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Managerial competencies in the perspective of management ethics: A comparative study of own research

Pawel Tadeusz Kazibudzki
Faculty of Economics and Management, Opole University of Technology, Opole, Poland

* Corresponding Author: **Pawel Tadeusz Kazibudzki**

Article Info

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to compare the results of our own research on the competence structure of managers of Polish companies as perceived through the prism of issues related to management ethics, and trust management in particular. From the perspective of our own research work on modeling the competency profile of executives of Polish companies, the results of three empirical studies have been presented and compared. The research on the competency profiles of managers in Polish companies was of different nature. The first and third competency profiles were created based on an empirical study of a single workplace. At the same time, the first profile was statistically representative of that enterprise, while in the case of the third profile, the research was exhaustive. In the case of the second competency profile, the research was statistically representative of a specific type of managerial personnel, as in this case it was an entrepreneur-manager, who cannot be identified with the typical so-called contract manager. In the author's opinion, this is why the research work described has significant cognitive value from the perspective of ethical aspects of management, and trust management in particular. In conclusion, it can be said that the level of management ethics in Polish companies is quite low, while the need for its improvement is mostly indicated by those who are, as it were, its recipients. After all, the people most responsible for creating ethical behavior in the organization are primarily managers. These, in turn, as can be seen from the described research, in most cases do not see such a need.

1. Introduction

Ethics is a philosophical science that deals with such issues as moral norms, moral patterns, moral behavior and values, as well as their evaluation [Bittner, Stępień, 2000, p. 5] [2]. According to W. M. Grudzewski [2007, p. 14] [9], ethical considerations were initiated by Socrates, while the very concept of ethics was introduced into science by Aristotle. In general, it can also be assumed that there are so-called general ethics and specific ethics. Among the detailed ethics, in turn, we can distinguish the so-called economic ethics, which deals with the morality of a farming society and has a value-based character. And within the framework of economic ethics, taking its subject matter as a criterion, we can distinguish: macroethics, mesoethics, microethics, professional ethics, global ethics and management ethics, which evaluates the behavior of enterprises and their managers and the level at which the various functions of management are carried out. Thus, it can be said that it deals with the ethical norms that guide the behavior of organizations, as well as being the result of the behavior of various individuals operating within these organizations. Of course, if the management of organizations were carried out with integrity, there would be no management ethics, as it would be redundant. However, this is not the case, as is clearly indicated by the economic practice around us, hence in the conduct of any business activity, trust - both from the public and from business partners - becomes essential.

It is receiving increasing attention in the business world not only because of its importance for doing business, but also because of commonly observed trends, namely [Grudzewski *et al.*, 2009, pp. 15, 66] [8]: the number of employees who trust their superiors is decreasing - distrust in the workplace, in turn, leads to:

- Lack of commitment,
- Lack of open communication,
- Low employee satisfaction,
- Empty words and unrealistic notions,
- Inaction and resignation,
- Social withdrawal,
- Feuds, backbiting, discrediting, disputes and abuse,
- Spreading cynicism in the organization and employees leaving it;
- The decline in trust in the work environment is the result of an inappropriate approach to employees, which is especially the case during the implementation of such programs as downsizing, restructuring, or reengineering;
- Lack of employee engagement worsens productivity, and this affects the performance of the entire organization.

Besides, in the globally organized economy of the knowledge society, we can't compete the way we used to. Thanks to network structures, capital has become mobile, technology can move quickly. Goods can be produced in countries where they can be produced at lower cost, and can then be transferred to developed markets. It is now necessary to compete by taking advantage of capabilities that competitors will not be able to imitate. These distinctive capabilities are precisely trust, which now predestines it to the role of a strategic resource for the organizations of "tomorrow". This is because it has the following properties [Grudzewski et. al., 2007, p. 32] [9]:

- Any organization can respond to dynamic changes in a turbulent environment (value test);
- A high level of trust is an intangible asset of few organizations (a test of rarity);
- Interpersonal trust is a specific employee shareholding, since it can occur in all employees (ownership test);
- Trust shows great resistance to imitation or automatic copying, so it is difficult to imitate (imitation test);
- When creating trust over time, it tends to increase (sustainability test);
- Trust cannot be substituted for other useful values, because this trust is the stimulator of other cultural norms (substitutability test);
- Trust can be the basis of a highly competitive operating strategy (competitive test);
- Trust cannot be shaped through administrative regulations and codified organizational rules (the formalization test);
- Trust encompasses virtually all aspects of the operation of a business or other organization (organization test).

The purpose of this article is to compare the results of our own research on the competence structure of managers of Polish companies as perceived through the prism of issues related to management ethics, and trust management in particular.

2. Concept and typology of trust

Since the term trust is a very old concept, many different approaches can be found in the literature regarding the question of its essence. Consequently, one can find many definitions of trust, which are the result of interest in this concept of many scientific disciplines, including psychology, management, marketing, information systems, etc. The multitude of definitions, in turn, makes it difficult to point to this one as the only correct one. However, it can be noted that, in general, trust in the literature is interpreted as (Grudzewski *et al.*, 2009, p. 17) [8]:

- Mental and subjective attitude towards the other party;
- Intention to rely on it - as a result, the trustee becomes dependent on the other party.
- Behavior flowing from the act of entrusting something to another party.

In turn, economic calculus, familiarity and values are cited as sources of trust [Grudzewski *et al.*, 2009, pp. 29-35] [8]. Representatives of the theory of trust based on economic calculus believe that individuals make the decision to trust based on a rational profit and loss calculus, that is, the lack of benefits in a certain relationship between parties determines the lack of trust between them. Trust, interpreted as derived from familiarity, is the result of cumulative information about the other party, so it occurs over time and requires knowledge of the history of interaction. Value-based theory, on the other hand, proclaims that trust cannot emerge until individuals begin to share common values.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the essence and forms of trust that it takes in business relationships, one can also find in the literature various typologies of trust, which mostly boil down to different classifications of the bases for its formation. Thus, the following types of trust can be mentioned here, due to the person of the author:

- Williamson [1985] [31]: calculative, personal, and aggregate (also called institutional) trust;
- Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, Camerer [1998] [27]: deterrence-based, relational, and institution- based trust;
- Ardichvili, Page, Wentling [2003] [1]: institutional and knowledge-based trust;
- Uslaner [2008] [29]: normative, strategic, generalized and narrowed trust;
- Leimeister, Ebner, Kremar [2005] [17]: dispositional, interpersonal, and systemic trust;
- Paul, McDaniel [2004] [24]: calculative, competency, relational, and integrated trust;
- Levitsky, Bunker [1996] [18]: calculative, knowledge-based and identification-based trust;
- Sako [2006] [28]: contractual, competence and goodwill trust;
- Galford, Drapeau [2003] [7]: strategic trust, personal trust, and trust in the company;
- Nooteboom [2003] [23], Zucker [1986] [32]: characteristic-based, institutional-based, and process-based trust;
- Ratnasingam [2003] [26]: trust based on competence, predictability, and goodwill;
- McAllister [1995] [21]: cognition-based trust and affection-based trust;
- Lane [2000] [16]: calculative, norm-based, cognitive, systemic and social trust;
- Brenkert [2000] [4]: basic, guarded, and extended trust;
- Bratnicki, Struzyna [2001]: personal, calculative, institutional, perceptual and cumulative trust.

Generalizing, trust refers to the level of human conviction regarding the fact that others will behave in a predictable

manner and that what they say is credible. A person's level of trust in others depends largely on that person's perception of their trustworthiness, although a person can also "place trust" in others. Trust can apply to individuals, it can apply to groups, and it can apply to institutions that function in society, including the government. We can even imagine a so-called "general level of trust" in a particular community. The literature clearly separates trust based on personal experience, from trust based on the general norm of the collective. This is because the former is related to personal relationships and is formed through a period of cooperation with another person (or organization). Generalized trust is the tendency to rely on strangers or organizations, even without knowledge of their past. The level of generalized trust can vary between different groups in society, as well as between different communities. While trust based on personal experience and ongoing relationships may be stronger than trust based on community norms, it is argued that generalized trust is more valuable because it expands the "reach of trust" to include more people, leading to a better and more expansive scale of cooperation. In light of the wide recognition of the phenomenon of trust, the question arises about its conceptualization. Unfortunately, however, since it is a very old concept, the literature provides many definitions of trust. From the perspective of this article, however, it is significant that the most common characteristics of trust that appear in definitions are [Grudzewski *et al*., 2007, p. 35] [9]: benevolence, honesty, predictability and competence.

3. The essence of the structure of action competence
Every person, during his daily life, witnesses an infinite variety of social situations in which he must be able to use his competencies. In order to form them, it is first necessary to develop certain basic skills and means that will later enable him, with the help of all his senses, to perceive and interact with the social and material environment. These basic competencies include sensory, motor, interactional, intellectual and emotional skills and means. It is even possible to distinguish between cognitive, moral, emotional, verbal, social and aesthetic competencies, as each describes the ability to apply skills and means of action in specific and analytically distinct scopes and directions of an individual's activities. This distinction is made purely for analytical purposes, because in reality the various aspects of individual activity are interrelated and influence each other [Kazibudzki, 2013, p. 335] [14].

The existing interdependence between individual spheres of competence forms the basic arrangement for social and instrumental action, which, although internally structured, is continuously subject to change. This arrangement is referred to by the term **structure of the individual's action competence**-this structure describes the specific relationship of cognitive, moral, aesthetic, emotional, linguistic and social

aspects of competence, which are available and applied over a specific time period, over the course of an individual's life [Kazibudzki, 2013, p. 335] [14]. It is worth emphasizing that for the proper functioning of an individual, it becomes necessary not only to develop appropriate competencies of action in individual areas of activity, but also to properly coordinate the differentiated behavioral requirements imposed by them. The coordination of differentiated behavioral requirements, in turn, enforces the need for the unit:

▪ to have a highly differentiated and complex, yet rational structuring of competencies, serving the individual in his struggle with situational demands;
▪ To have the ability to make compromises between the different demands and expectations of others with short- and long-term personal needs, aspirations and aspirational directions. [Bartkowiak, 2003, p. 109].

Action competencies, therefore, must be constructed in such a way that they can meet both situational requirements and the satisfaction of individual needs. So far, however, it has not been possible to create a kind of universal competence profile for managers, although such attempts have been made by many researchers [Bartkowiak, 2003, p. 100].

4. Profiles of managerial competencies in the light of own research methods-results and discussion
From the perspective of our own research work on modeling the competency profile of executives of Polish companies, the results of three empirical studies can be presented and compared.

4.1 An empirical study conducted at the Turów Lignite Mine
The subjects of the first research study were managers and employees directly reporting to managers employed at the Turów Lignite Mine. Due to the size of the research community, the sampling for this research was random. In them, the research questionnaire was addressed to two groups of respondents (managers and employees directly subordinate to managers), whose task was to determine their or their supervisor's competencies from the point of view of the criterion of their relevance in the management process. Thus, the result of this research work is a database, built on the basis of answers to two questions of the questionnaire, obtained from two hundred respondents (one hundred managers and one hundred employees directly reporting to managers). Its result, on the other hand, is the resulting first competence profile constructed on the basis of the opinions of two groups of respondents: managers (Table 1) and employees directly reporting to managers i.e. their direct subordinates (Table 2).

Table 1: Competency profile obtained from managers' opinions

Kind of Competence	Number	Structure in Percentage
Question #1	Please Indicate, out of Those Listed Below, the Three Competencies that best describe you	
Effectiveness	26	8,67 (7)
Integrity	30	10 (5)
Advertisement	41	13,67 (4)
Communicativeness	27	9 (6)
Creativity	54	18 (2)
Elasticity	59	19,67 (1)

Openness to People	44	14,67 (3)
Justice	19	6,33 (8)
Question #2	Please indicate, out of those listed below, the one competency that you lack the most	
Effectiveness	12	12 (4)
Integrity	4	4 (6)
Advertisement	15	15 (2)
Communicativeness	19	19 (1)
Creativity	12	12 (4)
Elasticity	14	14 (3)
Openness to People	15	15 (2)
Justice	9	9 (5)

Source: [Kazibudzki, 2013, p. 339] [14].

Table 2 Competency profile obtained from opinions of subordinate managers

Kind of Competence	Number	Structure in Percentage
Question #1	Please indicate, out of those listed below, the three competencies that you believe best describe your direct supervisor	
Effectiveness	29	9,67 (6)
Integrity	28	9,33 (7)
Advertisement	41	13,67 (3)
Communicativeness	39	13 (4)
Creativity	65	21,67 (1)
Elasticity	50	16,67 (2)
Openness to People	35	11,67 (5)
Justice	13	4,33 (8)
Question #2	Please indicate, out of those listed below, the one competency that you believe your direct supervisor lacks the most	
Effectiveness	16	16 (1)
Integrity	11	11 (4)
Advertisement	11	11 (4)
Communicativeness	15	15 (2)
Creativity	7	7 (5)
Elasticity	12	12 (3)
Openness to people	16	16 (1)
Justice	12	12 (3)

Source: [Kazibudzki, 2013, p. 340] [14].

4.2 Results of statistical surveys conducted on a random sample

The subjects of the second empirical study were entrepreneur-managers and their employees who met the criteria specified for the research paper, i.e.:

- Small enterprises (according to the criteria of the Law on Freedom of Economic Activity of July 2, 2004);
- Manufacturing industry (by PKD);
- Enterprises of individuals or companies of unincorporated individuals.

The survey was conducted in the area of the Silesian, Łódź and Subcarpathian provinces selected at random as follows. First, based on the REGON database of the Provincial Statistical Offices, a list of enterprises meeting the criteria specified above was created, and then a representative sample of one hundred enterprises was drawn for the purposes of the survey from the set thus created. In each of them, two questions were asked to two groups of respondents: the entrepreneur-manager and one of his employees selected at random. Prior to the primary research, a dozen interviews were conducted to determine the set of competencies that formed the basis of the research work. In this way, eight core competencies were identified, allowing the level of their saturation to be determined in the second stage of the research. Saturation was measured as follows: each competency was scored from 1 to 8 points, depending on how high it ranked in the hierarchy of importance with individual respondents, then the points for each competency were summed up and the ratio of the resulting total points to the

potentially maximum size of 800 points was calculated for this research. The following are the questions asked to the two groups of respondents described.

A group of entrepreneur-managers
Question 1: Rank the list of competencies below, starting with those that dominate you the most and ending with those that are almost absent in you - efficiency, honesty, resourcefulness, communication, flexibility, openness to people, fairness, creativity.

Question 2: What competencies according to your experience should dominate the entrepreneur of "tomorrow". Rank the following list of competencies starting with those that are crucial to the survival and growth of his business, and ending with those that are less important: (list as above).

A group of entrepreneur-manager employees:
Question 1: Rank the list of competencies below, starting with those that dominate your employer the most and ending with those that are almost non-existent with him: (list as above).

Question 2: What competencies do you think should dominate the entrepreneur of "tomorrow". Rank the following list of competencies starting with those most important from your point of view and ending with those less important: (list as above).

As a result of the described research work, a second competence profile of managers was obtained, constructed on

the basis of the opinions of two groups of respondents, i.e.: entrepreneur-managers (Table 3) and employees employed by them (Table 4).

Table 3: Competency profile based on opinions of entrepreneur-managers

Type competencies	Percentage of saturation of a given competence at the entrepreneur-manager real and hypothetical	
	Realtor	Entrepreneur of the future
Effectiveness	63 (3)	72 (1)
Integrity	54 (5)	71 (2)
Advertisement	83 (1)	63 (4)
Communicativeness	38 (7)	45 (7)
Elasticity	70 (2)	69 (3)
Openness to people	60 (4)	55 (5)
Justice	54 (6)	49 (6)
Creativity	28 (8)	25 (8)

Source: [Kazibudzki, 2010, p. 34] [15].

Table 4: Competency profile as perceived by employees of entrepreneur-managers

Type competencies	Percentage of saturation of a given competence at the entrepreneur-manager real and hypothetical	
	Realtor	Entrepreneur of the future
Effectiveness	62 (3)	57 (4)
Integrity	57 (4)	71 (2)
Advertisement	73 (1)	46 (7)
Communicativeness	42 (6)	53 (5)
Elasticity	66 (2)	47 (6)
Openness to people	56 (5)	70 (3)
Justice	62 (3)	73 (1)
Creativity	32 (7)	33 (8)

Source: [Kazibudzki, 2010, p. 34] [15].

4.3 Actual and exemplary competencies in light of the case study

The subject of the third and final empirical study on the competency profile of managers was the management of an enterprise engaged in urban and municipal cleaning, and thus operating in the high social responsibility sector. This time, again, a survey was conducted in which the executives of the said business entity were asked, first to rate the intensity of their competencies on a scale of "0" to "5", and then to propose, based on their experience, the level of the same qualities in what they consider an ideal situation. The survey was exhaustive in nature, as it was conducted on all management employees. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information on the competency profile of a managerial position and managers' perceptions of the characteristics of an ideal manager. The questionnaire included such qualities as creativity, willingness to learn and self- development, willingness to share knowledge and experience, ability to work in groups, ability to adapt to the environment (resourcefulness), versatility, technical skills, honesty, fairness, efficiency, communication skills. It consisted of two questions, each question was accompanied by a table with the qualities described above. Each respondent was asked to mark the intensity of each trait in the table with a number from "0" to "5". The number "0" meant that the trait was not present at all, and the number "5" indicated the maximum intensity of the trait. The first question asked about the intensity of traits in the respondent, while the second question asked about the intensity of the listed traits that the ideal manager should have in the respondent's opinion.

Based on the research work described above, a third profile of management competencies was developed, this time as perceived by managers of a company operating in the high social responsibility sector (Table 5).

Table 5: Competency profile obtained from the case study

Kind of Competence	Actual average intensity	*Ideal* average intensity
Creativity	3,8 (3)	4,2 (4)
Willingness to learn and self-development	4,0 (2)	4,2 (4)
Willingness to share knowledge and experience	3,2 (5)	3,4 (7)
Ability to work in groups	4,0 (2)	3,8 (6)
Ability to adapt to the environment (resourcefulness)	3,6 (4)	4,0 (5)
Versatility	4,4 (1)	4,2 (4)
Technical skills appropriate to your role in the organization	4,0 (2)	4,6 (2)
Integrity	4,4 (1)	5,0 (1)
Justice	4,0 (2)	4,4 (3)
Effectiveness	4,0 (2)	4,4 (3)
Communication	3,8 (3)	4,0 (5)
Average	**3,9**	**4,2**

Source: [Kazibudzki, 2014, p. 215] [13].

5. Summary

A comparison of the results of our own research on the structure of the competencies of managers of Polish companies as perceived through the prism of issues concerning management ethics, and trust management in particular, can be summarized in the following conclusions.

First of all, it should be pointed out that the research on the competency profiles of managers in Polish companies was of different nature. The first and third competency profiles were created based on an empirical study of a single workplace. At the same time, the first profile was statistically representative of that enterprise, while in the case of the third profile, the research was exhaustive. In the case of the second competency

profile, the research was statistically representative of a specific type of managerial personnel, as in this case it was an entrepreneur-manager, who cannot be identified with the typical so- called contract manager. In the author's opinion, this is why the research work described has significant cognitive value from the perspective of ethical aspects of management, and trust management in particular.

Taking into account the first empirical study at the Turow Lignite Mine, it can be observed that such competencies as honesty and fairness are of little importance to the management of this unit. Moreover, it does not perceive these qualities as necessary, as it lists communicativeness and openness to people among the competencies most lacking in

daily work. However, the problem looks different from the perspective of employees directly reporting to managers. Although they similarly assess the level of saturation of management with such competencies as honesty and fairness, they point to these competencies as those most lacking in management, in order right after communicativeness and openness to people.

The results of a statistical survey on a random sample of a group of entrepreneur- managers also provide valuable information. Looking at the actual competency profile of an entrepreneur-manager, one can see that, again, traits such as fairness and honesty are not the competencies that dominate it. And again, while such a trait as fairness is a competence that, in the opinion of entrepreneur-managers, should dominate their target competency profile, one can notice a lack of such a need with regard to fairness (in the opinion of this group of respondents, it ranks sixth in terms of saturation out of a possible eight). This time again, the employees of entrepreneur-managers have a significantly different opinion, pointing to justice and fairness as competencies that, in their opinion, should dominate the competency profile of the entrepreneur-manager in the future.

Looking at the results of the survey conducted at a company operating in the high social responsibility sector, it can be seen that the management of this entity recognizes the high importance of such competencies as fairness and honesty, and additionally indicates the need to increase their importance in the future. Along with technical skills corresponding to the function performed in the organization, these are the qualities with the highest saturation according to the opinion of executives in this business unit.

In conclusion, it can be said that the level of management ethics in Polish companies is quite low, while the need for its improvement is mostly indicated by those who are, as it were, its recipients. After all, the people most responsible for creating ethical behavior in the organization are primarily managers. These, in turn, as can be seen from the described research, in most cases do not see such a need.

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