

Managerial Responsibility and Efficiency in Public Service (Competency-based Solutions)

Szilvia SZABÓ¹

This study aims to deal with a current and undoubtedly unique theme by examining the scope of leader responsibilities and effectiveness in a unique labour market environment following a concept which is still new in our country. The basic thesis of this study is that the responsibility of leaders is highly significant in achieving organizational efficiency even in public administration institutions, and additionally the terms of natural and developer leaders will be explained from this aspect as well. Furthermore, this study wants to define the importance of emotional intelligence and emotional competence in managerial work, particularly with regard to the practice of public administration. In relation to this topic the study also aims to formulate proposals for the behaviour of leaders with “creative vision”, and it summarizes those competency-based methods and good practices that can support leader activities efficiently, effectively and with resource saving.

Keywords: leadership management, civil service – public administration, emotional intelligence and competence, leader with vision, best practices, flow, work-life balance, coaching

“The key of being an effective leader is to be able to influence people without exercising power.”
(Thomas Gordon)

Leader Responsibility and Effectiveness

Leadership is first of all an effect. An effect on the environment and an effect on those employees and managers, who the appointed leader works directly or indirectly with. Therefore, his or her behaviour affects all, who share his or her goals and mission both at organizational and individual levels as well. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the leader to create a vision and be able to find the best ways to motivate others for effective actions. [1: 37] In case someone becomes a leader, it is of primary importance to be accepted and trusted by others, since he/she will be able to speak about goals, daily tasks and common vision as a leader based on this aforementioned acceptance. Sufficient experience, preparedness and skills are necessary for executive leadership, because the task is not only filling a particular position, but also leading a team’s life with full responsibility. [2]

“The Myth No. 1 of leadership is that it exists.” [3: 782] Accordingly, the presence of responsible and effective leadership has a very positive and progressive impact on any organizational culture. It can be particularly important in a time when there is a crisis, or a change in the life of the organization. It is felt exponentially in the life of public administration, since

1 Ph.D., associate professor, National University of Public Service, Faculty of Political Sciences and Public Administration, Institute of Human Resources; e-mail: szabo.szilvia@uni-nke.hu

due to the nature of the organizational culture it means a different motivational media for its employees. [4] The mission consciousness of leaders extends beyond, whether they carry out all tasks effectively and well, since they have special responsibility in the organization's human resource management during the process of achieving the objectives. [5]

In organizations of public administration, the base of success and effectiveness lies, in addition to professional knowledge, in the leader behaviour and competencies as follows:

- One of the pillars of leadership is a process by which a leader influences the behaviour of the members of the organization with his/her own behaviour in order to achieve a goal taking into account more aspects. Therefore, psychological and professional maturity are key elements of the success, while leader motivations [6: 183] [6: 222] [7: 11] [7: 29] that stimulate leaders to fill certain roles [5: 178] are also very important.
- The other pillar of effective and efficient leadership is the existence of those leader competencies, which support such leadership practices that are able to create visions and managing human resources effectively. [5: 179]

The Competency Model of the “Natural” Leader in Public Administration

Leaders have a special position in the social structure. Nobody was born for any positions, but certain genetic and biological conditions are needed to develop leader behaviour with fairly complex qualities and skills. Becoming a leader is a result of a long learning-developmental process. Leadership has some so called general laws (leadership and organization science, management methodology), which should prevail at all management positions. It has long been proven that there are no “born leaders”, but “being a leader” has some genetic and biological basis, on which the characteristics of “the leader's personality” will be simply based during personal development. Therefore, the leader characteristics of the individual function as a specific and complex system that are called leadership competencies. [8: 17] [8: 20]

The term of natural leader is still quite unknown in the practice of public administration, although its efficiency is proven by market practices. The internationally acknowledged book “Natural Leader” by Goleman, Boyatzis, McKee was published and translated into Hungarian more than ten years ago. [9] According to the authors “the previous leader ideal was functional minded and did not care much about personal and emotional aspects and looked at people only as replaceable elements.” [10: 44] The main principle of natural leadership is therefore formulated saying that the emotional effect exerted by leaders should appear in the relationship of the leader and “the follower”. [10: 44]

Being aware of the above-mentioned it has also become commonplace in practice that professional life explained the terms of success and efficiency with a new joint competency. It is called emotional competency (EC), while joint competency is a learned skill based on emotional intelligence (EQ) resulting in especially outstanding work performance. [11: 41] Of course, the high EQ itself does not guarantee that the individual actually learns the important emotional competencies being necessary for practicing leadership, but he/she has excellent chances to do so. Therefore, the new joint competency has a significant role during the managerial work already in the process of becoming a leader, since the competency model of the natural leader can be described by the joint leadership competency being characteristic of the emotionally intelligent leader.

Goleman coined the “framework”, in which he identified a total of 25 “emotional competencies” along five dimensions. He determined two basic categories, such as, “personal competency” and “social competency”. [12: 58–61] This is of great importance in leadership, because the leader as a human (human capital), as a separate subject takes part in the inter-personal (social) relationships.

Table 1. Goleman-Emotional Competency Model. [12: 58–61]

Personal Competencies	Social Competencies
Self-awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emotional awareness • accurate self-assessment • self-confidence Self-regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-control • reliability • conscientiousness • adaptation • innovation Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievement motivation • commitment 	Empathy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding others • development of others • client-centred • evaluation of diversity • political awareness Social Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • influence • communication • conflict resolution • management • catalyst for change • networking • cooperation • team spirit

Based on these facts the EC is closer to practical life than the EQ, because it is primarily such personality traits that leads to outstanding work. The EQ is the general characteristics of individuals, while the EC is more than that, because it is the ensemble of the job-specific skills. Both develop with age, knowledge and experience, so they are less dependent on genetic conditions, or childhood experiences, than the traditionally used intelligence quotient. According to all these information, medium and high labour force, including the leader, differs from each other in their emotional competence levels.

In case of responsible and efficient leadership roles beyond professional and methodological competencies the existence of personal and social competencies is of great importance as well. Using these competencies would have particular significance in the closed, hierarchical, bureaucratic and often inflexible organizational culture and practice of public administration. Those leaders can best adapt to the constantly changing world of work, who are emotionally competent and able to convey this toward their subordinates. This means that they can easily develop themselves, and quickly adapt to organizational and cultural changes resulting from innovations, which is also a benchmark for subordinates. These leaders have open and people-centred attitude toward workers, and they do their tasks by providing support and caring leadership behaviour. All of these means for the organization measured results in the efficiency and performance.

Leader with Vision

We can see that the issue of leadership effectiveness and responsible behaviour is much more complex and goes beyond whether a person is professionally competent to fill the position. Considering not only the present behaviour and roles, but also the importance of the new leadership competencies of a leader, we can say that leaders being responsible for the organization have to be “leaders with vision”. [3: 782] To meet this expectation such leadership attitude is needed that we can characterize with five basic joint competencies, based on the Goleman-model. [5] (Figure 1)



Figure 1. Joint competencies of the leader with vision. [5] [3: 782]

Empathy – those leaders are able to provide long-term motivation for people working in the organization, who understand emotions and feelings and take into account the point of view of others.

- *Motivation/Passion* – leaders, who are in possession of this competency, are able to convey important organizational goals as values to be followed for the subordinates by using this motivation.
- *Self-Awareness* – leaders will be only successful and efficient if they are able to define their own leader behaviour and goals, namely they are familiar with the leadership tools and techniques available and able to use them according to the needs of their subordinates.
- *Self-Regulation/Management* – exercising power does not mean self-serving and unlimited managerial work, but a well-controlled leadership process.
- *Social Skills – Openness* – leaders can be only creditable, if they also believe in organizational ideas. In case their commitment and sense of purpose are not deep enough or only a pretence, others will quickly notice and this leads to distrust among subor-

dinates. The key to the effectiveness is the free and credible flow of knowledge and information, but this can be only realized in a trusting, honest and open atmosphere. In such an atmosphere employees feel needed and motivated, and that is why they are able to work the most efficiently. A lot of leaders still believe that keeping information and knowledge for themselves increases their power. Responsible leaders understand that sharing knowledge makes them truly successful.

Good Practices – Competency-based Solutions

The new leader attitude needs to find new solutions as well (besides the well-known and functioning HR tools) in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness. The realization lies in such innovative competency solutions that have to be added to the leadership methodology and thus to the human organizational strategy. Such solutions could be considered priorities as inter alia life-work balance, creating conscious experience flow, or coaching-oriented leadership and organization design. [13] It is indubitable that the listed solutions are obviously based on the “philosophy of a liveable workplace”.

The life-work balance is of major importance in terms of the caring organizational culture as well. Its knowledge and conscious use are essential for today’s leaders working in public administration, [5: 141] since employees spend most of their time at their workplaces. Creating balance is the individual’s responsibility, but leaders in charge also have a key role in creating sustainable balance between workload and private life, because it provides increased capacity and efficiency if individuals as private persons and as employees experience flow within the organizational culture, since they are able to enjoy their jobs and workplaces as they are in accordance with their abilities and qualifications. Activities implemented under favourable circumstances provide protection for balanced and healthy employees. Mutual respect, and respect for each other’s personality are keeping forces, which develop the organization and the work itself as well. Confrontations, intrigues, fighting for positions, unresolved conflicts only make life difficult and lead sooner or later to stress, loss of efficiency, and mental and physical health deterioration. [13: 195] [5: 144]

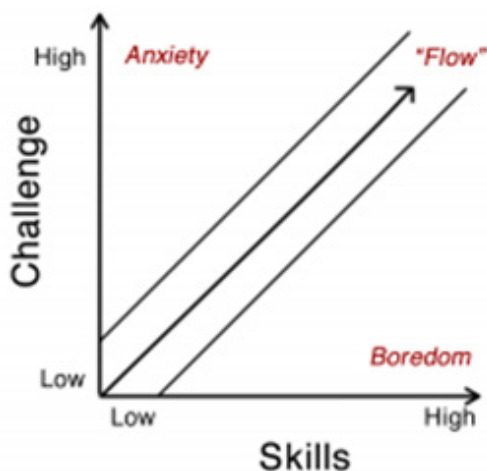


Figure 2. Flow. [14: 24]

The Flow experience is a feature of the advanced labour market situation of the 21st century, but unfortunately it is rarely known in our country. [14: 19–24] It refers to a conscious state, where the individual is able to focus maximally in order to achieve increased performance. The earmark of work flow is if employees can fulfil their duties in a motivating and trusting atmosphere without stress and excessive effort. Therefore, developing and maintaining such a working atmosphere should be the primary role of leaders.

The coaching-oriented organizational climate, and/or coaching-oriented leadership behaviour ensure a supportive atmosphere for work-life balance and the flow. It is characteristic for this approach that work performance takes place in an atmosphere of trust that is based on clear rules and processes with the support of a natural or developer leader. For this not only the existence of personal and social joint competency of leaders is necessary, but they also have to strengthen the empathetic, supportive, helping, and encouraging behaviour from among the roles of leaders with vision. In such organizational atmosphere both the employer's and the employee's roles change as well, since the employees become interested, therefore they are able to fulfil their tasks with long-term effectiveness in a highly motivating atmosphere.

Conclusions

It became commonplace to say that members, especially leaders, of public administration organizations face new challenges because of accelerated social changes and transformation processes of values. It is a fact that the issue of leadership efficiency and effectiveness requires a new approach in the practice of organizations. The way of thinking and practice being introduced in this study show new perspective for leaders working in public administration, but a new opened and recipient attitude is necessary for acquiring this approach. Based on studies of recent years [4] [5] there are some forward-looking initiatives in public administration, but there is still a long way to achieve a complete paradigm shift.

References

- [1] ENDREI J.: *Kemény üzenetek*. Győr: Endrei Könyvek Kiadó, 2011.
- [2] SZABÓ Sz.: Vezetői felelősség és eredményesség a közszolgálat emberi erőforrás gazdálkodásában. *Hr & Munkajog*, 6 11–12 (2015), 39–43.
- [3] KLEIN S., KLEIN B.: *A szervezet lelke*. Budapest: EDGE Kiadó Kft., 2006.
- [4] SZAKÁCS G.: *A közszolgálati szervezetek jellemzői és az emberi erőforrás gazdálkodás, ÁROP_2.2.17. Új közszolgálati életpálya, Emberi erőforrás gazdálkodás és közszolgálati életpálya kutatás „Közszolgálati humán tükör 2013” kutatás*. Budapest: NKE, 2014.
- [5] SZABÓ Sz., SZAKÁCS G. (szerk.): *Közszolgálati HR-menedzsment*. Budapest: NKE, 2015.
- [6] BAKACSI Gy.: *Szervezeti magatartás és vezetés*. Budapest: KJK-Kerszöv Kiadó, 2001.
- [7] DOBÁK M.: *Szervezeti formák és vezetés*. Budapest: KJK-Kerszöv Kiadó, 2001.
- [8] SZABÓ Sz.: *A vezetői kompetencia-fejlesztés tapasztalatai és lehetőségei egyes rendvédelmi szervek hivatásos állományára körében*. Budapest: ZMNE, 2008. (PhD-értekezés)
- [9] GOLEMAN, D., BOYATZIS, R., McKEE, A.: *Primal Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1992.

- [10] GOLEMAN, D., BOYATZIS, R., McKEE, A.: *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2003.
- [11] SZABÓ Sz.: *Kompetencia alapú emberi erőforrás gazdálkodás, ÁROP – 2.2.21 Tudásalapú közszolgálati előmenetel*. Budapest: NKE, 2014.
- [12] GOLEMAN, D.: *Érzelmi intelligencia a munkahelyen*. Budapest: Edge 2000. Kiadó, 2004.
- [13] SZABÓ Sz.: Life – work balance az érzelmi kompetencia mentén – Egyéni és szervezeti aspektusok. *Tudásmenedzsment, Különszám* (2013), 189–196.
- [14] CSÍKSZENTMIHÁLYI M.: *Flow – Az áramlat (a tökéletes élmény pszichológiája)*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2001.

