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**EXPLORING BELIEFS ABOUT LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF
HEADS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of a study into leadership as related to the heads of educational institutions, considering the results of a theoretical analysis of Russian and foreign literature currently available in the public domain on leadership, and describing the procedures of empirical research, the results are interpreted, and conclusions are drawn. The topic is so obviously relevant for Russian environments that numerous monographs, books, dissertations in pedagogy, psychology, sociology, philosophy, students' and children's projects are concerned with the issue of leadership. The literature confirmed that the discussion around the issue of leadership has not subsided so far. Leader in education is a special topic in pedagogical science. During great changes in Russia, serious hopes are pinned on education: the stability of social development and the potential of human capital in the future depend on the level of upbringing and education of the younger generation. The paper investigates the heads of educational institutions. The school principals and their deputies were involved in the empirical stage of the study. They were offered to self-assess their leadership qualities and rank a list of leadership qualities, compiled based on literary sources in different years. The findings confirmed the relevance of educating a leader in education: none of the proposed quality proved to be sufficiently developed in the respondents. Obviously, the administrative tradition of appointing heads in the education system and the lack of special training for applicants entail a difficult situation in real managerial practice.

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Keywords: education, individual, institution, leader, leader in education, leadership qualities



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1. Introduction

A growing scientific interest in the issue of leadership in an organization or organizational leadership in recent years can be due to some global changes. During unstable social developments determined by dynamic and large-scale social changes, an appeal to the potential of leadership is quite reasonable. Improving the efficiency of an organization, a group of people relies on active and confident leaders in conditions of instability and uncertainty. In theory and practice, a head having pronounced leadership qualities proves to be more successful in performing managerial functions, supporting their actions with informal authority among subordinates (Evtikhov, 2010).

Global transformations in modern social development and structure, including education, have heated up the issue of school leadership. Since the 90s of the last century, the change of educational paradigm from centered, authoritarian, unified to personality-oriented, humanistic, democratic initiated scientific research in understanding the role of the head of an educational institution as a leader. The literature has repeatedly emphasized that instability and uncertainty of social development, significant social transformations cause an urgent need for leaders who are committed to take responsibility for making decisions, as an expression of public hope to cope with uncertainty.

Consequently, referring to additional resources of organizational leadership from the perspective of leadership qualities as personal qualities signifies increasingly effective activity of the head of an educational institution in the light of great social changes.

2. Problem Statement

In today's, dynamically changing world, leadership seems to be a topic equally relevant for all spheres of human professional and everyday life and activity.

Firstly, the development of personal qualities in the future generation, being the main potential of human capital, directly depends on the solution of the leadership problem today. It is not fortuitous that close attention of the state and the public to the field of education has recently been expressed in the processes of modernization to take place in the Russian education system, in the growth of scientific research, and the breadth of publications in public journals. Thus, the development of a creative, active, independent student with an active life and social position, capable of capturing changes and adapting to emerging circumstances, while maintaining his identity and need for self-realization, is defined as a key priority of education.

Secondly, serious hopes of society are pinned on education today as a possible source of formation and development of human capital to promote the sustainable future. In the modern educational environment, the latest models, technologies and approaches to learning are piloted, problems of socialization, professional identity of the younger generation are evaluated, innovative educational environment are designed.

Thirdly, education at large as a social sphere is going through a crisis and is intensively seeking for the most optimal methods of training, socialization, upbringing, professional identity of students. Today, the modern educational environment is becoming open for social interaction with professional, social, cultural, economic environments, and responds to modifications in social demand and public opinion.

Thus, theoretical and methodological understanding of leadership in education is conditioned by social dimension, the features of professional pedagogical activity and the needs of the time. In line with these considerations, the most important issue remains that of leadership in educational institutions.

3. Research Questions

The results of studies on leadership, accumulated by the 21st century, though, do not give unequivocal answers to the most important questions. In science, there are still debatable positions regarding the definition of “leader”, the systematization of necessary qualities, diagnostic procedures, and so on. A key issue is the relationship between the concepts of leader and head.

In everyday usage, these terms often seem to be synonymous. In the Soviet period, heads of educational institutions were appointed based on such criteria as political literacy, moral stability and organizational skills. Consequently, a person appointed to the position of a school director, first of all, understood the responsibility of his/her appointment, and only secondly – the responsibility for the performance and development of the institution and the team. In this context, the head of a school had to perform, to a greater extent, administrative duties, corresponding to a bureaucratic management model, strictly observing the principles of one-man management, subordination, hierarchy, rigidly maintaining stability in the team and institution (Gromyko, 2000). In the subsequent period, Russian scholars considered holistic management of educational systems (Konarzhevsky, 1997; Krichevsky, 2007; Tretyakov, 2001; Potashnik, 2007; Ushakov, 2000; Zvereva, 1997). Modern social development characterized by democratization, openness, and globalization has changed an overall model of educational relations towards a state-social model.

In modern conditions driven by market relations, growth of technologies, and openness of professional activity, successful managerial activity of the head of an educational institution came to be subject to his/her commitment and adaptability to changes, social and professional mobility in a competitive environment, and other qualities required in modern conditions. As Marchukova (2011) emphasizes, “the modern management model and the role of the head of an educational institution have fundamentally changed and now appears similar to the model of a competent manager in education, economically and legally literate, capable of providing regulatory support for school activities, thinking strategically, etc.” (p. 12). A modern head of an educational institution should be responsive to all external and internal impacts to the development and functioning of the organization, be able to organize social interactions with parents, with higher management structures, and social partners. Back in the last century, Russian scientists emphasized that external impacts became stronger on the educational environment at school. For example, Shamova (1991) and Tretyakov (2001) identified six key external impacts on the educational school environment, namely: socio-political, production and economic, social and domestic, natural and ecological, cultural and spiritual-moral. Potashnik and Lazarev (1995) add confessional formations, the armed forces, the media, etc. to the above impacts.

In recent publications, in scientific research, a successful, effective head who achieves high performance and stable results is increasingly referred to as a leader. In the pedagogical literature, the leadership of a headmaster is viewed as a person’s ability to manage tactical functioning, strategic development of an educational institution in a heterogeneous, poorly predictable and intensively changing

environment (Gam, 2007).

Studies that are more recent confirm that leader is not synonymous with manager, and is certainly not synonymous with head (Gam, 2007; Potashnik, 2007). This means that a head does not always turn out to be a leader, and, therefore, a leader does not always become a head. What is more, if the position of a leader matches with leadership qualities of a particular person, his/her professional activity is distinguished by significant efficiency, initiative, and success. Unfortunately, in today's educational policy, the procedure for appointing the head of a general education school relies on a track record, characteristics from a previous job and other positive indicators rather than any diagnostic studies to examine the applicant's leadership potential.

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims to identify, in modern conditions, the leadership qualities of heads of educational institutions that are significant for them to perform leadership functions and build leadership potential in their professional activities.

5. Research Methods

Despite a considerable number of publications concerned with studying, analyzing, identifying a set of qualities of a successful leader, scientific interest and scientific understanding of leadership appeared in early 20th century. By this time, despite varying approaches used, a common view was established on the leader as a person with certain qualities.

As Doyle and Smith (2001) emphasize, there are as many definitions of 'leader' in science today as there are researchers investigating this problem. One thing is certain: the leadership is intrinsically intertwined with the human. According to Doyle and Smith (2001), this human has an obvious and pronounced influence on others, has followers, and comes to the fore as soon as a crisis or special concern comes up. These are people who have a clear idea of what they want to achieve and why. Based on an analysis of many existing definitions, the authors give the following definition of leaders, considering that they are people who are able to think and act creatively in non-standard situations, and who intend to influence the actions, beliefs and feelings of others (Doyle & Smith, 2001). Having analyzed literary sources over the past 80 years, the authors identify four leading trends in the study of leadership, namely: theory of traits, behavioral theories, contingency theory and transformational theories.

According to his clear and concise overview, van Maurik (2002) accepts that none of the four trends is mutually exclusive or completely time-limited, overriding what has been created by the previous trends.

The earliest papers were devoted to the theory of traits and the great man theory looking at the qualities of leaders-rulers. Later on, the scholars relied on behavioral models of leaders, in particular – motivational concepts of leadership. A humanistic trend in social psychology triggered the development of organizational leadership (for example, managerial activities). A new round in exploring leadership developed in the second half of the 20th century in line with an attribution approach (models of Calder (1997), Heider (1958), Kelley and Thibaut (1969), Mitchell et al. (1981) etc.). Further – in a transactional

approach, in a theory of transforming leadership (Burns, 1978; Green & Mitchell, 1979; Hollander, 2009; House & Mitchell, 1974) and in a theory of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Heifetz, 1994). For example, Heifetz (1994) believes that leadership is, first of all, the ability to influence others, to mobilize their resources for joint problem solving. Heifetz (1994) sees the principal task of the leader in stimulating socially adaptive work that implies teaching people the skills of social cooperation in the context of an inevitable and eternal conflict between the chosen system of values and real social life.

More recent papers in humanitarian psychology and sociology draw on values-based leadership philosophy (the papers of Kuczmarski and Kuczmarski (1995)).

In the domestic literature, over 300 definitions of leadership can be found in the papers of Kudryashova (1996) and her school, which are arranged around 14 groups. There are many reasons for classifying leadership qualities or traits in the literature today. This issue is so popular that no single leadership theory has left it behind. As far back as 1940, the American psychologist Bird (1940), who had analyzed the research available by that time on leadership qualities and traits, compiled a single list of qualities (traits).

Thus, Stogdill (1974) who analyzed the results of several hundred publications on leadership traits proposed a model that is quite popular.

Equally well-known is a model proposed by Lawton and Rose (1993), which resulted from a seminar for managers of different levels and included ten basic qualities that an effective leader heading an organization should have.

A model by Gardner (1989) is also known abroad. He studied a large number of North American organizations and their leaders and concluded that there are some qualities or attributes that he called 'leadership qualities'.

In the paper, the authors rely on Evtikhov (2010) with his Comparative Analysis of Leadership Traits of Executives of Different Managerial Levels of Industrial Enterprises, which made an attempt to group the existing developments in science in this direction. He also made up a list of leadership qualities based on the models discussed above by Stogdill (1974), Lawton and Rose (1993), Bennis (1994), Urbanovich (2005) and others. As a result, he offered a list of 21 qualities, some of which the authors refined and adapted to the objectives of the present study.

6. Findings

An empirical stage of the study involved a focus group interview with directors of educational institutions and their deputies who were asked to self-assess their leadership qualities.

To achieve this goal, the heads of educational institutions were offered two tasks on the list of leadership qualities, namely:

1) rate the listed leadership qualities as follows:

- 3 points – sufficiently developed;
- 2 points – insufficiently developed;
- 1 point – need to be developed.

2) rank the listed leadership qualities based on their importance to perform leadership functions in your professional activities.

The processed results for the first task are presented in Table 01.

Table 1. Degree of leadership qualities among respondents (% of the sample, n=224)

No.	Leadership quality	sufficiently developed	insufficiently developed	need to be developed
1)	foresight, vision;	16	54	30
2)	vitality, a drive to succeed;	42	40	18
3)	ability to cope with stress;	24	20	56
4)	risk appetite, willingness to change, focus on problem solving;	44	26	30
5)	resilience, determination;	31	25	44
6)	charisma or charm;	11	54	35
7)	innovative mobility (ability to respond to new ideas and experiences);	44	26	30
8)	mature emotional intelligence (empathy, emotional responsiveness);	23	23	54
9)	a high degree of communicative competence (interpersonal, public speaking and persuasive skills);	44	26	30
10)	decision-making certainty;	44	26	30
11)	benevolence and honesty;	23	23	54
12)	fairness and exactingness to others;	31	25	44
13)	consistency in decisions and actions;	31	25	44
14)	trustworthiness;	23	23	54
15)	ability to get followers motivated;	48	26	26
16)	confidence and steadfastness against an opponent;	42	40	18
17)	ability to take responsibility in uncertain situations;	64	26	10
18)	ability to encourage subordinates to solve a given task;	48	26	26
19)	ability to defend and protect the interests of the team;	48	26	26
20)	ability to strategically and tactically plan one's actions and the actions of subordinates;	31	25	44
21)	ability to prioritize.	48	26	26

The results of the second task – ranking of leadership qualities, according to the heads of educational institutions, are proposed in Table 02.

Table 2. Ranking of leadership qualities

No.	Leadership quality	Rank
1)	foresight, vision;	1
2)	vitality, a drive to succeed;	15
3)	ability to cope with stress;	5
4)	risk appetite, willingness to change, focus on problem solving;	16
5)	resilience, determination;	6
6)	charisma or charm;	21
7)	innovative mobility (ability to respond to new ideas and experiences);	14
8)	mature emotional intelligence (empathy, emotional responsiveness);	20
9)	a high degree of communicative competence (interpersonal, public speaking and persuasive skills);	19
10)	decision-making certainty;	7
11)	benevolence and honesty;	18
12)	fairness and exactingness to others;	9
13)	consistency in decisions and actions;	4
14)	trustworthiness;	10
15)	ability to get followers motivated;	13
16)	confidence and steadfastness against an opponent;	17

17)	ability to take responsibility in uncertain situations;	2
18)	ability to encourage subordinates to solve a given task;	11
19)	ability to defend and protect the interests of the team;	12
20)	ability to strategically and tactically plan one's actions and the actions of subordinates;	3
21)	ability to prioritize.	8

7. Conclusion

The findings suggest that 62% of the heads of educational institutions found the ability to take responsibility in uncertain situations the most developed leadership quality, while 48% of respondents found certain leadership qualities sufficiently developed, including the ability to get followers motivated, the ability to encourage subordinates to solve a given task, the ability to defend and protect the interests of the team, the ability to prioritize. Some poorly developed leadership qualities that more than half of the respondents need to develop involved the following: stress resistance, mature emotional intelligence (empathy, emotional responsiveness), benevolence and honesty, trustworthiness. Remarkably, none of the proposed leadership qualities was assessed by the respondents as sufficiently developed.

As for the same leadership qualities ranked by the respondents, the first three should be regarded as the most significant in professional activity (foresight, vision, the ability to take responsibility in uncertain situations, the ability to strategically and tactically plan their actions and the actions of subordinates). These qualities emphasize the relevance of strategic thinking and behavior of modern leaders in education in the vein of social changes.

According to the respondents, the least significant are such leadership qualities as a high degree of communicative competence, mature emotional intelligence, charisma or charm. It is interesting that foreign literature, on the contrary, considers these leadership qualities the most popular. This contradiction is apparently due to the national tradition of appointing the heads of educational institutions, rather than to democratic choice.

In today's dynamically changing world, professionalism in any field becomes highly questionable, all the more so in the educational field. Professional activities are predetermined not only by the knowledge and skills gained in the field of professional and personal qualities, but also expressed in the degree of their development (Pogrebnaya et al., 2019). The head of an educational institution cannot ensure the long-term development of his/her organization, relying solely on his/her professionalism. Undoubtedly, professional and social experience is a certain 'strategic reserve' in decision-making, but, increasingly, a headmaster is required to be mobile, innovative, open, quick-minded and adaptable. Consequently, even with considerable professional authority, a modern head must develop leadership potential.

As Rubina (2017) emphasizes, education being a social sphere is not accidentally in the center of public attention today: an aggregate index of human potential in the future depends on the quality of education. Zasytkin (2010) argues that only a leader at schools can boost fresh approaches and technologies in the upbringing and development of new generations.

Ibragimova and Zhmakina (2020) note that certain psychological and social qualities are required to take a leading position in a competitive environment. However, they vary significantly depending on historical eras, individual states and specific situations.

Thus, the study confirms the need to develop leadership qualities among heads of educational institutions, proving once again that a head is not necessarily a leader, and a leader is not always a head.

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