IDENTIFICATION OF LEADERSHIP STYLES, WITHIN THE LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION. CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The research recorded the respondents' opinions and attitudes within the local public administration in Călăraşi county, on the identification of the specific leadership skills and behaviors. The research method used was the survey, having as a research tool a semi-standardized questionnaire, with a total of 12 questions applied to 209 persons within the 37 town halls in Călăraşi county. It is found out that the persons with secondary education perceive the leaders within the organization as having an authoritarian leadership style, while the persons with higher education perceive the leaders as having a collaborative/participatory leadership style. Also, depending on the sector in which it operates, the employees of the public administration institutions in the rural areas tend to practice an authoritarian leadership style, while the employees of the town halls in the urban area tend to a collaborative leadership style. The two aspects correlate, as in the town halls in the rural area, most employees and local councelors have only secondary education, while in the urban area the situation is changing in favor of the employees with higher education. After processing the data it was found out that in terms of leadership style existent in the public administration in Călăraşi county the collaborative style prevails by a majority of 56.3%, facilitative style 9.3% and 34.4% the authoritarian style.

Key words: *public administration, management, leader, leadership, style*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a complex phenomenon that reaches nearly all organizational, social and personal processes. It depends on a process of influence, where people are inspired to achieve certain objectives by personal motivation. "... **Leadership is like the Abominable Snowman, whose steps are everywhere, but is nowhere to be seen**" (Bennis and Nanus, 2000) [1]. Leadership means to rise above the vision of a man, to take performance of a man to a higher standard, to build the personality of a man beyond his limits (Maxwell, J., 2010) [5].
Leadership involves really like management, managing the subordinates activity, the responsibility towards them and directing them towards reaching the objectives. A good leadership matters also for developing the managerial spirit in the public administration because it can transform organizations and it can have a positive impact on the lives of thousands of persons.

Indeed, leadership is not easy to be learned, but which valuable thing is simple? A good leader is formed, not born, he grows over time, it passes through a continuous process of education, training, experience and self-evaluation. (Tichy M. Noel, Cohen Eli , 2000) [6]. Leadership concerns, more than almost anything else, how a person (in this case the head of a department or organization) influences on others (subordinates, colleagues, team) to achieve an objective, directing the group he coordinates so that its actions are consistent and to be a closer cohesion among its members.
The present study is an analysis of the main components of leadership in the department in which the respondent works. The data obtained were processed statistically, ensuring the confidentiality of the information and the processing results are available for the participants in the research. The research focused on achieving a typology of leadership practiced within the local public administration in Călăraşi county.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research recorded the respondents' opinions and attitudes within the local public administration in Călăraşi county, on the identification of the specific leadership skills and behaviors, namely: communication within the institution; forming a team that will lead to the successful achievement of the objectives; encouraging the team in making decisions; tasks performing and organizing time effectively; changes perceptions and improving the performances and behaviors; transformation of complex projects in individual tasks, easy to follow; conflict management. The purpose of this research - to identify the characteristics of leader in the studied institutions, to observe how leader type influences the team performance and how leader perceives his colleagues and the team he belongs to.

The research method used in this study was the survey, having as research tool a semi-standardized questionnaire, with a total of 12 questions applied to 209 persons within the 37 town halls in Călăraşi county, including the operative management of town hall: mayor, vice-mayors, general manager, general secretary. Each interviewee had to choose one of three possible answers for each of the 9 questions noted by a, b or c. Three questions were of identification. Each question has three possible answers, which is given a number of points.

A score between 31-36 points represents facilitative style, between 19-30 points collaborative style and between 12-18 points is leadership style is defined as authoritarian (controlling) one.

The results obtained following the interpretation of this set of data set led to a set of conclusions on establishing a typology of leadership practiced within the local public administration in Călăraşi county.

In order to collect information and to achieve the proposed objectives it went to the method of direct survey method, face to face, to the place of work of those questioned.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

With a total surface of 5,088 square meters, representing 2.1% of the country surface, Călăraşi county ranks 28th place as size among the counties of the country. It borders to the North with Ialomita county, to the South-East with Constanta county, to the West with Giurgiu county and Ilfov county and to the South with Bulgaria. Calarasi county was established in 1981, the administrative organization of the territory, on 31st December 2007, being the following: 2 municipalities - Calarasi and Oltenita; 3 towns - Budesti, Fundulea, Lehliu Gara; 50 communes; 160 villages, including those belonging to the towns (South Muntenia Regional Development Agency, 2013) [9].

It was tried a fair sampling of the groups of respondents by age (Figure 1) and studies (Figure 2) so that the results to be conclusive
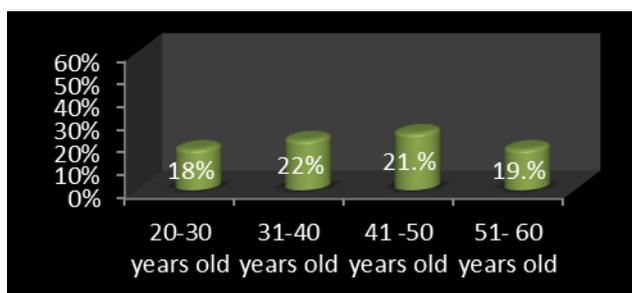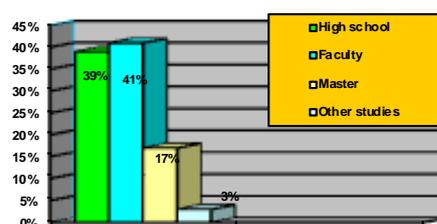

Fig. 1. The respondents' age

Figure 2. Level of the respondents studies

Presentation of the questionnaire and obtained results/questions.
At the question, when I discuss a difficult problem with my team, the answer options were: **a.**I express my opinion and I provide a solution; b.I listen first to the others' opinions and I suggest a solution of mutual agreement; c.I ask for people's opinion and I summarize what I heard (Fig. 3.)
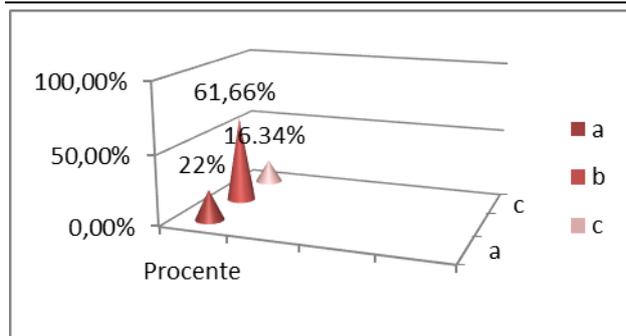
Fig. 3. Quantification of the answers obtained

The question, if the subordinates do not come to the established meetings, the options were: a.27%, I call them all providing them some motivations to participate, and ask them what should happen; b.55% I go to each team member and ask him solutions how he would improve his participations in the meetings, then decide what to do; c.18% I send a note to all team members and I tell them that the participation in the meetings is mandatory.

At the question, in a meeting with my team I feel the best when: a. 73% answered that they listen, ask questions and collect solutions from the team; b. 11% present something or somebody presents something; 16% allow someone else to lead the meeting, and they participate as team members.

At the question, in order to be sure that the subordinates follow the correct objectives: a. 23% collaborates with the team in order to determine which will be the objectives; b. 32% presents to the team the objectives received from top management and allow the team to arrange objectives; c. 45% communicate the objectives which the team wants to achieve in accordance with those received from top management.

At the question, when I participate in a meeting: a. 25% answered, I state with determination my opinions; b) 39%, I am able to present both my opinions and the group opinions; c) 36%, I am able to use the others' ideas in order to find new solutions to problems.

The statement, when I chair a brainstorming, had as answer options: a. I like to remain neutral while the rest come up with ideas; b. I am very tempted and I abstain hardly to interfere with own ideas; c.I provide

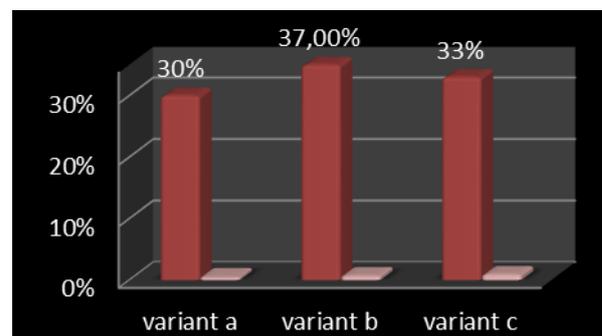an occasional input and then retire in the neutral zone (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Obtained results

At the question, when the team reach a conclusion I do not agree to: a) 26% say to the group that they agree to the respective conclusion; b) 56% asks the team to analyze again the facts based on some arguments they present; c) 18% agree to the conclusion and decision even they do not agree 100%.

At the question, when I know very well a problem that the team faces to: a) 35%, help the team to find the solution but remain neutral and interfere only if it is needed; b) 37%, allow someone else to chair the discussion and act as an usual member; c) 28% influence the team with the approach and with the recommendations while they chair the discussion.

Presentation of the analyzed leadership styles

We cannot talk about a recipe that leaders follow. In some cases, depending on the unpredictability of some circumstances, leaders must show flexibility in adapting to a different style of leadership to the one that he shows constantly.

Participatory/collaborative leadership style. Although participatory leaders make the final decision when it is about a project, they include the team members in the decision. They encourage the creativity and their employees are often involved in the team projects. There are a number of advantages of the participatory leader (Zlate, 2004) [7]. Their employees have a high degree of satisfaction in the work place and they are productive because they can involve in the group decisions. They feel that they control their own destiny, so they are motivated to

work for more than the financial reward. Because participation takes time, this approach is often seen in long-term tasks, but the result is generally positive. The disadvantages of this type of leadership are that sometimes the participatory management can hinder situations where speed and efficiency are essential (Cretu D., et al. 2010) [2]. For example, during a crisis, the team may lose time to listen to the opinions of each participant. Another disadvantage is that not all team members can provide satisfactory support every time.

The facilitative leadership style. Facultative leaders calls in most cases the solutions proposed by the team, but they follow the rules strictly and they ensure that their employees follow each procedure accurately. This is the most appropriate leadership style when the work place implies a high risk factor (Zlate, 2004) [7]. In most cases, leaders assume this position because of their ability to comply with the rules and to support them strongly and less because of their qualifications or performance. This causes resentment when their team members do not appreciate the advice. They are efficient in motivating others to come up with ideas but there are certain situations when the team needs to be more authoritarian or collaborative, where appropriate, especially when it is directly involved in making a decision or when it has the best technical expertise of all team members (Cretu D., et al. 2010) [2].

The authoritarian leadership style. It is an extreme form of facilitative leadership style, noting that in this case the leaders have complete power over their employees. The staff and team members rarely have the opportunity to make suggestions or to talk about a task, even if they would be in the interest of the organization. The biggest advantage is that leadership style proves incredibly efficient (Tannenbaum, R and Warren H. Schmidt, 2009) [8]. The decisions are made rapidly, and the work is done easily. The biggest disadvantage consists of the fact that few people will be treated in this way by their boss. So, where we meet this leadership style, we find also a series of twist of

situations related to absent and rapid resignations. However, the style proves useful for the routine works.

Interpretation of the questionnaire.
If 31-36 points were obtained **the style is facilitative** (Mc Gregor, D., 2008) [4]. The Leader uses in most cases the solutions proposed by the team, he even allows the team to make decisions. He is efficient in motivating others to come up with ideas but he should not forget that there are certain situations when the team needs to be more authoritarian or collaborative, where appropriate, especially when he is directly involved in making a decision or when he has the best technical expertise of all team members.

If the score is between 19-30 points **the leader is collaborative** (Mc Gregor, D., 2008) [4]. He tends to bring his own ideas but also he uses the team contributions. He is interested of course, in the general objective, but equally in the relationships with the team members. There are cases when he stays neutral, leaving certain ideas to be implemented. Directions of improvement are those of understanding the complex real situations and adopting the best leadership style.

If the score obtained is between 12 to 18 points, **the leadership style is defined as authoritarian/controlling** (Mc Gregor, D., 2008) [4]**.** There are benefits of the authoritarian style, but in a changing area that requires people to adapt and support the team. This style can remove the leader, even from objective aimed. Sometimes he has the impression that the whole responsibility falls on his shoulders. In some cases, the other two leadership styles: collaborative and facilitative can make him close to the objective followed by the people he leads. For example, in situations when he needs ideas and solutions from experts in the team or from the people who know better the situations. Knowing the leadership styles focused on facilitating and collaboration, the leaders can better motivate people and they can become more influential.

The interpretation of the obtained answers, and the identification of the leadership styles, on education levels of the participants in the

research reveals that the persons with secondary education perceive leaders within the organization as having an authoritarian leadership style, while people with higher education perceive leaders as having a collaborative/participatory leadership style. Also, depending on the sector in which it operates, the employees of public administration institutions in the rural area tend to practice an authoritarian leadership style, while the employees of town halls in the urban area perceive leaders as having a collaborative leadership style. The two aspects correlate, as in the town halls in the rural area, most employees and local councilors have only secondary education, while in the urban area the situation is changing in favor of the employees with higher education.

Table 1.Leadership styles, on public administration participating in the survey

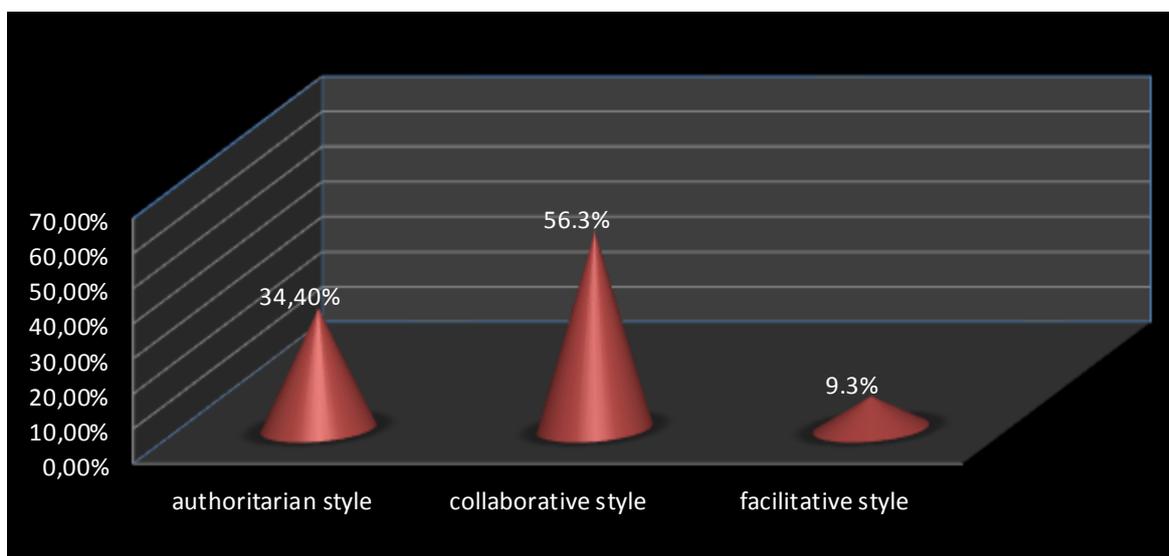| Education level	Perception of the leadership styles		
	Authoritarian (respondents' percent)	Collaborative (respondents' percent)	Facilitative (respondents' percent)
1. High school	56%	39%	5%
2. Faculty	31%	57%	12%
3.Master and post university studies	16%	73%	11%
Average percentage	34.4%	56.3%	9.3%

Fig. 5. The Leadership styles, in the public administration in Călăraşi

The respondents' level of education is more advanced, the cooperation prevails among the members of the organization. If a subordinate is less prepared or uncertain, he tends to be fearful in front of an authoritarian leader.
The predominant leadership style at all levels of public administration, is the collaborative one, which is due to the specific activities to be addressed. After processing the data it was found out that in terms of leadership style existent in the public administration in the Calarasi County the collaborative style prevails by a majority of 56.3%, facilitative style 9.3% and 34.4% the authoritarian style (Fig. 5.)

CONCLUSIONS

Leadership begins to be perceived as a reality "leader sets the purpose to be achieved, the management team sets the strategy for achieving the purpose, and the operational team to complete the project." (Maxwell, J., 2010)
But there is a confusion between management and leadership. The head of office is automatically treated as leader, because there is a theoretical training of the current leaders, this sector has just begun to be taught in universities, the managers are more involved in solving the employees tasks and less in their coordination, due to the lack of trust.

Within the local public administration it tends to a participatory leadership style, meaning the involvement of the subordinates in decision making related to the work, specifically with a minimum participation of the subordinates before the leader himself takes the final decision, with advantages such as: it increases the motivation of the subordinates; the quality of work increases, when participative leadership is used. First, the decisions made jointly by more employees, are better than leader himself could make - especially when the subordinates have special knowledge. Secondly, the participation can improve the quality because the employees like to work directly to solve problems without consulting their head and then have better results; the participation increases the acceptance degree of the decisions by the subordinates.

There are also some potential disadvantages in participatory leadership, such as: time and energy can be wasted. When you need a quick decision, the participation is not suitable since it requires a long time; loss of power, some leaders fear by, is actually a false problem. Some leaders believe that participatory style will reduce the power and influence. But in fact, the lack of trust in subordinates and fear that they will fail are usually wrong feelings that characterize the insecure managers; lack of responsiveness or knowledge is an impediment in some situations. It is possible that the subordinates are not receptive to participation. It may happen that the subordinates lack the knowledge necessary to make decisions.

There is strong evidence that the employees, who have a chance to participate in decision making, say they have more professional satisfactions than others (Maxwell, J., 2010),. However, it must have in mind that the participation works best when the employees are carefully selected, are intelligent and know the problem, for the participatory style shows results.

We consider that one should invest in organizing more diversified vocational training courses and employ young graduates in order to develop the leadership potential of the organization. The inability to select and develop the employees may be one reason for the failure of leaders (Crețu D., 2015) [3].

Leaders to see employees rather as team colleagues, to establish relationships, from here it develops the confidence showing more strength of character and competence - without them leaders cannot succeed, they are a team, the reach the purposes together, they need each other.

However freedom of action and employees participation should be limited, otherwise the authority may suffer.

The managers - to be considered leaders must, in addition to the objectives to reach and procedures to meet, to study, to build trust relations, to encourage staff to believe in their potential. There are few cases where the manager has the ability to be also a good leader that is why both types of persons should be highlighted.

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