

## MANAGER'S AUTHORITY– THE EXPERIENCES OF POLISH MANAGERIAL STAFF

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The problem of an authority has interdisciplinary and complex character. The article's authors have adopted the disciplined perspective of management sciences. The aim of the research presented in the article is cognition of the meaning of authority assigned by Polish managers and identification of activities being done by the managerial staff to shape their professional authority. The realisation of this aim had involved carrying out the questionnaire study among the representatives of the managerial staff. The study sample numbers 60 people, therefore this is a pilot research and the results are treated as a ground for wording the hypothesis for further and developed research. Psychological interpretation of authority of a manager as a person with specified abilities and mental qualifications who commands respect and trust dominates among Polish senior management. They identify the authority more as source of managerial effectiveness than personal power. They strongly combine it with ability to build and support team's involvement. Two tendencies equilibrate in search of authority's genesis. On the one hand the respondents identify the authority with native qualifications typical for charismatic leaders. On the other hand they appreciate the function of professional knowledge and professionalism of management. The managers make out positive distinct relationship between manager's strong authority and management's effectiveness. They overlook the threats such as limit of subordinates' independence and creativity.*

**Keywords:** Authority, Management, Manager's authority

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The problem of an authority has interdisciplinary and complex character. The article's authors have adopted the disciplined perspective of management sciences. Their studies are based on assumption that an authority can be analysed from the subjective view (who is the authority in certain community) and from the subject view (what traits and behaviours should characterise an individual so she or he can become an authority). The conceptions according to which an authority has social foundation because values, customs, power and faith vision accepted in certain community decide whether someone will be treated as an authority have been also analysed. In the study literature there are controversies which are being aroused by the value of manager's authority for team or organisation managed by him. It is indicated that it is a factor that significantly enhances the management's effectiveness. Simultaneously there is sideswipe about the fact that the leader with strong authority limits an autonomy and creativity of other team members. Big diversity of the conceptions of authority and its assigned value entitles to research this organisational phenomenon. The aim of the research presented in the article is cognition of the meaning of authority assigned by Polish managers and identification of activities being done by the managerial staff to shape their professional authority. The realisation of this aim had involved carrying out the questionnaire study among the representatives of the managerial staff. The study sample numbers 60 people, therefore this is a pilot research and the results are treated as a ground for wording the hypothesis for further and developed research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues of authority is the problem that is often taken by researchers in works relevant to society's functioning. The authority, as phenomenon universal in time section as well as in spatial cross-section, is a subject of consideration of humanities and social science, for instance philosophy, ethics, cultural anthropology and management sciences. In the article the perspective of management sciences had been adopted because of the subject area of taken studies. The authority was a subject of consideration of many researchers. For instance Fayol, Follett, Barnard, Weber (Gupta, Gupta, 1992, pp. 287–289) have been engaged in this issue. The following definitions of authority can be indicated (Rao, 2012, pp. 283–284):

1. Authority is one of power's legitimation types, warrant to call the shots or enforce the decision
2. Authority is a social acceptance of people controlling others
3. Authority is a person or an institution accepted as a source of reliable information about particular subject that enjoys confidence because of a professionalism, expert whose decision are treated as ultimate one
4. Authority is a charismatic person, free of doubts, who we are prone to succumb, obey and carry out the orders

These definitions show the existence of the following authority's dimensions: subjective (inner), subject (outer) and the authority understood as a social institution. Authority, as a person or an institution, is an indication of subjective understanding an authority – in this case *you are* an authority. Understanding the authority as a prestige, respect, personal quality or feature is a subject perception of this phenomenon – in this situation a person or an institution *give* an authority. Authority in subjective view refers to an individual or an institution, therefore this is a form of perceiving the authority as immanent part of personal identity of person or feature of particular subject. Two main types of authority can be singularised here: person-subjective (people constituting a role model) and institution-subjective (institutions respected because of performing social functions). The subject authority is outer construct against subjective authority. Several terms differ from each other in content and scope depending on subsuming authority in the context of phenomenon, feature or relation. Regardless of accepted definition personal authority should be understood as 'model', 'example', 'influence', that is an authority of a human who has great importance for others because of owned personal quality and possibility of influencing the run of events in particular field of political, social or cultural life. An authority is a peculiar social institution because from the oldest times it is permanent element of social order and it fulfills specified social functions. In primary societies the elderly people were respected as authority. The original authority of elders had become a trigger for establishing social institutions and law. The authority could be then base of state-building processes and also the element that joins and makes a culture. Nowadays, the authority is a cultural code that is common for every society regardless of social and economic system and historical tradition. In source literature the functions of authorities was analysed mostly in macroscale. The unitary dimension or the perspective of social groups were less important. Manager's authority in the context of team managed by him or organisation is a subject of analysis in the next chapter. From the beginning of management sciences' nascence an authority is considered as title to dictating and ability to ordering allegiance to yourself (Smit, Cronje, Brevis, Vrba, 2007, pp. 33–34). The classics have divided it into formal (official) and personal authority:

- Formal authority – institutionalised warrant to make decisions and call the shots in the name of organisation,
- Personal authority – ability to order obedience coming from intelligence, knowledge, experience, moral values, faculty of dictating etc.

M. Weber (1958, pp. 1–11) had featured three types of an authority:

- Traditional authority constitutes holiness of tradition. Ability and title to rule are handed-down, often by succession. It does not facilitates social change and it strenghtens status quo;
- Charismatic authority features leaders whose vision and mission inspire other people. Charismatic power is based on personal charisma of leader who is hold in esteem by his subordinates. People follow the leader because they feel he is going to help them in achieving the goals.
- Legal – national authority is empowered in faith in wording of the constituted and natural law. Obedience is not given to specific leader (neither traditional nor charismatic) but it constitutes a book of consistent rules. Bureaucracy is the example of this authority.

The researchers engaged in explaining the sources of an authority appeal to Ch. Barnard's theory of authority's acceptance (1971, p. 259). He claims that power has its source in subordinates' acceptance. The subordinates assess validity of superior's orders and they decide whether to carry them out or not. Managers have power when the subordinates carry out their orders. Cited author has emphasized that an employee will carry out an order if:

- he understands it;
- he thinks that order is consistent with organisational goals;
- he thinks that order is consistent with his own bag;
- he is mentally and physically efficient to carry it out.

Ch. Barnard (1971, p. 262) thought that it is possible to keep the balance of personal and organisational goals if managers know acceptance's area (indifference's area) of an employee. This means they know what employee will do without calling into question the manager's authority. The subordinates will accept the order if they profit from manager's acceptance or they lose because of lack of acceptance. The acceptance of order is facility of benefits coming from the order. Theory of acceptance supports behavioural approach to leadership but carries many problems in an organisation. It undermines manager's authority and his role in the organisation. Manager can not be sure if his orders will be accepted or not. He will know only when his orders will be carried out. People who perform managerial function can differently understand their role and be differently perceived by co-workers and environment especially in times of dynamic changes of organisation's environment (Mintzberg, 2009). The managers in the organisations command designated scope of power what involves possibility of influencing the employees to arrange activities that are desirable from the viewpoint of organisation. The power within the meaning of scientific management is an ability to independently make decisions (Junckerstorff, Gast, 1960, p. 76). Managerial power comes from place in organisational hierarchy and personal abilities to manage and endear subservient employees with the aim of realisation of own conceptions. S.M. Dornbusch i W.R. Scott (1975) had distinguished endorsed power and authorized power. When the subordinates accept superiors' orders and do their bidding, we have a brush with endorsed power. When junior manager's orders are supported and enforced by upper management and as a last resort by whole society, we have a brush with authorized power. McClelland and D.H. Burnham had affirmed that effective managers feel the bigger need to influence others for the good of organisation than for underlining of their importance (Stoner, Freeman, Gilbert, 1997, p. 240). The managers who cautiously use their power act more effectively than the ones who use their power to satisfy the need of domination on others or neglect its exercising. The buffering of rules and change of procedures with the aim of gaining credit of subordinates can arouse suspicion that a superior is weak and undecided. M.S. Murugan (2008, p. 17) emphasises that keeping balance between power and responsibility is important. The shortage of this balance will cause ineffective management.

An authority, just as power, is an important factor that influences effectiveness of leadership. It can be formal or informal. Hence possessing power is not tantamount to having authority. In practise of staffing it happens that these values cross. Competencies, proficiency, care of common good etc. do not decide about advancement but the irrational factors, like: shared events, emotional solidarity, tastes, identity of accepted norms will decide about it. Manager needs both formal authority and informal authority. Informal authority requires specified personal qualities and interpersonal skills. The effective management of an enterprise is influenced by demeanour of people with power. This demeanour not only comes from positions occupied by them but also from informal authority. Organisational authority is a formal authority when it is connected with position and its power is designated in an organisation's functioning's rules. Informal authority is based on competencies, personal qualities, way of behaving and values. Procedures of employees' promoting or recruitment to management positions usually need candidate's competencies in his or her field. Then formal authority is simultaneously an informal authority. But if it is not like this and person hired for management position is not capable, she or he has only formal authority. Giving him or her authority is an organisational justification of this authority. Formal authority comes from official importance of function performing in the organisation. Informal authority is a result of possessing the skills and character traits which render that the subordinates respect the superior's orders unaffectedly. Person who has this kind of abilities can integrate a team, create a positive atmosphere in workplace and encourage subordinates to bigger productivity and in consequence have influence on shaping employees' behaviour (Conger, 2005, pp. 40–41). On the grounds of review of source literature about management it is possible to indicate qualities of manager who is an authority for the subordinates (Drucker, 2006, pp. 370–372; Adair, 2011, p. 12; Wildenmann, 2015, p. 32; Amstrong, 2016, p. 16; Griffin, 2016, p. 526):

- competencies,
- fertility,
- responsibility,
- requirements of yourself and others,
- endeavour to attain own purpose,
- ability to plan and organise work,
- professional development,
- openness to good relations,
- ability to motivate,
- ability to communicate with employees,
- readiness to compromise,
- ability to flip-flop,
- listening skills, empathy,
- respectfulness to others.

In scientific literature the controversies are apparent. They arouse from manager's authority's value for team that he managed or organisation. On the one hand it is indicated that respected manager (accorded formal and informal authority) is able to effectively motivate employees. It enhances management's effectiveness. There are simultaneously captious remarks that indicate that manager with strong authority limits independence and creativity of other team members. This issue is particularly important in organisations that work in project teams when every employee have high substantive competencies and creativity and initiative of particular persons decide about team's success. M.P. Follet (1927/1941) contributed to growth of studies over power and authority in organisation. In 1920s she wrote that employees should be treated as business partners and the professionals who work with each other.

This cooperation should elicit the best qualities from employees, be a contributor to team integration and reaching synergistic effect due to combination of knowledge and experience of individual employees. It is assumed that managers of the future will primarily have to possess skills of using the employees' competencies, going beyond the existing limitations, quick responding to changes in environment and learning the new (Hesselbein, Goldsmith, 2006, pp. 10-11). Evolution of modern organisations from bureaucracy to more flexible postbureaucracy leads to shift of manager's role in an organisation. J. Hendry affirms that changes in managerial education towards more humanistic direction should be incidental to the change of this education (Hendry, 2006, pp. 267–281; Ancona, Kochan, Scully, Maanen Van, Westney, 2009, pp. 35–41).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The results of studies presented in this article are an element of a broader research project. This research was conducted in January of 2018 and concerned 60 representatives of upper and middle management who were also students in the Executive MBA program of the Institute of Economic Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. On account of the relatively small sample size (especially in consideration to women – a total of 18) the study results can be used to identify certain trends or tendencies as well as to formulate hypotheses for further scientific research performed on a more representative group of participants. Study subjects included people having achieved various levels of education but all of their possessed managerial experience had been gained holding high level management positions (an average of 4 years). Although the site of the study was Warsaw the respondents represented all regions of Poland. The research is based on documented literature relating to the concept of self-awareness or the process of processing information about oneself and one's relationships with the environment. It is assumed that the participating managers possess external self-awareness relating to behaviors, social roles and interpersonal contacts. The research was aimed at answering the following research problems:

- How is concept of professional authority defined by Polish managers?
- What qualities and abilities influence the building of the manager's authority in their opinion?
- How do Polish managers perceive the relationship between manager's authority and effectiveness of management?

### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS' ANALYSIS

Open questions were applied to find out the opinions of managerial staff participating in the research about essence of professional authority. Table no. 1 shows classification of answers. The attribute approach that is prequalification of manager's authority because of qualities and abilities he or she owns dominates in understanding of this concept.

*Table following on the next page*

*Table 1: Definitions of manager's authority in judgement of Polish managerial staff (self-elaboration based on survey research)*

<b>Answer category: Manager's authority is...</b>	<b>Number (N=60)</b>	<b>%</b>
A complex of qualities that enable to build the team's involvement and effective management	19	31.7
Trust level of a team managed by this manager	15	25
A complex of qualities that bring the respect of the subordinates and other groups of co-workers	12	20
Kind of charisma with advocacy of competencies	8	13.3
Ethical attitude of manager	6	10
Manager's ability to realise delineated goals	6	10
Ability to combine his work with organisation's success	2	3.3
Knowledge, prospect and honesty	1	1.7
Ability to see human in your subordinate	1	1.7
Person who leads his or her team to success	1	1.7
Nonanswer	3	5

*The answers do not aggregate to 100% because part of the respondents gave complex answer.*

Managers participating in the research have expressed the opinions that manager should be identified with his or her qualities and abilities that enable to build the team's involvement and thereby provide the effective management. Large group of respondents put together the authority with level of confidence in manager (25%) and the respect that he or she commands (20%). The authority is a kind of charisma combined with high level of professional competencies for over 13% of research participants. Relatively low rate of linking the authority with ethical attitude beats the drum. The dominance of attribute approach of authority justifies question about the profile of qualities and abilities that qualify manager's authority. Table no. 2 presents this data. In the opinion of managers participating in the research the most important ability that warrants building the authority is building and supporting the team's high involvement. The importance of interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence was also rated very high by the respondents. The responsibility and professional knowledge were also located in group of answers over 50%. The statistically significant differences between women and men's answers were not affirmed.

*Table following on the next page*

*Table 2: Profile of qualities and abilities which in Polish managers' opinion influence the most their professional authority (self-elaboration based on survey research)*

Quality/ability	Number (N=60)	%
Professionally builds and supports team's high involvement	45	75
Has high interpersonal skills and high emotional intelligence	44	73.3
Is very responsible	34	56.7
Has a superior professional knowledge	33	55
Has a natural 'leader's gene'	22	36.7
Can climb down	21	35
Commands respect	18	30
Is demanding	15	25
Respect the co-workers' opinion	15	25
Is creative	11	18.3
Is intelligent	11	18.3
Sets great store on ethical aspects of management	7	11.7

*The answers do not aggregate to 100% because respondents could point maximally 5 qualities and abilities.*

Nearly every third of the respondents combines authority with 'leader's gene', native charisma that is the qualities which are largely contingent on genes. It should be considered as interesting. Nevertheless managers asked about to what extent the authority entails permanent elements of personality and to what extent it has adaptive character related to knowledge and occupational professionalism have valued similar value for these two factors (cf. table no. 3). The analysis of variance level indicates high inner consistency within the study sample.

*Table 3: Conditioning of manager's authority [rating from 1 to 5 where 1 means 'I completely disagree' and 5 means 'I completely agree'] (self-elaboration based on survey research)*

	Arithmetic mean	Variance
The authority is inextricably bound up with charisma and strong, expressive manager's personality	3.5	0.66667
The authority is inextricably bound up with high level of professional knowledge and competencies.	4.1	0.59583

The meaning of authority in the context of management's effectiveness was crucial issue taken up in the research. The study participants were asked to assess the truthfulness of ascertainties which concern the authority's influence on such variables as: manager team's independence, creativity and partnership, participation in management (cf. table no. 4).

*Table following on the next page*

*Table 4. Manager's authority and management's effectiveness [rating from 1 to 5 where 1 means 'I completely disagree' and 5 means 'I completely agree'] (self-elaboration based on survey research)*

	Arithmetic mean	Variance
Manager's strong authority is one of the most important factors that determine effective management of a team	3.9	0.87908
Strong authority paralyzes subordinates' autonomy of thinking and creativity	2.1	0.64379
The employees miss strong leadership related to supervisor's personal authority	3.9	1.05
The employees more expect partnership and participation in management than strong leadership related to manager's authority	3.4	1.05

Managers who took part in the research rate high the importance of the authority as factor of success in management. In vast majority they think that authority does not pose a threat to the subordinates' independence and creativity. They also overlook the conflict between strong leadership grounded on manager's personal authority and management grounded on partnership and participation, although simultaneously the rate of variance indicates that opinions about it are more differential. The qualitative analysis of questionnaires indicates that around 10% of respondents point to clear advantage of 'longing for strong leadership' (rating 5) over expectation of partnership and participation in management (rating 1).

## 5. CONCLUSION

An organization needs effective and skilled executives to facilitate corporate success in the long run. Effectiveness of executives plays a vital role for the success of an organization in the contemporary business dome. Organizations need competent and SMART working managers to be able to achieve their objectives efficiently and effectively. The executives are employed for their skills and expertise to the maximize the profitability of the organization. They induce a vital role in developing and executing of organization operations and create an affective function for the implementation of strategies and policies (Yang, Zhang, Tsui, 2010, pp. 654–678). In this context, "managerial effectiveness" is an important factor that enables effectual operations and delivery of complex initiatives (Bamel, Rangnekar, Rastogi, 2011). Psychological interpretation of authority of a manager as a person with specified abilities and mental qualifications who commands respect and trust dominates among Polish senior management. They identify the authority more as source of managerial effectiveness than personal power. They strongly combine it with ability to build and support team's involvement. Two tendencies equilibrate in search of authority's genesis. On the one hand the respondents identify the authority with native qualifications typical for charismatic leaders. On the other hand they appreciate the function of professional knowledge and professionalism of management. The managers make out positive distinct relationship between manager's strong authority and management's effectiveness. They overlook the threats such as limit of subordinates' independence and creativity. Relatively small group involved in the research lies behind that conclusions worded above should be confirmed on representative sample. Diagnosing of the cultural differences in perception of the meaning and conditioning of the authority will be also cognitively interesting. The identification of influence such variables as sex and job seniority on management position on authority's evaluation requires further research.



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