

SELF-REFLECTION OF ABILITIES TO BECOME AN ARMY LEADER

SEBEREFLEXE SCHOPNOSTÍ STÁT SE ARMÁDNÍM VŮDCEM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify college students' perceptions of their ability to become an army leader in the Army of the Czech Republic. Leaders form an idea of what they want to achieve and why they should achieve it. In the research part, a quantitative research method with a non-standardized questionnaire research technique was used. This is a self-assessing test of perceptions of abilities to become a leader. The research sample consisted of a total of 85 military students at the Faculty of Military Leadership of the University of Defence in Brno. The data were collected in the period from April 2018 to July 2018. The respondents are determined to serve in the direct leadership in the Army of the Czech Republic. The results are used to suggest and recommend an increase in the readiness of graduates of the University of Defence to occupy leadership positions after graduating from university. The results are discussed in the context of the training of military leaders organized by the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic.

Keywords: leadership, management, perception, direct leadership, Army of the Czech Republic, ability

JEL Classification: M12, M53

ABSTRAKT

Cílem příspěvku je identifikovat vnímání vysokoškolských studentů o jejich schopnostech stát se lídrem v Armádě České republiky. Lídři mají představu o tom, čeho chtějí dosáhnout, a proč toho mají dosahovat. Ve výzkumné části byla použita metoda kvantitativního výzkumu s využitím techniky nestandardizovaného dotazníku. Jedná se o sebehodnotící test vnímání schopností stát se lídrem. Výzkumný vzorek tvořilo celkem 85 vojenských studentů Fakulty vojenského leadershipu Univerzity obrany v Brně. Data byla sbírána v období od dubna 2018 do července 2018. Respondenti jsou předurčeni k výkonu služby na základních velitelských stupních v Armádě České republiky. Výsledky jsou použity pro návrh a doporučení ke zvýšení připravenosti absolventů Univerzity obrany, k zvládnutí velitelských funkcí po absolvování studia. Výsledky jsou diskutovány v kontextu přípravy vojenských velitelů v resortu Ministerstva obrany České republiky.

Klíčová slova: *leadership, management, vnímání, přímý leadership, Armáda České republiky, schopnost*

JEL klasifikace: M12, M53

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to identify college students' perceptions of their ability to become an army leader in the Army of the Czech Republic. The concepts of leadership in the military and civil environments coincide in some respects, but differ in others. That is to say, military environments often require rapid decision-making. In practice, commanders take decisions based on intuition and previous experience. It is still necessary to evaluate the information in relation to the current problems and to emphasize the analysis of the problem. The army has different standardization practices compared to a civilian environment which provides the necessary information for solving and performing various activities. Military decisions have ethical and legal implications and human lives depend on them. Therefore, it is important to eliminate prejudices and stereotypes in the decision-making process (Bartholomees, 2010).

Army leaders also have the ability and the qualities to lead many corporate organizations. Since they are brought up in an environment where decisions have to be quick and they can be life-threatening, it becomes much easier for them to become CEOs. Army officers start learning and acquiring leadership skills from a very junior level and these skills improve in time. Leader development is a con-

tinuous, steady and progressive process based on army values that turns soldiers and civilians into competent and confident leaders, capable of decisive action. Leader development is achieved through permanent integration of knowledge, skills and experiences gained in institutional training and education, organizational training, operational experience and self-development. Commanders and other organizational leaders are responsible for producing competent, confident and agile leaders, who are bold and quick in dynamic and complex situations. The army training and leader development model labels necessary areas of training for soldiers and developing leaders (Sharma, 2014).

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Nowadays it is necessary to distinguish the processes of management and leadership. Managers must be leaders and leaders are often, but not always, managers (Armstrong & Stephens, 2008). The British Management Standard Centre states that the main purpose of management and leadership is to guide direction, facilitate change and achieve results through efficient, creative and responsible use of resources. Management is projected to achieve results by efficiently obtaining, distributing, using and controlling all available resources, including staffing, finance, facilities and equipment, information and knowledge.

Conversely, leadership focuses on human resources. It is the process of creating and communicating the vision of the future, motivating people and gaining their commitment and engagement (Armstrong & Stephens, 2008). Therefore, it is inadequate to be just a good manager; they must also be good leaders of people. A manager is an individual who effectively manages and maintains a functioning system. Conversely, the leader management system essentially creates, develops or changes its form and direction of orientation (Styblo, 2013).

Tab. 1 » Management vs Leadership

Management	Leadership
Planning / Prioritization	Strategy / Vision
Communication	Formation and team development
Analytical capabilities / Decision making	Developing relationships
People management / Coaching	Influence / Negotiation
	Innovation
	Focus on results
	Entrepreneurial approach

Source: own

Moreover, the term leadership is very often discussed in articles and studies, although it is rarely defined in them. In the general definition of Smircich and Morgan (1982, in Yukl, 2008) it is stated that leadership consists not only in influencing the behaviour of other people but also in influencing other people in general. They argue that leadership is performed in a process in which an individual or more individuals succeed in trying to frame and define the reality of others (Yukl, 2008, p. 3). In other words, the leader is the one who comes up with the interpretation of the situation and his or her followers are individuals who accept it and they behave according to it. It is a process that captures the interpretation of reality by the leader, and the adoption of this follow-on interpretation. In the concept of leadership, the transition from perception of the transaction style of management is seen as optimal for the preference of the transformation style. For example, authors Drath and Paulus (1994, in Yukl, 2008, p. 3) describe leadership as a process of giving meaning to what people are doing together with understanding and identifying with it.

In other words, it can be briefly summed up that in the earlier concept, the leader was considered to be an individual who set expectations and guided them with the help of rewards and punishments, but in the new approach they appre-

ciate the personal approach and the ability to use the potential of the subordinates and their motivation (Procházka, Vaculík, Smutný, 2013). The authors Hogan and Kaiser (2005) have researched the relevant literature and they perceive leadership as the ability to create and maintain a group that performs relative to their competitors (Hogan, Kaiser, 2005). They point out that this is a shift from the traditional concept of the term. Their perception does not focus only on a person, a group or a process, but mainly on the outcome itself. They emphasize that group performance is an inherent part of leadership. In the Czech Republic, Lukas and Smolík perceive leadership as follows:

- Marking an individual's position in the hierarchy,
- Characterizing of individuals,
- The behaviour of an individual,
- Some form of relationship between people or social groups (Lukas & Smolík, 2008, s. 75).

That is to say, leaders have three basic roles. The first role is to define the task where they must make sure that the followers understand what is expected of them. The second role is fulfilling the task where they ascertain why a group actually exists and ensure the purpose of the group. If this fails, frustration, disharmony, criticism, group disintegration, etc., appear. The last role is to maintain effective relationships between themselves and the members of the group and the people in the group. They can be divided into levels that relate to the morale of the team, motivation, etc. (Armstrong & Stephens, 2008).

The army is one of the most organized institutions. All duties of its members are clearly defined. For instance, according to the Army Regulation (AR 600-100), military leadership is defined as influencing individuals by providing meaning, direction and motivation while they are working to accomplish the mission and improve the organization. Military leadership is an agreement between the leader and their followers where the leader is required to have expertise and ability, flexibility in decision making and willingness to take responsibility for themselves and others, while on the other hand, the followers are able to develop a sense of identification with the leader.

Tab. 2 » The direct leadership

Direct leadership		
Management	Leadership	Achieving
Leading others	Creating a positive atmosphere in an organization	Providing directions, managing and defining clear priorities in time
Leading by example	Preparing and developing yourself	Implementation of missions
Communication	Preparation and development of others	Managing information
Expansion of influence		

Source: U. S. Army, 2015

The table above is in line with the Leadership Model of required competencies, which defines what the leader must be, what they need to know. It is the main set of requirements that informs the supervisor of what is expected of them. A leader must have mental agility, sensible decision-making, innovativeness, timidity, expertise. A number of research studies are currently underway and many articles on leadership and its acquisition by commanders are published. The first aspect is the linking of pedagogical psychology to the commander's work, which emphasizes the training and professionalism which are the basic features of the modern army. The obligation to conduct professional training is the responsibility of each commander.

It is necessary for the commander to have basic knowledge in this area and to guide the educational process of their subordinates in order to achieve effective results. Also trends in the effective preparation of leaders for the modern security environment are discussed. These discussions focus on the required skills and the preparation of people to fulfil the functions and tasks in this environment. Some authors focus on the training of senior officers. In order to maintain the necessary quality of career courses for officers, to shorten their duration, and thus reduce the content, it is necessary to improve the preparation of commanders and staff at

individual levels of command with the emphasis on the highest levels and to create an effective system of independent training for officers' learning. The current preparation of ACR members includes individual and collective forms of preparation. Structurally, it is divided into the preparation of individuals, commanders and crew members and units. The individual components of education, learning and training must be understood as a system – that is, as a single set of inherent and inseparable ways of preparing people.

3 METHODS

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Nowadays, with the changing security environment, new technologies and new changes in the requirements form the competencies of leaders at the level of direct leadership. Based on these facts, the area of training and readiness of military leaders is becoming increasingly more significant. Leadership training improves the leadership skills of students so that they can lead others efficiently in the future. Putting maximum effort into your training allows you to develop your leadership abilities and skills. The role of leader is assigned certain rights and obligations, from the position resulting and related to it. An important part of these obligations is to identify with the role of leader.

The purpose of this paper is to identify college students' perceptions of their ability to become an army leader in the Army of the Czech Republic.

The research problem was formulated in the following research question: "How do students of the Faculty of Military Leadership perceive their ability and motivation to become leaders in the Army of the Czech Republic?"

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The research sample consisted of a total of 85 military students of the University of Defence in Brno. The data were collected in the period from April 2018 until July 2018. The participants were military students studying in the first year (33), the second year (28), the third year (24) of the five-year master programme at the Faculty of Military Leadership. These selected military students would like to become commanders in the course of their careers. The Faculty of Military

Leadership carries out and develops the education of experts in Economics and Management. The programme provides a general academic and military-oriented education and the graduates are thus qualified for middle management positions within the defence department, possibly in organizations involved in ensuring state security. In the course of the study programme, students are preparing for acting at the basic and central tactical level, to command and control the armed forces and to lead interdisciplinary and multinational teams in today's complex security environment, characterized by cultural differences and diversity. The study programme provides students with the competencies that are needed in and useful for the leadership area in defence and state security at national and above all international (alliance) level. After they complete their studies of the above study programme, they will be assigned to military positions in the direct leadership in the Army of the Czech Republic. The selection of participant was conducted based on their availability.

MEASUREMENT TOOLS

In the research part, a quantitative research method with a non-standardized questionnaire research technique was used. The questionnaire verified the students' perceptions of their ability to become an army leader. It contains twenty questions. To evaluate the answers to the closed questions, the five-step Likert scale was used, where 1 means that the behaviour is minimal and 5 means that the behaviour is maximally used. The statistical software Statistica 10 was used for the statistical evaluation of the data, using the open-source implementation of the S language. The data obtained by the empirical survey were evaluated using statistical methods, namely: descriptive statistics, icon plots for each question were created for understanding of the overview.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics allow us to describe the essential information about the results of our research sample. Basic numerical analysis, which was carried out in the initial phase of the work, was used as basic data for the calculation of characteristics. Based on conducted statistical analysis, the explored data are presented in Table 3 below. Namely, they represent the calculated values of: arithmetic

average of variability, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, kurtosis and skewness.

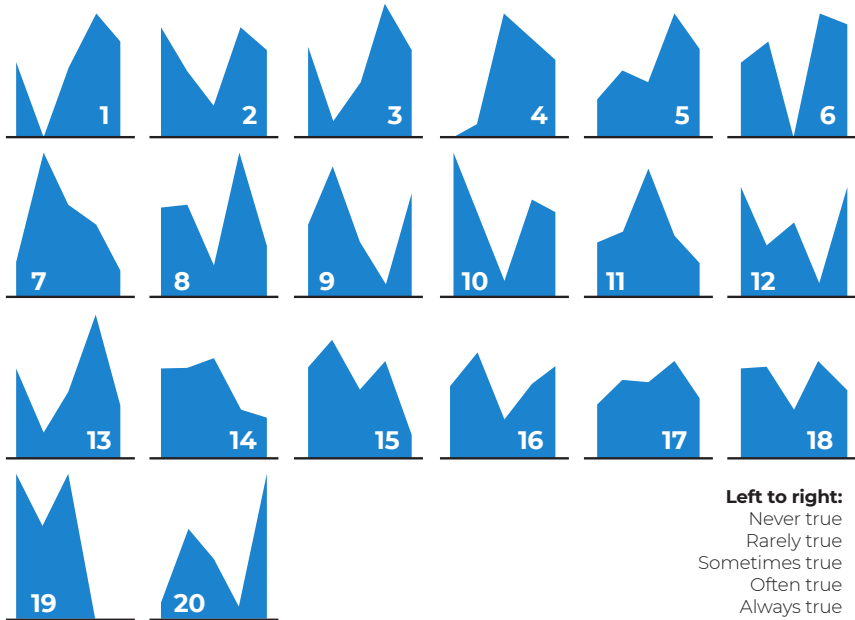
Tab. 3 » Basic statistics

	Mean	Median	Mode	Frequency of mode	Min.	Max	Std. dev	Coef. var	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q 1	3.31	3	4	25	1	5	1.20	36.16	-0.28	-0.79
Q 2	3.16	3	4	24	1	5	1.26	39.86	-0.14	-1.07
Q 3	3.26	3	4	26	1	5	1.22	37.33	-0.27	-0.86
Q 4	3.32	3	3	30	1	5	1.06	31.96	-0.06	-0.64
Q 5	3.22	3	4	25	1	5	1.18	36.57	-0.14	-0.93
Q 6	3.27	3	4	25	1	5	1.28	39.02	-0.17	-1.17
Q 7	2.99	3	Multiple	26	1	5	1.06	35.59	0.15	-0.71
Q 8	3.11	3	4	27	1	5	1.20	38.49	-0.12	-1.01
Q 9	3.11	3	2	25	1	5	1.25	40.37	0.13	-1.09
Q 10	3.02	3	4	23	1	5	1.25	41.45	-0.05	-1.06
Q 11	3.05	3	3	31	1	5	1.07	35.05	0.02	-0.53
Q 12	3.15	3	3	24	1	5	1.28	40.51	-0.01	-1.03
Q 13	3.18	3	4	27	1	5	1.15	36.08	-0.21	-0.78
Q 14	2.99	3	3	27	1	5	1.14	38.12	0.07	-0.73
Q 15	2.96	3	2	24	1	5	1.13	38.05	0.02	-0.85
Q 16	3.16	3	2	23	1	5	1.24	39.26	-0.02	-1.09
Q 17	3.14	3	3	24	1	5	1.15	36.48	-0.04	-0.84
Q 18	3.11	3	4	23	1	5	1.22	39.13	-0.04	-1.00
Q 19	2.75	3	3	33	1	5	1.05	37.98	0.07	-0.44
Q 20	3.33	3	Multiple	22	1	5	1.24	37.19	0.00	-1.19

Source: own

Based on the results, the respondents were divided into two categories according to the obtained score. The first category with scores of 50 and more points suggests the motivation to become a leader and the ability to perform the tasks expected from a leader. Based on the result, 79 respondents of a total of 85 belong in this category. The second category, with a score of 50 or fewer points, indicates low motivation to become a leader or failure to perform the tasks expected from a leader. Authors have selected the most important results, which need to be further discussed and which should inspire discussions to determine which skills and abilities can be further developed and enhanced. In the area of team cooperation and empathy, a positive identification of selected respondents prevails. The relations between the commander and the subordinates must be based on mutual respect. The military command and the personal qualities of the leaders are key for building mutual respect. Leaders must require the exact execution of the training tasks from their subordinates and at the same time they must set an example by a responsible approach to training and its implementation. In addition, based on the achieved score, the range of the different answers of each respondent is shown. The most decisive indicators are commitment and determination to become a leader. All results are displayed in the icon plots below.

Fig. 1 » Icon plot



1. I like to work in a team.
2. I am able to express myself clearly.
3. I consider myself as sensitive and emotional.
4. I am good at planning.
5. I can interpret rules and regulations correctly.
6. I do not have the trouble to ask others for advice.
7. I like to collect and evaluate data.
8. I am good at solving problems.
9. I do not have trouble writing a reminder to other people.
10. I can delegate work to others.
11. I can handle the objections of customers / other people well.
12. I do not have trouble to command other people.
13. I know how to correctly formulate goals and arrange successful completion.
14. I do not have any difficulty to put in practice new procedures.
15. I like to rate the performance of other people and give them feedback.
16. When I make a mistake, I can admit it and fix the problem.
17. I am able to solve the conflict in the collective / at the workplace.
18. I am inclined to diversity in the team / workplace.
19. I do not mind working in changing environment.
20. One of my greatest wishes is to become a leader.

Source: own

Selected respondents positively identify with the ability to plan and organize. In practice, leaders must actively engage in preparation and planning, they must ensure the maximum possible stability of the approved plan and protect the unit from activities that disrupt the preparation. It is necessary that the commander insists on meeting the requirements and standards of preparation. It requires the commander to respond to the fact that some tasks could not be fulfilled in time and in the required quality for a variety of reasons. They need to be aware of the fact that it is more important to practice a limited number of decisive tasks rather than to plan and execute large quantities with the risk that they will not be managed to the required extent and their subsequent documentation will have to be moved to the next period. An interesting finding is that selected respondents do not confine themselves to the ability to provide feedback and self-reflection. The authors recommend that the selected problematic areas become part of instruction at the Faculty of Military Leadership in the form of practical exercises for the contingency situation of command practice.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The article describes the theoretical background of the study which includes the distinction between management and leadership, clarification of requirements of direct leaders and their characteristic in the Army of the Czech Republic. At the end of the theoretical part, the current subject of research in the area of leadership is summarized. The implemented research is classified as a pilot study, which will be followed by further standard research. The focus of this study was to identify college students' perceptions of their ability to become an army leader in the Army of the Czech Republic. Answers provided by a total of 85 military students have been analyzed. These respondents are students at the Faculty Military Leadership. Nowadays they are determined to serve in the direct leadership in Army of the Czech Republic. These findings are going to be applied in the next stage of research and to suggest and recommend interactive educational programmes enhancing the communication skills, the level of emotional intelligence and planning, organization skills and solution of conflicts. The training programme should be provided for all direct leaders in the Army Continuing Education System who serve in supervisory positions. This could be an appropriate way to support

the required competencies of future leaders in the Czech army. Future research in this area should focus on the development of social competencies of military leaders in the Army of the Czech Republic.

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