishing contact was also highly rated – over 60% of respondents identified these categories as "very important". In addition, about 50% of teachers considered that rhetorical skills, empathy, adequate self-esteem and self-confidence remain important. Some variation in the distribution of responses was observed in the case of extrovertism. Psychological characteristics of the extrovert type include such

features as sociability, openness, vividness and seeking sensations. In practice, extroverts are communicative people, easily establishing contact, often showing leadership features. According to more than 40% of respondents it is important for the head teacher to have extrovert features, and about 27% consider this to be “very important”.

An important issue raised during the research on managerial talent was the recognition of perceptions by teachers regarding the category of “outstanding head teacher”. Respondents’ statements in the context of a question about the characteristics of such a person indicated several distinctive elements. The first was described as effective organization of the school’s work. Teachers repeatedly pointed out the need for clear and concrete formulation of expectations and delegation of tasks, as well as clear cooperation and the head teacher’s understanding of the perspective of various stakeholders: teachers, parents, students, etc. Respondents emphasized the need for the head to treat the school holistically, attaching importance to the ongoing coordination of the activities of all members of the school community. The second of the observed thematic areas, which corresponds to statements related to the effective organization of work, is social and emotional competences. Respondents stressed the importance of features related to the personality and character of the head teacher, as well as a high degree of internalization of social norms, which is reflected in measurable behaviors and specific ways of treating other people. In addition, with regard to the statements of the surveyed teachers, the meaning of the concepts of responsibility and courage has a strong impact. Responsibility and courage have been embedded in different contexts, especially in the decision-making process. Another area was defined as authority and mastery of substance. This is shaped by many resources and skills, including knowledge of educational law, issues related to pedagogy and child psychology, as well as management in broad terms. Self-improvement and continuous personal and professional development were also of great importance. In respondents’ assessments of the characteristics of an outstanding head teacher, the concept of authority was also mentioned many times, but it should be emphasized that this is based on merit and inspiration of others, and not on strength resulting from the position. The importance of planning and well-thought-out decision-making also resounds strongly from the analyzed statements. Impulsiveness, violence and a tendency to make hasty decisions are perceived negatively by respondents. It may be assumed that a head who operates in the former manner provides teachers with a sense of security and causes them to perceive their manager as a responsible, orderly and trustworthy person.

Another recognized category was related to the question asking which of the listed features of a head teacher are, in the opinion of teachers, the most destructive for the general functioning of the school. Among the most common negative behaviors (over 80%) there appeared in the following order: “injustice, unequal treatment of employees” (209 respondents), “stiffness of thinking and acting, lack of openness to change” (198 respondents) and “disregard for employees” (over 70% of respondents). Other areas were also frequently indicated: “criticism, emotional criticism, personal remarks” (about 64% of selections) and “delegating own duties to other employees” (139 teachers, i.e. about 59% of respondents chose this answer). The lowest score among the indicated answers was that of “lack of punctuality”, selected by 29 respondents (12%). A dozen or so respondents also recorded their subjective observations concerning negative features and behaviors of a head teacher – participation in politics, lack of knowledge of the law and laziness were indicated here.

An important issue considered in the research, significant for the practical management of a modern educational institution, was problems involving conflicts. In one of the questionnaire questions, selected descriptions of conflict were presented: “is determined by human nature”, “at a moderate level is necessary for each organization”, “should be solved as soon as possible”, “only harms the organization”, “allows one to mark one’s own subjective position on a given issue”, “may motivate to act”, “deepens prejudices and stereotypes”, “may increase effectiveness”, “leads to deterioration of the working atmosphere”, “distracts attention from pursued objectives”. As the results indicate, there are two issues that stand out in particular in the opinions of the surveyed teachers that characterize the phenomenon of conflict. Over 80% of respondents considered that conflict “should be resolved as soon as possible” and “distracts attention from pursued objectives”. About 55% agreed that conflict “leads to deterioration of the working atmosphere”, while over 40% indicated that conflict “at a moderate level is necessary for each organization” and “is determined by human nature”. It is also noteworthy that for about 37% of respondents conflict “may increase effectiveness”, and for about 35% it “allows one to mark one’s own subjective position on a given issue”. Only 17% of respondents categorically stated that conflict “only harms the organization”. The results obtained give an interesting picture of how conflict is viewed among the group of surveyed teachers. First of all – a fact that may inspire some optimism – in the vast majority of cases they note the dichotomous nature of a conflict situation, not only its weaknesses or threats. At the same time, they are of the opinion that conflict may lead to an improvement in effectiveness and is even needed

at a moderate level in an organization. Moreover, one cannot dispute the correctness of the most frequently selected observations relating to the necessity of resolving conflict as soon as possible and the problem that it distracts attention from pursued objectives. Indeed, the problems of conflict management clearly indicate benefits of a quick resolution of a conflict situation, as otherwise it leads to escalation of unacceptable behaviors and the spread of the conflict to the whole working group.

Respondents were also asked about the most effective way of resolving conflicts in the teaching team. This question contained a list of closed answers and was constructed on the basis of a model of conflict resolution styles proposed by Thomas and Kilmann (the indicated styles being Rivalry, Cooperation, Compromise, Avoidance, Adaptation). As the results show, in teachers' opinions, the most effective way of resolving conflicts among staff is cooperation – this answer was selected by about 63% of respondents. The second most frequent choice was the compromise style, considered justified by about 31% of respondents. Twelve respondents stated that the best way is to adapt by satisfying needs. Other methods – rivalry and avoidance – were not selected.

From the perspective of conflict management theory, the style based on cooperation is indeed highly rated in terms of effectiveness. However, it should be noted that in practice it is very difficult to apply and requires that the manager demonstrate high emotional maturity, self-control and insight. Nevertheless, skillfully and reflectively applied, it usually brings measurable, positive results. Ultimately, it also makes it possible to obtain many of the successful consequences of conflict situations (e.g. improvement of communication, quality of interpersonal relations), and also to a large extent to avoid negative consequences such as disturbance of group dynamics, the formation of antagonistically oriented “camps”, or communication difficulties between superiors and subordinates.

Head teachers' perspective

Both in the survey of teachers and during the interviews with head teachers, the issue of the manager's integration with staff was raised. Head teachers were asked to assess whether and how they identify the balance between the manager's distance and his or her integration with the working team. They were also asked whether a manager should in principle integrate with his employees.

In the case of both groups of respondents, the approach to the issue of integration was conscious and deliberate – the main aim was to learn about

the assessments of two interested parties having different perspectives on the situation. As indicated by the statements made by head teachers, most of them favor integration, but at the same time they point out that this integration must take a specific form, i.e. with the observance of boundaries and maintenance of a certain distance. They also clearly differentiate between integration and the phenomenon referred to as familiarity, which they view negatively and consider harmful to the organization of work. There was also a conviction that as regards the form of integration, it is important whether the head was formerly a teacher at the school and experienced friendly relations with the people whom he or she currently manages, or came from outside the institution. In addition, head teachers pointed to the importance of the emotional maturity of teachers – to what extent they understand the system of professional and social relations, whether they attempt to use integration situations to achieve additional objectives, and whether they view a lessening of the distance between them and the head teacher as a kind of permission to show less commitment in the tasks entrusted to them. The whole group of surveyed head teachers agreed on these issues and responded with a high degree of consistency.

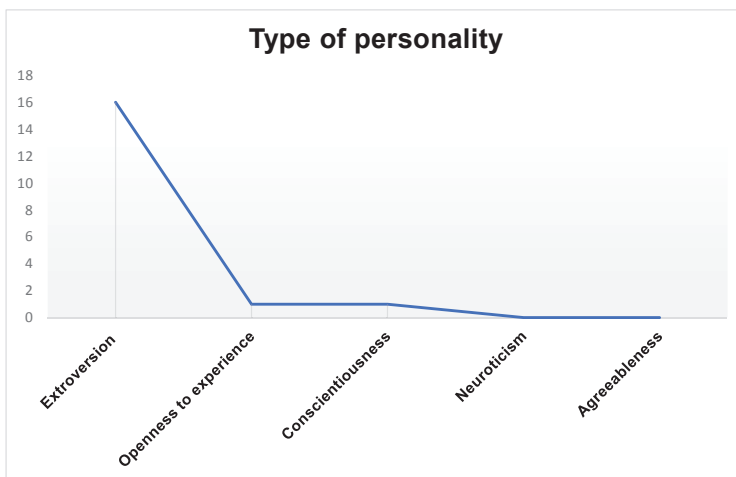
To sum up, the surveyed head teachers do not favor deep integration with the working team. In arguing in support of such an attitude, they emphasize its importance in relation to the later management of staff and the effective pursuit of objectives. It should be emphasized that these preferences (referring to “moderate integration”, “integration with the maintenance of boundaries” or “integration with distance”) correspond closely to the responses of the surveyed teachers, who also answered questions concerning the issue of integration between superior and subordinates. The dominant opinion among the surveyed teachers was again that such integration was justified, but in a specific form and with the maintenance of distance. Over 69% of respondents believed that the head teacher should integrate with staff, but at the same time about 60% stated that the appropriate type of integration was what is called “average integration”. This subtype of integration involves a high degree of knowledge on employees’ personal matters, mixing of methods of communication and use of forms of politeness depending on the situation or specific persons, as well as the organization of informal meetings outside the workplace, but – notably – without creating a clear collegiate group. It should also be mentioned that about 30% of respondents considered the most appropriate subtype to be “low integration”, which consists in superficial knowledge of the personal matters of employees, occasional meetings outside the workplace – mainly involving the whole staff – and clear maintenance of formal communication. These results lead one to

conclude that teachers' expectations regarding integration between head and staff are consistent with the preferences of the heads themselves.

Another thematic area covered in the interviews with head teachers was the issue of conflict resolution (Cieślińska, 2014, pp. 243–259). They were asked to assess what, in their opinion, is the most effective way of resolving conflicts among staff and between staff and parents. First of all, the interviewed head teachers' statements indicate that, as a rule, they are willing to use similar procedures in both types of situation. Their statements also indicate that the main objective is to create a space for dialogue for the conflicted parties. Very often, it is the head's office that becomes a place where conflicting parties can meet, confront different views of the matter and talk about the factors generating the conflict with somewhat reduced emotions. In the interviews, head teachers also stressed the importance of controlling strong emotions, keeping calm, rethinking matters and gaining distance. In fact, the importance of these categories is significant, as the findings of cognitive psychology show that strong emotions affect cognitive evaluation and cause distortions in the functioning of cognitive processes, such as memory, concentration, perception and thinking. Finally, it was also emphasized – with regard to teacher–parent conflicts – that in meetings concerning such situations there is a tendency for heads to defend the teacher, although they will discuss possible sanctions and consequences with the teacher when the parent is not present. The main objective in this situation is to avoid deprecation of the employee in the parents' eyes. The head teachers' statements show that they favor organizing space for dialogue, trying to avoid situations where conflict is ignored (or at least, they declare this to be the case). To a certain extent, this corresponds to the opinions of the surveyed teachers, who assessed cooperation as the most effective way of resolving staff conflicts – such an answer was selected by over 63% of respondents. It is consciously assessed that the results obtained from the questionnaires and interviews in this area correspond only to a certain extent, as the statements of head teachers in particular are characterized by a high degree of generality – thus it is appropriate to be cautious in comparing these results.

Standardized psychological tests were also applied to the surveyed head teachers. However, it is worthwhile to emphasize that they were only of a complementary nature, and given the small number of respondents (18), the main objective was to satisfy theoretical curiosity and to seek inspiration for more extensive research in the future. Analysis of the results indicated that most of the surveyed head teachers are extrovert types. Of the 18 subjects, 16 achieved high scores in this dimension (above 8 sten). By definition, extroversion is asso-

ciated with optimism, sociability, preference for being among people, cheerful mood and energetic seeking of stimulation. All subjects also achieved scores in the highest range (8–10 sten) for openness to experience and conscientiousness. Openness to experience is a category characterized by a tendency to search for life experiences and give them a positive meaning. People with a high intensity of this feature are therefore characterized by openness, high cognitive curiosity and broad intellectual horizons. Conscientiousness, on the other hand, is characterized by motivation, commitment and consistent pursuit of desired goals. This dimension is also associated with reliability and punctuality. A summary is presented in Graph 1.

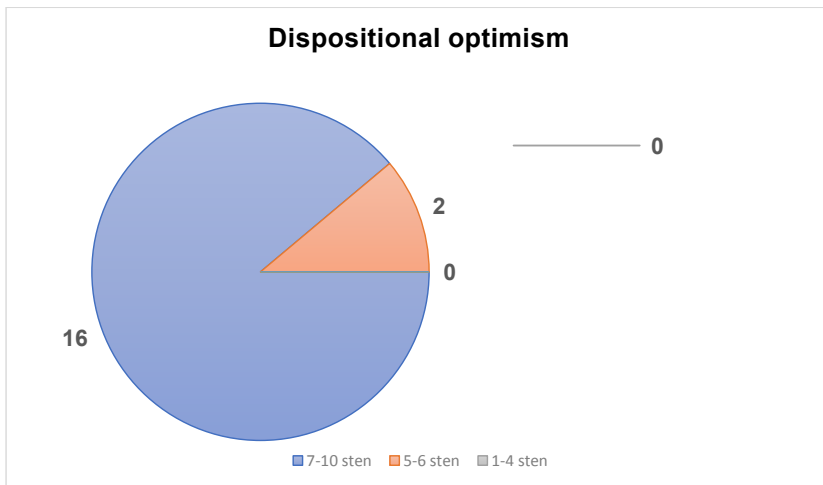


Graph 1: Head teachers' personality type.

Source: Author's research, based on NEO-FFI Five Factor Inventory (Costy and McCrae).

For the most part, the surveyed head teachers also achieved high scores in the dimension of dispositional optimism (16 persons in the range 7–10 sten, two in the range 5–6 sten; see Graph 2).

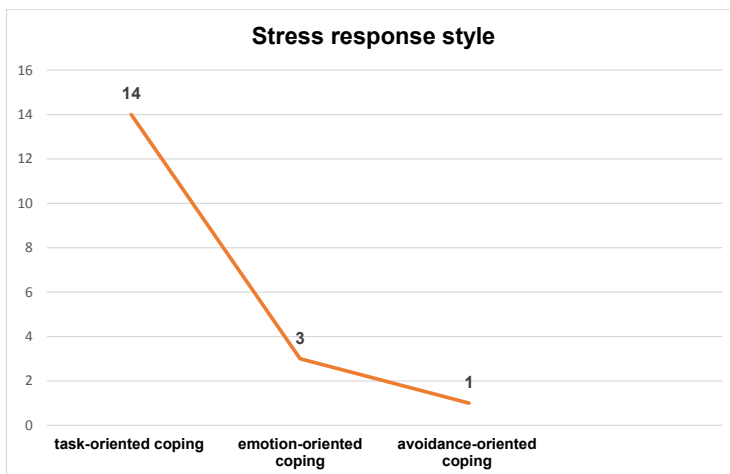
One of the regulatory mechanisms which determine a person's choice of goals and the direction of their activity is proneness to optimism, referred to in this case as *dispositional* optimism. The level of optimism has a modifying function in behaviors and actions. In general, it correlates positively with high self-esteem, self-efficacy belief, and a sense of high internal control. Negative correlations have been recorded with level of anxiety and degree of helplessness.



Graph 2: Results for the category of dispositional optimism.

Source: Author's research based on LOT-R Life Orientation Test (Scheier, Carver, Bridges).

Respondents were also analyzed for their ways of coping in stressful situations. A summary of the results is given in Graph 3.



Graph 3: Results for the category of stress response style.

Source: Author's research based on CISS Questionnaire of Coping with Stress Situations (Endler, Parker).

Most of the surveyed head teachers (14 persons) showed a tendency towards task-oriented coping in response to stress (3 persons were characterized by emotion-oriented coping and 1 by avoidance-oriented coping). The task-focused style is based on taking action to effectively solve a problem or to dynamically change an existing stressful situation.

Managerial talent in education – characteristics of the category

As previously mentioned, the main objective of the empirical research was to construct a category to be described as managerial talent in education. Educational management is not a new phenomenon, but the research procedure was aimed towards an in-depth recognition of the management category in education, as well as comparison of issues with talent management, which for many years has been common and widely commented on in the management sciences. A thorough analysis of the research material, including survey results, transcripts of individual interviews and outline measurements of psychological features, enabled an attempt to construct the category of managerial talent in education.

Six main components of managerial talent in education were distinguished: courage, comprehensive knowledge and skills, emotional maturity, responsibility, planning for the future, and awareness of the specific features of a teaching team.

The first component of managerial talent is the category of courage. This feature of a head teacher's character was repeatedly confirmed by the statements of surveyed teachers, in very diverse contexts. Emphasis was placed on courage in making decisions, often innovative, unconventional and thus unpopular. The importance of courage in opposing certain expectations on the part of the governing or supervising body was also emphasized. However, it should be pointed out that what is desired is probably not a "sassy critic". On the contrary – a courageous head teacher remains balanced and controlled, but at the same time determined, consistent and assertive in his or her actions. Educational managers characterized by managerial talent are able to follow their own path, despite often unfavorable circumstances. They have a vision of the school which has been developed along with the teaching staff, and are able to negotiate the direction to be taken. They are not passively subordinated to imposed expectations. It should be emphasized that such an attitude requires high mental resilience. In case of such behaviors, there is a risk of losing peace of mind and being exposed to emotionally unpleasant experiences.

The second component is comprehensiveness of knowledge and skills. Managerial talent develops continuously, improves its competences and ac-

quires specialist knowledge. Such an approach corresponds to the life-long learning perspective. However, extensive knowledge can be a source of inspiration for school management and for improvement of the quality of the school's work. People who have a need for continuous improvement also exhibit a certain humility towards the knowledge they already have. This is an extremely valuable feature that protects the individual against some illusory specialization and adoption of the dangerous attitude of "I already know everything", one of the most hazardous intellectual traps.

The third component of managerial talent in education is so-called emotional maturity. This dimension includes many areas and psychological predispositions, such as affective mastery or empathy. Emotionally mature persons are aware of their own emotional states, reactivity, susceptibility to frustration and ways of reacting in difficult situations. They correctly identify resources and strengths, carry out continuous work on themselves and improve emotional competence. Emotional maturity also includes a self-internal dimension – this concerns the level of empathy, and is expressed in the quality of social functioning. A person is able to accept the perspective of others, even in complex and conflict situations, which is particularly difficult and requires very great insight into oneself and self-awareness. It can be assumed that an emotionally mature head teacher understands the different groups of people with whom he or she cooperates – teachers, students, parents, other employees, representatives of local government, media and the whole school environment. High emotional maturity is also an expression of continuous work on one's own psychological structure and social competences.

The fourth component is responsibility. This dimension was very often indicated in the interviews with head teachers, who clearly emphasize the situation of today's educational institutions, in which in formal and legal terms, the school manager is ultimately responsible for all of the school's activities and initiatives. This is a significant source of emotional burden. In view of such expectations, the issue of responsibility in the context of managerial talent in education is strongly justified. A sense of responsibility is often the determinant of commitment and dedication to the school. The head teacher's work is not limited to specified hours. Of course, it is characterized by a certain hourly structure, including for example teaching hours or advertised office hours, but the process of planning or visualization of ideas cannot be contained exclusively within standard working hours. Such an attitude requires a special commitment, one of the important foundations of which is a high sense of responsibility.

Planning for the future is another component. A talented head teacher thinks in a long-term and far-reaching manner, trying to keep up to date with innovative solutions and, as far as possible, to stay ahead of current standards. He or she cannot remain mentally embedded only in the present perspective, concerning a particular day, month or even a school year. The nature of modern school management requires the ability to look at and direct actions for the future – strategically and in the long term – and often to plan for as long as several years. Planning for the future is expressed in the effective setting of objectives, as well as the means and ways to achieve them in the best possible way. It allows schools to organize their work in such a way that they are perceived as innovative and responsive to expectations. This also makes it possible for a particular case to be a source of inspiration for others and to set the direction of change.

The final component of managerial talent in education is a dimension specific to this field, namely awareness of the specific features of a teaching team. This quality can be fundamental in communication with and the management of educational staff. It is directly related to the specific nature of the management of this professional group. Teachers themselves, through spontaneous comments in the questionnaires that they completed, assessed that cooperation with teachers is of a very specific nature. Factors in this include, for example, a tendency for teachers to be hypersensitive to criticism and to consider the knowledge that they currently possess to be unquestionable. Of course, these assessments do not apply to all teachers, but the fact that representatives of that professional environment themselves draw attention to this issue is an interesting observation worthy of comment. The head should effectively identify and understand the needs of teachers, get to know their perspective, and listen to observations. It is not necessary always to adapt to them, but the mere fact that staff are involved in the school management process is very important. What is more, this situation generates a sense of belonging and responsibility for the organization under all circumstances. Awareness of the specific features involved in managing a team of teachers – a group of individuals sometimes overly convinced of their own infallibility and over-sensitive to criticism – may prove to be one of the key determinants of effective school management. This also seems to be particularly important in the context of significant restrictions imposed on the head teacher, resulting, for example, from the provisions of the Teacher's Charter and restrictions on the hiring and dismissal of employees in certain situations (Ustawa Karta Nauczyciela, 1982)

The main components indicated above are accompanied by a number of additional categories. Based on other research results (Cieślińska, 2014; 2015;

Śmietańska, 2016) it can be assumed that the ability to listen actively, to apply (at least to a greater extent) elements of democratic management style and to solve conflict situations by using models based on cooperation and compromise is also important. There are also preliminary indications of a likelihood that managerial talent in education is associated with an extrovert type, with a high level of dispositional optimism and a preference for a task-based style of coping with stressful situations. In the context of managerial talent in education, one's own educational background (humanities, social sciences vs. technical sciences) and previous professional experience are probably not of great importance. Both long-standing practice in the educational environment and the gaining of experience in completely different professional circumstances may be a source of much inspiration for the later practice of school management. Success potential is probably determined by psychological differences between individuals and the components indicated above, rather than the type of their formal education or the course of their professional career (Śmietańska, 2016, pp. 170–271).

Based on analysis of the research results and conclusions, an attempt has been made here to define the category of managerial talent in education. It is a set of psychological traits, talents and social properties, which include predisposition for making courageous decisions and consistency in their implementation, comprehensiveness and versatility of knowledge and skills, high level of emotional maturity, high sense of responsibility, competence in forward-looking planning, as well as knowledge of the specific features of managing a teaching team.

Conclusions

Contemporary head teachers and managers of the educational environment at all levels, often burdened with a multitude and diversity of tasks and requirements, associated with their role and with organization of the work of the managed institution, expect to receive appropriate support (Hofstede, 2000; Greer, 2001; Mazurkiewicz, 2009; Kwiatkowski & Michalak, 2010; Ingram, 2011; 2016; Griffin, 2017; Banaszak, 2016; 2017; 2019). This support will provide them with a sense of security and emotional stability in the dynamically changing school environment. Individual responsibility for all of the activities of the institution generates a sense of psychological burden and overwhelming, and in the long-term can lead to the abandonment of new initiatives and a temptation to focus on better predictable and thus safe situations. Head teachers seek opportunities to consult on their observations and activities on an ongoing

basis, to ensure a network of support and the sharing of effective practices. An important solution may be ideas related to mentoring and its introduction into the educational environment. A two-way professional relationship and the support resulting from it would create an opportunity to exchange expectations and experiences, to the benefit of both sides of the relationship.

Educational managers are an important source of information and inspiration for effective changes in education in Poland – they should be listened to systematically, and encouraged to share their observations and reflections on an official basis. Daily contact with the management practice of an educational institution generates a completely different perspective from those of legislators, the governing or supervisory authorities and the scientific community.

Polish schools still require constructive change, connected above all with flexibility of thinking and perception not only of the didactic and educational process, but also the organization of the work of the school and the specific features of its management (Banaszak, 2017; 2019). One of the most important expected and desired changes is modern leadership in schools. The expectations made of contemporary head teachers are evolving. People in these leadership positions are increasingly acting as coordinators to support communication, working with groups to stimulate commitment, and also acting as a catalyst for change. Therefore, there is a clear need to revise the assumptions concerning leadership. In many situations, it is head teachers who can most accurately assess the chances for real success of further initiatives to be implemented in schools. Many of the reflections that accompany head teachers in the daily management of education thus constitute a rich source of knowledge on the practice of everyday school life, often also anticipating requirements and standards. This represents an invaluable contribution to a national educational policy that is rational, in line with modern standards, and adequate to public expectations.

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