THE MANAGERIAL STYLE AS A FACTOR CONDITIONING THE QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE IN TERRITORIAL SELF-GOVERNMENT UNITS IN POLAND

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Introduction

In view of the dynamic changes in the economy, the functioning of an organization requires stress on high quality and prompt response to specific needs of individual clients or groups of clients. Competition is an increasingly widespread phenomenon. It has also an impact on the Polish territorial self-government units (TSU), which, as a result, are bound to pursue modern methods of governance.

A major task in activities aimed to improve the quality of governance is to ensure the presence of appropriate managerial staff. However, it is rather difficult achieve, as in TUS such positions are usually held by elected officials, who often do not have the relevant background in terms of management of a territorial self-government unit.

Thus this work aims at highlighting the importance of human resource capitalized by executives and their managerial style for the quality of governance in TSUs.

The results of a survey in a form of an e-mail questionnaire sent to the managerial staff of all communes in the Malopolska Voivodship were used in this study. There were responses obtained from 36 officials at various managerial positions in the offices of rural, urban-rural and urban communes. A graphic-and-descriptive method was used to interpret the results of the survey.

1. Public managers as the human capital of an organization

A major challenge to contemporary organisations lies in that it needs to see the maturity and significance of the knowledge and skills of the staff as a determinant of the organisation’s development. Their significance results from the changing, dynamic external environment and the internal environment characterised with increasing self-awareness. Knowledge-based organisations in which more importance is attached to entrepreneurship and creativity are gaining in importance.

The above relationships may also seen in the theory of managing public organisations. Attention is drawn to the need to abandon the bureaucratic model of management to the benefit of public management, where the fundamental differences are as follows (Bednarczyk, 2001):

1. The departure form multiplication and replicability of activities and the following of instructions towards a focus on creativity in solving problems,
2. Establishing partnership relations not only within the public sector but also by cooperation with organisations from other sectors.
The above differences indicate that the effectiveness of the operation of those organisations is gaining in importance. Individual entrepreneurship and creativity are becoming a significant feature of the staff of public organisations, which, connected with ethics, patriotism, accountability and integrity will ensure the organisation’s success. The measure of their operation is the effectiveness of the management of public organisations, in which the critical areas are (Chmielak, 2003): strategic thinking and action, innovation and entrepreneurship, local entrepreneurship and advanced IT.

Public managers are managers at various levels whose main task is to effectively and economically manage organisations which provide broadly understood quality public services. Their task is to solve management problems considering the specify of their units following the criteria of political rationality, taking into account the economic soundness pertinent to the logics of market play (Kozuch, 2004). It should be remembered, however, that the very fact of adopting certain values is not sufficient to constitute a public organisation manager. It is required that they should meet all, or at least most of the following criteria (Mroziewski, 2005):

- a responsibility for providing a service, product or task rests on him/her;
- they are assessed on the basis of results using clearly defined management criteria and objectives;
- they have been appointed to their post or position in the organisation, often on the basis of employment contract;
- they are directly and implicitly accountable to a public body; they enjoy a significant level of autonomy in the decision-making process;
- they are free to make arrangements with regard to all resources of the organization;
- they are basically line managers, i.e. goals and results are achieved by people (they are not advisers or consultants).

It results from the above that public organisations, as well as other organisations of the future, will face new challenges which will be connected with gaining workers and managers commitment and to encourage them to do their work with a high level of integration, involvement and enthusiasm, as their success will depend on the constructive use of their qualifications, skills and motivation for better work, change and progress (Penc, 2000 UwB). Strategic thinking, identifying methods of getting sustainable competitive advantages and, what is most important, constantly seeking, learning and modifying elements which are no longer appropriate in the changing environment.

The essence of the notion of public manager lies in his operational, professional, political and ethical competencies. Thus performing the function of a public manager is connected with a demand for high quality human capital. Hence the success of public organisations to depend on knowledge, skills, experience, creativity, ability to solve problems and many other qualities of their managers.
2. Blake and Mouton’s grid of managerial styles in the assessment of management styles

The system of evaluation of staff performance in all organisations is one of major factors influencing the quality the operation of organisations. The assessment is an ongoing process and serves all the stakeholders (owners, managers etc.) in pursuing the attainment of envisaged goals. It is done by expressing opinion on those assessed, but at the same time through dialogue, leading to the alleviation of the possible or existing tensions within the organisation.

Thus the evaluation of the managerial staff of a TSU particularly important, as:

– persons performing managerial functions are elected officials and often do not have the proper knowledge and skills to perform these functions,
– the lack of proper background juxtaposed with the new, dynamically changing reality may lead to a number of irregularities (Penc, 2000 Placet) in terms of their behaviour, financial decisions etc.

The system of periodical evaluation is effective only in organisations which have a democratic style of management. For this reason, the basic studies should be targeted at determining the style of management which most generally may be defined as a whole of relatively constant and deliberately selected methods used to the manager to influence his staff in order to make them perform the tasks entrusted to them (Public…, 2001). An adequate style of management enables regular communication within the group, which has a significant impact on effects achieved in its operation.

Among the most frequently used methods of studying management styles is the grid of managerial styles developed by R. Blake and J. Mouton.

Blake & Mouton’s method uses a system of coordinates, where the x axis shows the focus on goals, while the y axis shows the focus on people. A specially structured questionnaire containing 12 questions and the rating algorithm for responses allows to define five management styles (Williamson, 1986):

1. **The impoverished style [passive]** – low concern for both goals and people (1;1). This style is presented by persons who put in minimum effort to reach the objectives and are not interested in active involvement of the staff in the organisation’s activity. Their main goal is to stay in the same post and survive until their retirement (Penc, 2000 Placet). Managers using this managerial style are reluctant to take decisions on their own. On the other hand, they welcome other people’s decisions which may lead to a frequent change of managers’ decisions, by which the group’s operation becomes unstable. In the event of internal staff conflicts they do not back either party. Usually managers representing this style are perceived as persons without a sense of humour who are not particularly hard-working (Chmielak, 1982).

2. The country club style [liberal] (1;9) – the person performing a managerial function shows a high concern for people, striving for developing relations based on mutual trust, improving methods of communication with their staff, crea-
tive a cooperative atmosphere etc. Such a manager spares no time or effort to prevent conflict, and where it occurs, tries to ease the situation and make their staff to cooperate on friendly terms. Managers who use this style only rarely demand a lot from their staff and wherever possible and needed – help them or even do their work for them. By focusing efforts on their workers, such a manager shows too little concern for the effects of the organisation’s operation. The problem is a low productivity caused by not setting requirements as to their staff performance, while at the same time trying to appear as a seemingly "big, happy family" (Penc, 2000).

3. The produce or perish style [autocratic] (9;1) – a concern for value, quality, time and methods, while at the same time neglecting the needs of the staff. Managers who use this style focus exclusively on laid-down tasks. They are striving for good production results by creating conditions which will be unaffected conflicts caused by interpersonal relations. The manager himself sets the tasks and methods of operation and specifies who works with who when implementing the tasks. Such a person does not accept the participation of the members of the organisation in the decision making process, shows no concern for the ambiance at work and does not care for his fellow workers’ success. This style is focused on forcing his own views, opinions and ideas by the manager, disregarding the views and opinions of the staff members. Where a conflict appears the manager tends to ignore it or to solve the conflict in an authoritarian manner. If he fails to succeed, he opposes and puts forward counter arguments, defending his position. The manager is perceived as being a rather mean person and work himself and his people hard (Chmielak, 2003).

4. The middle-of-the road style (5;5) – an attempt as striking a balance to reach a satisfactory level of results and keeping the involvement and motivation of workers at a reasonably high level.

5. The team style [optimal] (9:9) – high concern for both the goal and the people. The manager coordinates teamwork operations to achieve a maximum result. To integrate his/her team the manager creates an ambiance of mutual trust and positive motivation with the focus on common interests (goals) of the company, the manager and his staff.

3. The application of Blake and Mouton’s methods in assessing managerial styles in TSUs in Poland

The study of the styles of managing communes in the Małopolskie Voivodship was carried out via e-mail in March 2007. The questionnaire was sent to all communes in the voivodship. Questions about gender, age, educational background and the number of terms elected officials held when fulfilling managerial functions were added to the Blake & Mouton’s method.

Answers to questions contained in the questionnaire were received from 36 persons, including 18 holding posts in rural communes, 12 in towns and 6 in municipal-rural communes. A great majority of respondents (88.9%) were graduates. The analysis of information on the respondents’ declared educational background showed that the background of the majority of them was economics (16). 2 persons
were lawyers, and 6 with a background in technology. The educational background of other respondents (33.3%) was different from the above.

The age structure of respondents is shown in Table. A great majority were persons who had held their position for more than two terms (50.0%). Every third respondent was female.

Table 1. Age structure of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Number of responders</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31–40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pow. 60</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Own study.

The analysis and the average from calculations using answers in questionnaires (Figure) show that the managerial style used by respondents in TSUs corresponds to position $S_{sr} = (4;5)$. Thus it shows it is a middle-of-the-road style as far as the approach to workers is concerned, however, with a weaker focus on specific tasks. Therefore it seems that respondents are more interested in the atmosphere at work, building relations based on mutual trust or the involvement of the staff in the activities rather than pursuing goals. It is also connected with the lower requirements for employees, and as a result may cause lower work productivity.

![Managerial Style Grid](image)

Source: Own study.

Figure. Blake & Mouton’s managerial style grid by for communes of the Małopolskie Voivodship

The managerial style determined on the basis of mean values is similar when considering answers given by women only, the managerial posts in rural, urban-rural and urban communes, throughout all age groups. The only difference – $S_{2+} = (5;6)$ – was noted for persons who retained their positions for more than two terms. Their ranking was above the middle-of-the-road style. It seems that this may result
from a greater experience in managing TSUS and a better knowledge of their staff which has not been replaced after successive elections. But they still show more concern about people than the goals to be achieved.

A greater stress on results by managers with higher seniority (expressed by the length of tenure of office) may also be seen when analysing maximum and minimum values in individual questionnaires. The highest values in pursuing goals and focus on people $S_{\text{max}}$ (7;6) were noted in three cases by persons who had held their office for more than three terms. The lowest values of $S_{\text{min}}$ (3;3) were stated for two persons who held the managerial position for the first term.

In conclusion, it should be stated that the accumulated human capital of managerial staff, expressed in knowledge, skills and competencies has a major impact on the quality of TSU management. On the managers’ activity it depends whether the goals set for individuals will be achieved and what the costs of activities will be with regard to social services and the socio-economic development of communes.

Conclusions

The managerial style adopted, which is a resultant of the focus on tasks and the focus on people, is an important element of TSU management. Studies have shown that the middle-of-the-road style prevails in territorial self-government, which implies that efforts are being made to achieve a satisfactory level of results, considering also the staff involvement and motivation. Therefore in this style the activity managerial staff is not expansive and they pursue goals which are not too difficult to achieve and do not create conflicts between managers and their staff.

The reason behind this situation seems to be that the people who hold managerial posts somewhat lack authority. Their conservative approach may result from the fact that the failure to win next elections would be connected with losing their privileged position in society and thus they fear that they will receive negative acceptance from their former staff. It is confirmed by the fact that a significantly higher focus on results is noted among those who have held their position for a considerable time. These managers often have gained experience and are now more confident in what they do (thus the value of their accumulated human capital has increased).

These two key groups of factors make the managerial style used by individuals who have held their positions longer than two terms become closer to the optimal style (i.e. the values obtained on the basis of their responses are higher both for the focus on their results and the impact on people). Such managers are more effective, since though coordinating the work of their team achieve better results; due to their experience they are better prepared to motivate their staff and they now how to win over their staff to the idea of the common interests of both the organisation and their employees.
Bibliography


VADOVŲ STILIUS, KAIP VEIKSNYS, SĄLYGOJANTIS VALDYMO KOKYBĘ TERRITORINĖSE SAVIVALDOS GRUPĖSE LENKIOJE

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama valstybinių vadovų, kaip leiomų organizacijos vystymosi faktorių, žinių ir igūdžių, svarba. Pagrindinė valstybinių vadovų užduotis yra efektyviai ir ekonomiškai vadovauti organizacijoms, kurios teikia plačiai suprantamas kokybiškas viešosias paslaugas. Vadovų žinios ir igūdžiai turi teigiamą poveikį funkcionuojančių viešųjų organizacijų kokybei. Taigi labai svarbu išstudiuoti vadovavimo stilius.