

Qualities of a modern manager in the education system: A study among the teaching and administrative staff of Universities in the Republik of Kasakhstan

Cualidades de un administrador moderno en el sistema educativo: un estudio entre el personal docente y administrativo de las universidades de la República de Kazajstán

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ABSTRACT:

The article is devoted to the problem of managerial competence formation in the educational system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The authors emphasize that at the present stage of the education system development, the country needs managers of a new type, but there is very little research in this area. A survey was conducted among the administrative and teaching staff of six major universities in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Respondents were asked to describe qualities that they thought were necessary for a manager working in the education system. As a result of content analysis, 7 groups of qualities were singled out: strategic, communicative, organizational, psychological, pedagogical, entrepreneurial, and political. It is noted that the most frequently mentioned are the groups corresponding to the traditional understanding of manager's role. On the other hand, the percentage of people who see manager as a democratic leader is also significant. A brief summary of the results and prospects for further research are outlined in the conclusion.

Keywords: managerial competence, manager's qualities, education management, democratic management style, content analysis

RESUMEN:

El artículo está dedicado al problema de la formación de competencias gerenciales en el sistema educativo de la República de Kazajstán. Los autores enfatizan que en la etapa actual del desarrollo del sistema educativo, el país necesita directivos de un nuevo tipo, pero hay muy poca investigación en esta área. Se realizó una encuesta entre el personal administrativo y docente de seis grandes universidades de la República de Kazajstán. Se pidió a los encuestados que describiera las cualidades que consideraban necesarias para un gerente que trabajaba en el sistema educativo. Como resultado del análisis de contenido, se señalaron 7 grupos de cualidades: estratégicos, comunicativos, organizacionales, psicológicos, pedagógicos, emprendedores y políticos. Se observa que los más frecuentemente mencionados son los grupos que corresponden a la comprensión tradicional del papel del Gerente. Por otra parte, el porcentaje de personas que ven al Gerente como un líder democrático también es significativo. En la conclusión se esboza un breve resumen de los resultados y las perspectivas de la investigación ulterior.

Palabras clave: competencia gerencial, cualidades del gestor, gestión educativa, estilo de gestión democrática, análisis de contenidos

1. Introduction

The Republic of Kazakhstan gained Independence in 1991 and since then has been implementing a consistent

course towards integration into the global community. Our country is known to the world as a multi-ethnic, peace-loving and dynamically developing state.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of ongoing reforms and achieve high results in all sectors of the economy, the country needs modern and effective managers. Training such managers is one of the most important tasks for the state, as the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev has repeatedly stated: "A country that does not know how to develop knowledge is doomed to failure in the 21st century. We must build the human capacity for high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries of the future. Without a modern education system and modern managers capable of thinking broadly, in a new way, we will not be able to create an innovative economy" (Nazarbayev, 2012).

In his recent article "A Look into the Future: Modernization of Public Consciousness", the Head of the State rightly points out that in the modern world, personal success of an individual becomes the most important condition for the success of the entire nation. He defines education as "the most fundamental factor of success in the future" (Nazarbayev, 2017). Consequently, the problem of management should be solved, first of all, in the education system, since it determines the quality of human capital in the country.

A manager in the field of education is an employee professionally exercising the functions of managing education on the basis of modern management methods. There are three groups (levels) of education managers. The first group (the highest level) is the administrative staff of educational institutions and educational authorities; the second group (the middle level) consists of heads of methodological, legal, financial, economic and other services of the education system; the third group are teachers as the organizers of the management of learners' educational activities.

The key question that needs to be answered here is, "What are the requirements of modern society to managers in the field of education and, accordingly, what qualities should they have?" If we turn to international experience, we will see that a lot of research on this issue has been done, including within this decade.

In some works, there is a fairly traditional view of management in education. For example, Surya (2011) argues that "The process of educational management consists of three basic functions, namely planning, implementing and controlling. A manager uses these functions to achieve educational organization goals and objectives." In the author's opinion, it is the first of these functions (planning) that plays a key role in a manager's activities. Without proper planning, implementation will not yield the expected results, and control will not be effective.

A similar point of view is shared by Plaksiy (2006). In his opinion, the main aspect in the activities of a manager in the field of education is a vision of the future, development and implementation of the strategy. Among all qualities and competences necessary for a manager, a leading role is played by the qualities of a thinker and strategist who understands the current situation and future development prospects.

However, there is another point of view, and the number of its supporters has been growing recently. Such researchers do not agree with the traditional view of a manager's responsibilities and define them much broader. For example, Farah (2014) compares management of an educational institution with governing a state. The author claims that in modern conditions, a manager has not one, but many roles: he or she should be a politician, an economist, a psychologist and a sociologist. Such a broad understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a manager is characteristic of many modern studies.

Many researchers emphasize that the world is now changing more rapidly than ever before. Therefore, education and education management need to adjust accordingly to keep up with the requirements of the time (Coleman & Glover, 2010).

In general, serious changes have taken place in the management of education internationally in the past few decades. For example, 10 years ago M. Spendlove (2007) conducted a survey among Pro-Vice-Chancellors at ten UK universities in order to find out what requirements the head of a higher educational institution should meet. The results showed that academic credibility and experience of university life were perceived by most respondents as crucial, followed by people skills, including the ability to communicate and negotiate with others. In the publications of the last few years, people are increasingly talking about a "new management culture," which requires the presence of entrepreneurial, managerial and leadership qualities.

Another important trend that can be observed internationally is the growth of democratization in management. For example, a large emphasis is now placed on communication inside the organization, including the superior-subordinate relations. In democratic management systems, a leader does not impose orders but gives advice and recommendations to the staff. Such managers invite their subordinates to take an active part in life of the organization, thus contributing to development of highly-motivated "professional communities of teachers who guide one another in improving instruction" (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Ingle (2011) notes that communication between a manager and subordinates should be carried out in both

directions: from top to bottom, and from bottom to top. Managers must be aware of the current state of affairs in general, know all the processes taking place in the organization, be their active participants, and know the people they work with.

In our opinion, such two-way discussion is often absent in modern educational institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Many decisions are made at the "above" level only. Quite often the teaching staff members do not participate in planning, their opinion is simply not taken into account.

The same can be said about the system of managers training. The content of such training is developed by individual researchers or small government-funded research groups and approved by the authorized body of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, while there is virtually no broad discussion of this issue in academic circles. The number of scientific studies on this topic is also extremely small.

We believe that in order to provide a truly effective training of education managers, it is necessary to conduct large-scale scientific research that can reveal what competencies a manager should have and how these competencies can be effectively developed.

In our opinion, the first step to be taken is to conduct a large-scale survey among the administration, staff and teachers of educational institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Such a survey can provide an answer to one very important question, "How do people see the role of management from the inside of the education system?"

2. Methodology

Research participants and procedure. A survey was conducted among the administration, staff and faculty of 6 universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan (L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, S. Toraighyrov Pavlodar State University, Pavlodar State Pedagogical Institute, E.A. Buketov Karaganda State University, M. Kozybayev North Kazakhstan State University, and T. Ryskulov Kazakh Economic University). The total sample of the study was 462 people. The gender composition of the sample is as follows: females – 81.2%, males – 18.8%. The age of the study participants ranged from 25 to 72. Work experience in the university was within the range from 0.5 to 48 years.

The research method is surveying. Participants of the study were asked to fill in a form by answering questions regarding their levels of satisfaction with the work of management. Of particular interest for this article is the question, "What qualities do you think a manager in education should have?" This was an open-ended question, it had no ready-made answers to choose from. This type of questions has a number of advantages (Reja et al., 2003). Respondents are not constrained in their answers by any limits, they are free to express their opinions explicitly and as fully as they wish. Open-ended questions enable researchers to get more information, including about the reasons for particular decision, attitude to certain situations or objects, etc.

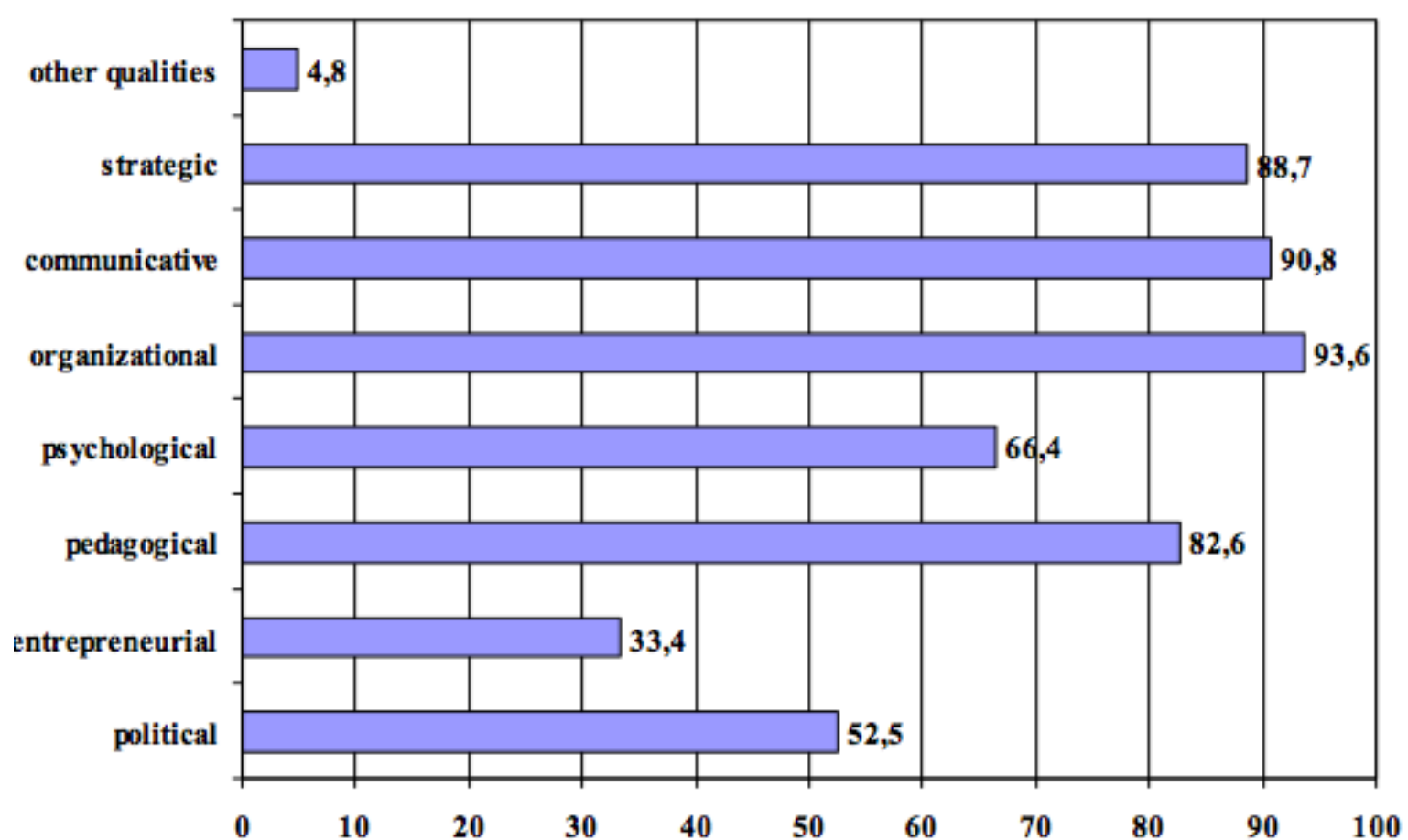
Results were processed using the content analysis method (Ward, 2012). The semantic unit of analysis is a word or phrase that indicates a certain quality of a manager in the sphere of education. Semantically close units were grouped together. The frequency of mentioning was calculated for each group (in % from the total sample of the study).

3. Results

In total, 7 groups of qualities that are necessary for a modern manager in the field of education were identified. These are strategic, communicative, organizational, psychological, pedagogical, entrepreneurial, and political qualities. A number of respondents indicated qualities that can not be attributed to any of the above groups. However, the number of references to such qualities is insignificant and is less than 5%. Therefore, all subsequent discussion will be devoted to the 7 groups only.

The percentage of people mentioning the 7 groups of qualities required by a modern manager in the field of education is shown in Figure 1. As can be seen, the distribution of results is quite uneven. The number of people who mentioned at least one of the qualities from the most popular group (organizational) is almost three times as high as the corresponding number for the least frequently mentioned group of qualities (entrepreneurial).

Figure 1
Percentage of people mentioning qualities from the groups



As results of the research showed, the most frequently mentioned were groups of qualities typical of the traditional view of a manager's role, namely organizational (93.6%), communicative (90.8%) and strategic (88.7%).

According to the study participants, the most important qualities of a manager are those associated with his organizational activities. Here are some of the answers given in the survey: "the ability to adequately assign responsibilities", "the ability to find right motives", "the ability to make decisions correctly and in a timely manner", "being demanding and critical", "propensity to organize", "taking responsibility for other people's work", "self-confidence, open-mindedness, readiness for change", "encouraging and stimulating good work", etc.

Thus, in most respondents' opinion, a manager is, above all, an organizer. Such a view is generally consistent with the classical theory of management, according to which, organizational activity synthesizes all types of activities in systems. It is very laborious and takes most of the manager's time. The subject of this activity is socio-economic systems, accounting for economic, aesthetic, technological, professional and other links and relations, formation of a team as an integral dynamic and stable system.

The second most frequently mentioned group of qualities is communicative. Here are some of the examples of answers given by the study participants: "ability to communicate effectively", "communicability", "ability to effectively communicate their demands to subordinates", "openness in communication", "attention to formal and informal communication", "the ability to persuade and influence people".

According to Marr (1987), managers spend 70% of their work time on communication. Consequently, the success of the organization's activities largely depends on the ability of the leader to communicate with people within and outside the organization. Only through communication with people can we achieve a clear understanding of the goals of team work, thereby creating the basis for motivating employees. Informal communication should be valued just as highly as formal.

Verbal communication is an important tool for influencing subordinates. A manager's speech can cause both positive (joy, satisfaction, pride) and negative emotions (resentment, fear, discontent), which changes the mood, psychological climate in the team, effectiveness and efficiency of work.

Verbal communication is used by a manager in a great variety of situations, whether it is giving instructions to subordinates, public speaking at a meeting, setting goals and tasks for the team, friendly conversation, performance review, talking on the phone, business negotiations, etc.

Another group of qualities, the importance of which was noted by the overwhelming majority of participants, is strategic. Here the respondents noted the "ability to think strategically", "clear vision", "leadership", "ability to determine priorities", "short, medium and long-term planning", "development of an effective development strategy for the organization", etc.

It is important for a modern manager to be visionary, not just a "manager" in the classic sense of this word. They have to be leaders with the ability to articulate what an organization would like to accomplish in the mid-term or long-term future. On the basis of this vision, a development strategy can be devised and implemented.

The next group of qualities is pedagogical. In a way, any leader is a teacher. In one way or another, he or she demonstrates and inculcates certain values, views, attitudes, and lines of conduct and thereby offers a certain model for his or her subordinates to follow. In an educational institution this role is of even greater importance, since the very goal of such organizations is educating the younger generation, preparing them for life in society.

It is important to understand that the content, methods and forms of educational activities must correspond to the current goals of education set by the state. Modern Kazakhstan needs independent, creatively and critically thinking specialists with a high level of intelligence, morality and conscientiousness, not speechless executors of other people's instructions. Therefore, it is necessary to create conditions for self-realization of each student, promote proactive attitude to learning, respect the freedom of each student to express his or her opinion and profess any views, i.e. act within the pedagogy of understanding and cooperation (Toleubekova & Zhumataeva, 2015).

Thus, in order to successfully manage an educational organization, a manager must have the qualities of a teacher. He or she needs set a personal example for the subordinates and students.

Based on the groups of qualities considered above, it is clear that the majority of the respondents support a traditional idea of what a manager should be. An overwhelming majority of respondents believe that a manager should set goals (strategic qualities), achieve them through organization of work (organizational qualities) and communication (communicative qualities). At the same time, since he or she works in the field of education, it is also necessary to have some qualities of a good teacher (pedagogical qualities). These roles of a manager have always been relevant. However, it is important to understand that in a particular period of time, other qualities may come to the fore. The modern period of our country's development sets fundamentally new requirements that did not exist before but are extremely important now.

Many of the research participants (66.4%) noted that a manager needs to be able to create and maintain a comfortable psychological climate. This applies to both the head of an entire education organization and a teacher working directly with students in the classroom. Managers must effectively manage their own emotions, as well as correctly recognize and take into account the emotions experienced and expressed by other people.

Numerous studies indicate the importance of taking into account the emotional state of employees and students. For example, Goleman (1995) introduced the concept of "emotional intelligence". He defines it as the ability to recognize one's own emotions and emotions of others to motivate oneself and others and manage emotions effectively. The researcher came to the following conclusion: the success of any activity is determined by technical skills, knowledge and intellectual abilities (IQ) only by 33%, while the emotional competence (EQ) accounts for the remaining 67%. For employees holding managerial positions, these two figures differ even more: only 15% of success is determined by IQ, and the remaining 85% by EQ.

Emotions carry a lot of information by using which we can act much more effectively and efficiently. Since in the management processes the leading role is given to interaction between people, the competence in the sphere of interpersonal relations is at the forefront. It is important for a manager to understand that each person is one-of-a-kind. He or she has a unique character, personality traits and life experience. Building understanding with people requires knowledge of these features and the ability to take them into account in one's work.

Motivation and stress resistance levels in the team are also directly related to the manager's emotional competence. All employees feel the need to be proud of their work, the need to be recognized for their achievements not only by colleagues, but by the management as well. If they do not get what they want, their productivity will inevitably decline. Employee's emotional discomfort is a real threat for the whole team's work effectiveness and efficiency, because in that case employees do not see the point of working at full strength. Positive emotions, an atmosphere of trust and support significantly increase people's stress resistance. If people feel good and comfortable, it is easier for them to overcome various difficulties.

Approximately half of the study participants (52.5%) believe that a manager should have some qualities of a politician. A manager in the field of education should know all the basic legal and regulatory documents in this field, have a clear understanding of the directions of the current state policy in the field of education, be a conductor of the state policy in education and also effectively influence this policy.

To ensure qualitative development of education in our country, it is necessary that all key initiatives of the Head of the State, all innovations coming from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan be effectively implemented in each specific educational organization. This is why it is essential for a manager in education to have some qualities of a politician.

Finally, the least frequently mentioned qualities were the entrepreneurial ones. Only 33.4% of the study participants believe that these qualities are necessary.

This is something that is still perceived by many people (especially of the older generation) as new and uncharacteristic for a manager of an educational institution. This is due to the fact that in the former (Soviet) period of our history, there was a centralized system of education funding: all funds came directly from the state budget. These funds were sufficient to meet each organization's needs, there was no need to search for additional sources of funding. Moreover, any attempts to conduct business independently were prosecuted. Although more than a quarter of a century has passed since that time, many people still have not adjusted their way of thinking to the realities of market economy.

In fact, in a market economy, entrepreneurial qualities are not just important – survival of the entire educational institution can depend on them. That's why managers need entrepreneurial competence. Entrepreneurial competence is a combination of personal and business qualities, skills, knowledge, and certain behavior models, that help to solve various business problems successfully and achieve high performance results (Morozova, 2012).

Therefore, a manager's work should be aimed at the search and realization of major ideas related to the creation of new educational and research products, as well as improvement of the existing ones, their commercialization, and finding new ways to earn money for the organization.

Having described each of the seven groups, we now can sum up the results of our research and make some conclusions.

4. Conclusions

The nature of managerial work largely determines the requirements for the personal qualities of a manager. If the management system is hierarchical, stable and strictly regulated, then subordination, obedience, diligence and discipline are the qualities that are valued most. Emotionality, individuality in such systems are not welcome. On the contrary, in democratic systems a manager needs to be a model of independence, creativity, mobility, flexibility and reflexivity in decision-making, the ability to prove one's point of view, listen to others, engage in discussion, work in a team and individually, etc.

The obtained results show that the inertia in the education system is still quite high. It has been 26 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, but many management processes in the field of education are still carried out almost as if nothing has changed. Organizational qualities were the most frequently mentioned group, which means that people still see a manager, above all, as an organizer of the system, a vertical hierarchy. The abilities to create such a system and maintain the order in it are considered to be essential.

However, there are reasons to assert that there is a clear trend towards democratization. Many respondents noted the importance of informal communication between the manager and subordinates, a favorable psychological climate and a sense of job satisfaction. This is an important signal for all managers in the field of education. To achieve high results, every manager must demonstrate the qualities of a democratic leader, and the management system itself should be democratic.

This research helped us to make a psychological portrait of a modern manager in the field of education by highlighting the basic qualities that he or she requires, according to the opinion of people working inside the education system (in our case, in universities). This view "from within" not only helps to learn about the current state of management in educational institutions, but also can serve as an impetus for further development in this field.

Prospects for further research consist in expanding the sample size and conducting a larger study throughout the country. The obtained data can be used for development of a training course for managers. Based on the identified groups of qualities, the main requirements for the competencies of a manager in the field of education can be formulated, specific programs for the development of these competences can be developed.

Further work in this direction can help improve the quality of managers' work, which will lead to further development of the national education system and, as a result, to a significant improvement in the quality of the human capital in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

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