

Original article

Selected leadership qualities

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INFORMATIONS

Article history:

Submitted: 15 December 2017

Accepted: 23 June 2018

Published: 31 December 2018

ABSTRACT

The article presents the essence and importance of leadership, with particular reference to the specificity of military leadership. The purpose of the article is to indicate the validity of certain leadership qualities in the civil and military context, as well as the interaction between them. The research was carried out on civilian organization employees who were to assess the validity of selected leadership traits. The most important features and social competencies necessary for effective leadership and attitudes, described in the literature as worthy of imitation, are presented. The applied research methods (the analysis of literature and surveys in civilian organizations) allowed for indicating the distinguished leadership traits and some similarities between the characteristics of a military and civilian leader.

KEYWORDS

leadership, leader, leadership qualities, military leadership



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Introduction

In the management sciences, more and more attention is paid to the importance of leadership in managing an organization, directing and creating an involved and effectively working team, and to the fact that society needs leaders to follow. Leadership is currently being developed in organizations and is increasingly important for their functioning. What is more, organizations no longer have only the need for managers but also leaders. In the military environment, however, a commander is not enough – now leaders are being created. More and more attention is attached to factors that significantly affect the creation of the image of a leader among his/her subordinates, thereby they are ready to follow him and they are confident that decisions made by him/her are well-founded.

Currently, various different models of an ideal leader, manager and director can be found in the literature. They are very similar to each other, often distinguished by one or

several features, or a hierarchy of importance of these features according to the author. However, there is always a head, often called a leader, at the top of managerial posts.

The aim of the work is to demonstrate the validity of certain leadership traits, presented in different models, with particular emphasis on military leadership. Moreover, the article shows the interaction and mutual influence of these qualities. Questionnaire surveys carried out in civilian organizations were used to establish the importance of these leadership qualities for employees.

In this article, the author did not focus on the indication of an ideal model, but on the distinction of features that are repeatedly mentioned as the most important, necessary to be defined as a leader. Few of these models are, however, embedded in the military context, which means that the model of an ideal military leader is often identified with the model of a leader in general.

The research methods applied in the article included primarily the analysis of literature in the subject of leadership, management and military leadership, as well as surveys carried out among employees of various enterprises.

The article presents the concept and the essence of leadership. The tasks of the Polish Armed Forces were outlined, and an attempt was made to define a leader's model, with particular emphasis on the specificity of the milieu by distinguishing and combining certain features present in the literature and the analysis of questionnaire surveys.

1. The concept and the essence of the leadership

In order to launch a reflection process on the subject of leadership, definitions of basic concepts such as heading, management, commanding, military leadership, as well as leadership should be mentioned. A leader is defined as a person at the head of a group of people who performs this function not only in a formal way assigned to him/her by the organization, but is also recognized by his/her people as an authority, thus being given an informal function when the subordinates voluntarily, without coercion, follow his/her orders. Management is defined as any kind of administration in enterprises with different forms of ownership (both private and public) and at various levels (both strategic and tactical), as well as administrative functions in non-business organizations, such as sports teams, trade unions and government institutions [Bjerke 2004, p. 69]. The management process consists in the overall planning, organizing, analyzing and controlling all activities taking place in a given organization, not only being an enterprise, but also a group of people organized in order to achieve a common goal, such as the sports team cited above, various institutions or military organizations, including the Armed Forces.

In the military field, the distinction should be made between two basic concepts, i.e. of a commander and of a leader, which are often identical, however different by definition. A commander is a person formally directing a group of people who was assigned the function as a result of promotion, military rank or in the face of circumstances such as a threat to national security. A military leader not only gives orders, but also motivates and inspires the persons he/she leads [Grabinska 2014, p. 9]. Military leadership

is a category that clearly transforms from the synonym of command into a differentiator of command activities, indicating not only their effectiveness, but also social efficiency. Thus, it becomes one of the most important skills, predispositions, or attributes perceived and desired in modern command [Kanarski 2003, p. 8]. As can be deduced from the quoted fragment, the concepts of a leader and a commander are closely related, but the military leader is a broader concept, while not every commander must prove to be an informal leader in the perception of his/her subordinates.

Undoubtedly, a leader is another important concept. It is also often equated with the above concepts of a commander. A leader should be characterized by professionalism, commitment and experience in what he/she does, the ability to influence people in a way that results from his/her charisma and motivating ability, the ability to bear responsibility for his/her actions undertaken and the representativeness of the group with whom he/she works. Such a picture of a leader is nowadays very much sought after in various civilian organizations in managerial positions [Hesselbein 1997, p. 14]. It is particularly important in this case not only to gear efforts towards financial benefits in the form of a payment or a bonus but also to identify with a team of colleagues and care for the effects and high quality of their work. A leader should be motivated by his/her supporters, as the relationship between a leader and the team is significant – a leader does not exist without the team, and the team performs tasks with greater difficulty and less effectively without a leader [Adair 2010, p. 55].

It is worth noting that a leader does not always have to be a formal manager or commander. Often, when working in a group on a specific task, a leader emerges spontaneously, due to his/her knowledge, experience, as well as due to the abovementioned social skills, responsibility, motivating skills and establishing cooperation. Supporters choose him/her voluntarily, by succumbing to his/her charisma, views, sometimes sympathy to him/her, and also because they feel that they can trust that person, seeing in him/her a professional, as well as a guardian or representative of the whole group. A leader means the same as a manager. These concepts are sometimes identical in English-language literature.

This approach to leadership in the context of management is also desirable in military organizations. *Leadership has become the hope of modern organizations, a challenge for the managerial staff of modern organizations, including the opportunity to dynamize the activities of the Armed Forces* [Kanarski 2003, p. 5]. Awareness that a manager-leader of an organization is one of the most important factors ensuring success and effective implementation of assigned tasks is more and more common, and education and shaping leadership skills is increasingly important in the civil and military environment.

2. Tasks assigned to the Polish Armed Forces

The characteristic of the work of a military leader, i.e. the environment of disposable groups, is an important element in the considerations on military leadership. The word *dispono* means, among others, to have, organize or apply, that is the task of the disposable groups is to be in constant readiness, to use their specialized skills for a specif-

ic purpose [Maciejewski 2014, p. 56]. The objectives and tasks of the Polish Armed Forces differ from the goals set in civilian organizations. The main objective of the Armed Forces is to ensure security and defend the integrity and sovereignty of the state [Bujak 2004, pp. 237-242], in distinction from civil organizations such as, for example, enterprises that are mainly oriented towards development, where all actions taken are focused on increasing the financial capital that ensures this development. During peace, all military activities are aimed at training and improving skills and methods of fighting, which, at the time when a situation that could threaten the sovereignty of the state occurs, provide security to the public. One of the tasks of the Polish Armed Forces is to spread patriotism as well as ethical and honorable conduct. Changes in the country and in the world cause that the activity of the Polish Armed Forces is not limited only to the state itself, but is expanded on a global scale. Threats are constantly changing and it is necessary to constantly monitor them and collect and analyze information. An important role is also played by international cooperation within organizations such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), the European Union or the United Nations (UN). Due to this, armed forces of different countries build a common alliance, increase their potential, and improve the flow of information thereby minimizing the possibility of occurrence of an armed conflict [Kanarski and Gawliczek 2002, p. 10-11]. However, in the event of a conflict or a threat to the state security, not only does a person in command of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland risk his/her health and life, but also the health and life of the subordinates. That is why the appropriate preparation to perform the profession and, above all, the possession and constant development of certain features that will allow a commander to be called a military leader – a leader followed by his/her subordinates are of crucial importance.

3. The model of a military leader

It was mentioned in the introduction that there are plenty of leadership models, which are similar to each other, however very few of them are embedded in the field of military. John Adair, in his reflections on leadership, also refers to military leaders, noting at the same time certain regularities and similarities between the model of a military leader and a civilian leader.

It should be noted that it is not a leader himself/herself who gives this name, but his/her subordinates, since it is an informal function. It is not easy to clearly determine whether military leadership is a skill that can be acquired or learned, or perhaps a certain trait with which great leaders have to be born. However, both a skill and a trait can be developed and improved, and this should also be in the case of military leadership. It is the readiness of other people to follow a given person that makes him/her a leader [Bjerke 2004, p. 79]. This “readiness” consists of several features and skills.

Decision-making skills

One of the leadership qualities is the ability to make decisions, which is very important in the face of a crisis or threat that is a common element of the military leader's work

environment. The survival of a sub-unit is related to a decision taken by a leader. It is worth noting that in the military environment, issuing orders by a commander obliges a soldier to execute them, which increases the commander's responsibility that the decision made is correct and also took into account the good of subordinates.

Justice, trust and loyalty

Undoubtedly, social competences are essential for a real military leader, so it is important that a leader treats his/her subordinates fair. Justice of the leader's actions will inspire confidence and contribute to the feeling of security and devotion. Such attitude among soldiers will build a strong sense of loyalty to the leader, which is very important and affects the positive development of a sense of pride and attachment to the unit, the leader and above all the country that the soldiers served. A leader himself/herself should emphasize these previously mentioned values, as he/she should be an example for his/her soldiers, support them morally and set a further path of development and achievement of goals. Not only they should trust him/her, but also a leader should trust the soldiers and be loyal to them. These three factors, justice, trust and loyalty, require a simultaneous interaction between a leader and the subordinates. Creating strong relationships based on justice and trust will create a feeling of attachment and loyalty, which results in a strong commitment to the work performed. However, this type of relationship is extremely difficult to maintain, very easy to demolish and not easy to rebuild.

Energy, enthusiasm and sense of humor

In order to build an involved team, the functioning of which will be based on the above-mentioned features, a leader standing at the head of it must not lack in energy, enthusiasm and sense of humor. Although a military leader will face different tasks, the most difficult one may be the very task of leadership. That is why it is important to be aware that what he/she will do will affect his/her subordinates. In situations of a danger or a crisis, one has to be prepared for the worst. A leader who is devoted to his service and performs his/her duties with enthusiasm and commitment, through his/her example will encourage soldiers to act in a similar way, and a sense of humor will allow reducing the distance in the group and build a friendly atmosphere, which will positively affect the effectiveness of work [Adair 2010, p. 29]. What is more, in crisis situations or very stressful moments, funny commentary allows for relieving tension, it to some extent reduces the negative mood in the team, provided it is an appropriate joke [Goffee 2012, pp. 84-102]. The leader should have the awareness that the human factor will always be present in his/her work – he/she will always lead people, therefore developed social competences play a significant role in the model of a leader.

Physical fitness

Physical fitness is also important for a military leader, as it affects the health condition. Soldiers serve in conditions that often put their health and physical condition at great risk and burden, which may result in health damage. Hence, a great deal of attention is

paid to various types of medical examinations and fitness tests in the recruitment process to the Polish Armed Forces. In this field, a military leader should also be an example of health and fitness [Adair 2010, p. 29]. Work on physical strength requires perseverance and continuous improvement. A leader should not lead to a situation when his/her subordinates prove to be fitter than him/her, he/she should take care that the state of his/her physical condition and health is always the best possible.

Self-confidence and self-improvement

These features are also highly placed in the hierarchy of qualities of a good leader. Widely understood self-improvement requires perseverance, the will of continuous development, and this is what a leader should be like – striving for perfection. Knowledge of their advantages and disadvantages as well as working on them are the basis for self-esteem, which affects self-confidence. A confident leader in his/her actions and decisions exerts the impression of confidence and rightness of actions taken by his/her subordinates, which also contributes to strengthening the bond formed on trust and loyalty. It is up to him/her to launch an initiative, the willingness to make and justly assign new responsibilities, and to encourage others to act.

Creating honest interpersonal relationships at the leader-subordinate level is extremely important to move from commanding to leadership. To this end, four areas should be distinguished, which have to be compatible with each other.

Not covering up weaknesses

Firstly, a leader should not hide his weaknesses from subordinates. In this way, a leader seems to be an imperfect person, just as everyone does. If a leader creates the impression of an ideal person, without flaws, who is self-sufficient, the people with whom they work will feel unnecessary. Without the team, however, a leader will not be a leader any more [Goffee 2012, pp. 82-90]. Not only the team must trust their leader, but also he/she should trust his/her people – share responsibility and delegate tasks accordingly. In the Armed Forces, the hierarchy of power is apparent, however the relationship in which a commander will be an ally instead of making the soldiers intimidated by the power will be more beneficial for both sides. Crisis situations that arise in the military leader's work environment are not the best time to show weakness. Fear and uncertainty should give way to courage and rational thinking of a leader, whose task will be to make strategic decisions, taking into account the well-being of the entire sub-unit and society. Any weaknesses of a leader should be overcome at this time, and when a team of involved people supports him/her, a given task, even in a dangerous situation, is more likely to be fulfilled successfully than when commanding a group of non-integrated units. In such situations the second area, which is intuition, may prove invaluable.

Intuition

Situations posing a threat to life require taking quick decisions, without time for analyses [Goffee 2012, pp. 84-102]. Intuition alone is not enough to make decisions, but should be supported by broad knowledge of a leader and rich experience, which will

allow for better decision making. However, intuition matters to a leader not only in emergency situations. A leader should pay attention on a daily basis to the atmosphere in the team, the behavior of subordinates, conflicts or other problems which subordinates are not always willing to share with their leader. Intuition can help sense and solve certain elements that can negatively affect the whole team's work. This will contribute to the proper functioning of the third area, i.e. hard empathy.

Hard empathy

It is about giving people not what they want but what they really need [Goffee 2012, pp. 93-102]. A leader bears a huge responsibility in this field. Hard empathy is best explained by the example of parenthood. It is difficult for a child to make right and good decisions, he/she is often guided by the willing to realize the current whims and does not think about the far-reaching consequences of his/her actions. The parent's task is to persuade the child to abandon bad decisions and direct him/her to the right ones, thanks to which he/she will go to a good school, get to an elite university, which will guarantee him/her material well-being for a lifetime and peaceful future. The same is true for leadership. A leader should think not only about himself/herself, but mainly about that the people, which he/she leads, lack nothing, which may mean basic needs, such as food and shelter in situations of threats to the sovereignty of the state, which in turn also means thinking about the good of the whole society covered by this threat. This is a very broad perspective that a military leader should consider when taking decisions in threatening situations. Rigor, discipline and a clearly defined hierarchy characterizing military environments make a leader be able to easily subordinate his/her people. However, the leader's task is not to abuse these power tools.

Originality

The last of the four compatible areas, which every leader should remember, is the courage to be different, since it is the features that differentiate us from the rest of society that may make people good leaders [Goffee 2012, pp. 96-102]. In the military environment, however, uniformity and subordination are visible, which may have a negative impact on the disclosure of differences in views or ideas. Undoubtedly, many advantages can be attributed to it, as the absolute obedience to the orders of a commander in situations of danger is a guarantee of quick response and effective action. However, a leader should be aware of his/her unusual attributes, skills or interests, and be tolerant enough to accept some dissimilarity among the subordinates. Managing a team of people with different characteristics or specific skills can be a challenge, but this diversity may be an advantage, depending on how it is used by a leader.

Research conducted in various civilian enterprises confirmed the above-mentioned factors influencing effective leadership, showing at the same time that this is a universal issue. Among the most important leadership traits respondents recognized the ability to make decisions (74% of responses), determination (54% of responses) and the ability to take responsibility (49% of responses). What is more, in the opinion of respondents, good relations between employees and supervisors (26%), are the factor that has the most important impact on effective leadership, which confirms that social

competences are the foundation of good leadership and an important element of managing a team of people. The most frequently indicated, desired by the employees, leadership traits included loyalty (40%), sense of justice (41%), emotional intelligence (38%) and self-confidence (37%).

Authority

In earlier deliberations, the statement often appeared that a leader should be a model, an example – he/she should be an authority. This is not an easy task to unambiguously determine whether a leader is an authority or rather tries to get this authority among the subordinates. It is important, however, that people need to have authority in their lives, someone who they are able to submit to. Almost 60% of respondents surveyed in civilian enterprises consider their superior as the authority (45% – “rather yes”, 12% “definitely yes”), and only 8% do not recognize his/her authority. Over 38% of respondents believe that being an example to others is one of the most important leadership qualities. Stanley Milgram also proved this in his experiment at the University of Yale [Cialdini 2000, pp. 190-197]. This experiment showed how strongly we are influenced by authority, often without verification of the correctness of these commands.

Robert Cialdini distinguishes three symbols that show authority, which people often succumb to. They are: a title (scientific, professional, e.g. professor, doctor, patron or specialist in a given field), clothing (uniform or elegant, expensive suit), and a car whose brand is considered as expensive may testify to a high material social status [Cialdini 2000, pp. 200-202]. The mentioned symbols are primarily visible, thus they affect us during the first contact with a given person.

Two symbols are used in the military milieu: the title and clothing, i.e. a military rank and a uniform. A uniform itself evokes a sense of respect for a given soldier in society, while the sewn-on epaulets testify to the military rank, and the higher it is, the greater the respect of a soldier. A military rank is a symbol of acquired knowledge, experience and service in defense of the Homeland.

It is impossible not to notice the danger resulting from the ignorance of the use of these symbols of authority by society. Milgram's experiment showed that if we see a doctor (academic title) in a coat (clothing), we do not verify whether this person is actually a doctor – those who were subjected to the experiment did not undermine the medical authority of the person who gave them instructions. Although these commands were aimed at unfair harming another person by the administration of electric shocks as the form of a punishment for mistakes made in a simple guessing. These two elements were enough to recognize a completely foreign person as a reliable authority in a matter concerning the life or death of another human being.

A military leader should base his/her authority not only on these two (or three) symbols. The features cited earlier should also be the basis of the leader's power.

An individual, a team and a task

Having the above-mentioned features will help a leader to move efficiently in three areas important for each leader: an individual, a team and a task. Each leader runs

a team composed of individuals that are not the same. The task of a leader is to build and maintain in each of them a sense of belonging to the team, whose goal is to perform a certain task as effectively as possible. In order to make these areas constantly integrated, it is important to follow the basic management functions, such as planning, entering planned activities and controlling them. Planning consists of activities such as team selection and strategy for the implementation of the assigned task. Motivation is another important function. Even the most devoted employee may experience a decrease in motivation and commitment, therefore a leader should know how to influence him/her to maintain these factors at the highest possible level, which again means that the team consists of individuals that may require different approaches and strengthening incentives [Adair 2010, pp. 36-41]. Referring to the classic Suna Tzu, it should be mentioned that soldiers in the battlefield should not be motivated by a strict system of penalties and prizes. Fear of punishment will not make a soldier a warrior ready to make sacrifices for his/her homeland. Intangible stimuli more positively affect their motivation (promotion or nobility), and they can be persuaded by speeches and promises until they fall into anger or euphoria [Tzu and Pin 2014, p. 23]. A military leader has a wide range of tools at disposal that allow him/her to induce subordinates to obedience. Such methods of influencing people as fear, coercion, threat or order are used not only in the Armed Forces. Methods, whose effect is sometimes immediate, but short-lived, are difficult to be determined as effective. In leadership it is important to make people happy, often not only for the time of service. Respect and trust will allow o building a team of people who are ready for sacrifice and believe in the rightness of the actions taken.

Conclusions

The issue of leadership is a very broad topic, and the unambiguous definition of a universal leader model is extremely difficult. This article was intended to emphasize the importance and interaction of certain leadership qualities contained in various models defining an ideal leader, with particular emphasis on military leadership. The results of research carried out in the conditions of civilian organizations confirmed the essence and universality of certain features of a leader, also a military leader, described in the literature and the significance of these features for the employees of these organizations. Developed social competences are an extremely important factor in determining whether a commander deserves to be called a leader. A person at the head of a team of people, or in this case a sub-unit, should be characterized not only by knowledge and professional experience, but above all have the ability to win over people.

The soldiers' working environment is very specific. The consequence of a crisis situation may be not only material loss, but loss of state independence, damage to health or death. Intangible assets gain more importance in emergency situations, build morale and motivate to greater sacrifices. The goal of a leader is not to lead the team to destruction, but to lead people in such a way that they, themselves aware of the con-

sequences of actions taken, decide to fight in the name of shared values, for the good of society, in defense of national sovereignty.

Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

Author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. Author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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How to cite this paper

Gaj, M. (2018). Selected leadership qualities. *Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces*, vol. 50, no. 4(190), pp. 140-151, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0013.0728>



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