

COMPETENCY MODEL OF VILLAGE LEADER – THE REPORT OF THE FIELD RESEARCH

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Abstract: One of the actors whose role is very firmly rooted in the idea of local self-government is the village leader. It performs a support function for the commune without being provided with formal authority and financial benefits and its work is subjected to very high expectations of the local community. By analyzing the literature, you will notice that there are only few publications on determinants of the village leader efficacy. Thus, the authors of the article have undertaken the task of exploring this topic further. The purpose of this article is to present the outcome of the competency workshop for village leaders and a proposal of the village leader competency model along with behavioral indicators of village leaders' efficient operations. This article presents the theoretical basis of the competency model, methods of its identification and pointed out the specific aspect of field research in defining the competence model.

Keywords: public organizations, competencies, competence management.

MODEL KOMPETENCJI SOŁTYSY – RAPORT Z BADAŃ TERENOWYCH

Streszczenie: Jednym podmiotów w zarządzaniu publicznym jest sołtys, który pełni rolę wspierającą dla władz gminy. Analizując literaturę przedmiotu można zauważyć, że jest niewiele publikacji dotyczących wyróżników skuteczności pełnienia roli sołtysa, w związku z tym autorki artykułu podjęły próbę identyfikacji atrybutów kompetencyjnych współczesnego sołtysa. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zaprezentowanie wyniku warsztatu kompetencyjnego dla sołtysów i propozycja modelu kompetencji sołtysa wraz ze wskaźnikami behawioralnymi jego efektywnego działania. W artykule przedstawiono podstawę teoretyczną modelu kompetencji, metody jego identyfikacji oraz zwrócono uwagę na aspekt specyfiki badań terenowych w definiowaniu modelu kompetencji.

Słowa kluczowe: organizacje publiczne, kompetencje, zarządzanie kompetencjami.

1. Introduction

It is well known that efficacy in fulfilling a role in a society or a performance of organizational tasks depends on the so-called human factor. Defining what is efficacy of the human factor in Management Sciences, led to the creation of the concept of a competency model, which is defined as the use of resources which a person has to have to obtain specific results in work environment (Fryczyńska, Jabłońska-Wołoszyn, 2008). The authors of the literature of this subject emphasize that the model consists of competencies understood as: “potential contributing to the achievement of specific (desired) results” (Armstrong, 2000, p. 241); ”a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, personality traits, motivation and attitudes that characterize workers who perform tasks efficiently and effectively in their workplace” (Majewski, 2012, p. 21); “orders in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes allowing to pursue professional tasks at the appropriate level” (Filipowicz, 2004, p. 17).

In the research practical competencies are defined as possible to observe characteristics of people who perform work efficiently and effectively. The characteristics are the behavioral descriptions of people performing particular roles or performing tasks in the required way.

In other words, a competency model is a standardized set of behaviors that allows to answer the question: What does a contractor do (what behaviors he shows) to be considered competent? Such recognition has a significant value for the description of a role, because it reflects the true nature of competences as means of transforming the human factor into work results.

For the improvement of Human Resources, a competency model is not just a wish list of required behaviors (Dalton, 1997), but the methodology of work guaranteeing high results and confirming that people who are characterized by a specific set of competencies, are more efficient than others. The analysis of the literature on the functioning of the state organizations and the use of the human factor in their management, indicates more frequent use of competency models in Human Resources Management. Unfortunately, when it comes to the role of village leaders and the competencies necessary to perform their duties, it is very difficult to find the theoretical base and research results in this area.

Assuming that the role of village leaders is a manifestation of the continuity of the local self-government tradition, and is constantly changing depending on the ambient conditions, the aim of this article is to define a competency model of modern village leaders. In accordance with the theoretical assumption defined on the basis of village leaders' attributes, the set of competencies should represent behaviors that likely will bring success in a local community. In accordance with the best practices for creating competency models, the result of the work should be a proposed set of village leader competencies that includes:

- a list of competencies with their definitions allowing to understand the requirements for a village leader,
- behavioral indicators describing in detail the behaviors which set the base to evaluate whether a village leader has a given competence or not.

This article consist of the description of the social aspects of the functioning of village leader, the presentation of the method to identify competencies and its outcomes in the form of a proposal for a village leader competency model.

2. Village leader as a as the subject of research on competences

One of the entities whose role is very much rooted in the idea of local rural local self-government is a village leader. In accordance with the latest legislation village leaders play executive roles in the legislative authority which is a village assembly and the advisory authority which is a village advisory council (DzU z 2016 r., poz. 446). In practical terms, a village leader is a help for the local government unit, in other words, an intermediary on the line resident – Councillor (Hebda, 2016) of municipality. The specificity of the role of village leaders shows that implementing ancillary functions to municipality has not provided a formal power and financial gain. Their work is subjected to very high expectations of local communities and includes number of tasks from different thematic areas such as (Dz. Urz. Woj. Śląsk. z 2017 r. poz. 121):

- performing a representative function of local population, and participating in the village leaders councils convoked by a mayor of a municipality,
- convoking and conducting meetings of a village council,
- motivating residents in order to improve the economy and living conditions,
- administrative and financial tasks: keeping the economy types of property and financial resources provided for the use of municipality, preparing activity reports, settling financial accounts for communal property located on the territory of a municipality,
- confirming the circumstances that are required of residents by the law,
- performing other tasks e.g. fire protection and defence, prevention of natural disasters and removal of their consequences – their help is to communicate fast to authorities the disturbing signals from residents.

Implementation of the above tasks requires personal efficacy and self-motivation because village leaders devote their private time working for others without pay. Moreover, nowadays the role of a village leader is not regarded as historically – being chosen a village leader was high honors and presentation of respect by villagers and the legitimacy of the role of “ruler” (Hebda, 2016). Currently, village leaders are ordinary citizens with additional social function –

in addition to the mentioned above tasks, they must understand needs of residents to pass them to relevant public authorities. On the other hand, residents make village leaders responsible for various disadvantages associated with everyday life e.g. the lack of paved roads.

As selected studies on the issues of village leaders' activity prove, in reality, the biggest challenge is weakening their position in terms of power and prestige, with the increase of social expectations on their efficacy and efficiency at the same time (Matysiak, 2013). It is not surprising therefore, that in practice, we can encounter three types of roles for village leaders (Borucka, 2017):

1. village leader from the office – it is a person whose candidature has been forced by local voters or that was in the office for a few terms (this case occurs in the absence of new candidates or a habit to the office). Such a village leader performs only the statutory minimum, does not engage in social life, but shall convene meetings in formal cases i.e. the funds, a disruption in the functioning of general interest, distribution of tax decisions, etc. To sum up, he/she does what is ordered and neither feels obligated nor endorses the position;
2. ghostly village leader – it is a person who in early stages is motivated and executes carefully his/her statutory obligations, wants to do more, is inventive, but does not have the support from local authorities or the rural community. He/she has no authority and is not able to motivate people to action. His/her ideas do not meet with approval and as a result, withdraws from his/her responsibilities. Tasks are fulfilled without the commitment or occasionally, and eventually, he/she becomes a village leader only on paper;
3. village leader a community activist – has authority among the villagers and is able to make them committed to work towards common goals and gives them sense of belonging to the community. He/she has ideas about the needed changes and presents them to the Council of municipality. He/she builds the role on the basis of real needs of residents, which are identified in direct contact and through community forums – his/her ideas are approved by a wider group of people. He/she cooperates with the municipality and eagerly participate in any of its activities. Also he/she tries to raise money from a variety of sources.

From the perspective of the residents the most desirable is a community activist. Therefore, this research is focused on examination, and then description of such behavioral indicators that determine being this type of a village leader.

3. The panel of experts as a tool for the identification of competencies

In the competence management practice there are two approaches to identification and description: selection of a "competence catalogue" or creating a "blank sheet".

A competence catalogue consists of sets of different competences which are described on the cards. The competence cards include definitions of competences and various levels of compliance with competences – the most often used model starts from the basic level of competence acquisition, through the specialist level, up to the expert level. The use of such directory of competences helps to choose the competences and the level of their fulfilment, which is the best way to describe a doer of specific asks.

Work on a "blank sheet" requires to identify indicators of success in fulfilling a role from the scratch, that is, on the basis of information that characterize the behavioral determinants of certain tasks. This method requires the description of best-in-class performers from different perspectives, for example. expectations of customers, metaphorical projection of typical characteristics, analysis of strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and the required knowledge and skills. As the result of a variety of qualitative data, we get a characteristic which requires connection of similar descriptions to the appropriate behavioral scales. Consequently, we get a description of behaviors adapted to the specificity of the role that fully reflects its attributes.

Regardless of the choice of the approach, it is required to apply the method of panel experts, which is a group interview (or a competency workshop), during which a role's representative also makes its description. The aim of a competency workshop is to define the key competences and the description the required behaviors. Based on the above characteristics, it should be stressed that competency workshops reference directly to the qualitative research, which uses methods characteristic of the humanities including: methods of organizational anthropology, involved and participatory methods, or metaphorical methods (Sułkowski, 2011). The design of a competency interview is analogous to direct group interview, which "is based on dialogue and relies on obtaining the core information through direct and interactive conversation of investigator or interviewer with respondent (or group of respondents) on the carried research. In the course of such interview more or less the formal questions are asked, and after the questioning further information is possible to obtain" (Chybalski, Matejun, 2013).

To identify the village leader competency model, the script for the competency workshop was prepared which contained the following research areas:

- Characteristics of a village leader in public structures - a projection task comparing a village leader to an animal and his/her village or municipality to the environment in which this animal lives.
- Knowledge and skills required to perform the role of a village leader-a group discussion to specify what knowledge and skills should he/she have; the results are given below.

- Values and areas of life important from the perspective of the role of a village leader – an individual assessment done by each village leader. After the available tool analysis, the Hogan Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI) was selected. MVPI contains the following scales:
 - Recognition – desire for attention, approval and praise.
 - Power – striving for success, achievement, status and control.
 - Hedonism – orientation for fun, pleasure and joy.
 - Altruistic – desire to help others and be useful for society (contribute to its development).
 - Affiliation – desire to enjoy working in a team and social relationships.
 - Tradition – dedication, strong personal beliefs and sense of duty.
 - Security – need for predictability, structure and governance.
 - Commerce – interest of money, profit, investments and business opportunities.
 - Aesthetics – need for self-expression, care for the style and appearance.
 - Learning – seeking the knowledge, research, technology and data.
- Village leaders in the surrounding environment – a group discussion about the SWOT analysis of current operations of village leaders in the local environment.

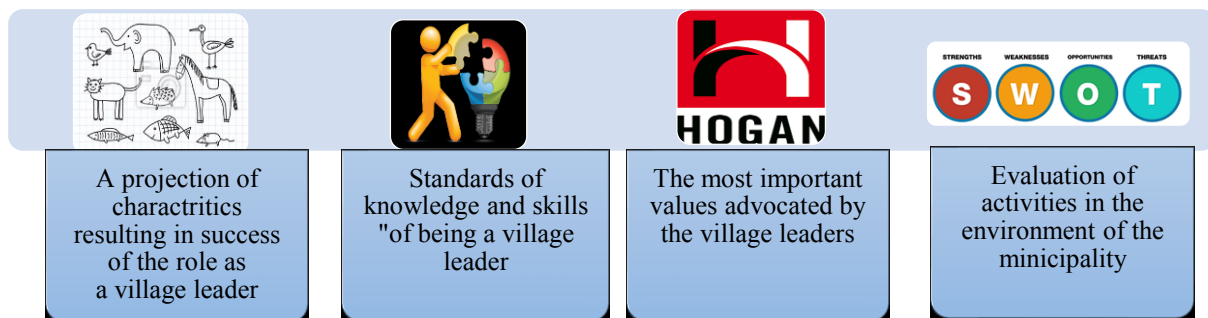


Figure 1. The script for the competency workshop for the village leaders. Source: own elaboration.

4. The indicators of a village leader efficacy – a proposal for the competency model

The competency workshop described above has been used on a pilot basis to examine their views of the representatives of the office of the County Stanisławów. The workshop was held in March 2017. Described below are the characteristics of the village leaders who took part in it:

- age (youngest village leader 23 years old, the oldest over 70),
- the number of inhabitants of the village (from 44 to 303 inhabitants),
- gender (2 women, 6 men),
- number of terms (5 people serve the first term, 2 people serve the second term).

The individual task, a village leader and his/her environment in the metaphor of an animal" has shown very many features that a village leader must have. Although the proposals of animals were different (monkey, bear, cat, sloth, lion x 2, horse), the animal features apply to the following:

- cooperation with others: knows how to live in a group, and is communicative,
- helping others: being fair, friendly, eager to help; everyone can count on him/her,
- personal efficacy: the ability to adapt to any situation, for example: overcoming obstacles, being strong, dominant, individualistic, enduring,
- vital energy: being fast, fierce, brave, unflinching, merciless.

These characteristics, reference to the description of the inhabitants who according to the village leaders are like "jungles, forest, a lot of traps, you can get lost. In the forest there are: wolves moving only in their own herd and no one else is allowed on their territory; foxes wanting to take something from someone and existing on the side; wild boars which only turn everything upside down and run away; sloths – want something, but they don't want to take any actions; cuckoos, wanting to only push and toss things aside; magpies-thieves".

The next task on the workshop was to define the knowledge and skills necessary to act as a village leader. During the group discussion the participants have identified the following requirements:

- knowledge:
 - about life: a village leader knows the needs of the people (through meetings), knows what is happening around,
 - about the law: a village leader knows the Local Government Act, the statutes containing the regulations for the Fund Act,
- skills:
 - social: communication skills, empathy, openness to people, listening to others without imposing one's own opinion, patience,
 - influencing others: personal efficacy: poise, courage, operability (work and raise funds from a variety of sources), tenacity, focus on purpose.

In the next task, the participants have evaluated on a scale 1-5 (1. Not important 2. Little important 3. On average important 4. Important 5. Very important) the validity of the proposed in the Hogan's questionnaire values for people acting as village leaders. The following figure shows the Hogan's values:

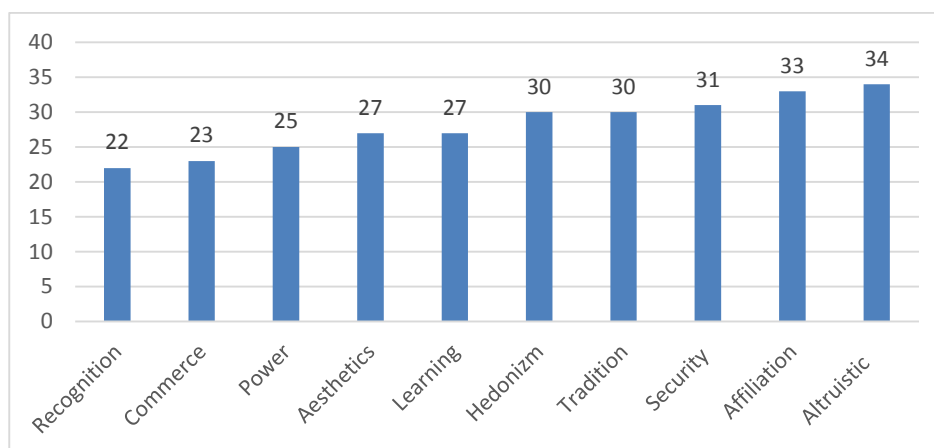


Figure 2. Hogan's values in work of village leaders. Source: own elaboration.

As it is apparent from the above chart, the scoring totals indicate the values ranging from 22 to 34. For the purposes of creating this competency model, the selected were the values greater than or equal to 30 i.e. altruism, belonging, security, hedonism and tradition.

The last task for the group was to conduct a SWOT analysis of the statement: a village leader as a social role. The participants in turn provided the positive and negative sides of the position, but also opportunities and risks that it involves. Below the Figure 3, shows the result of the group discussion.

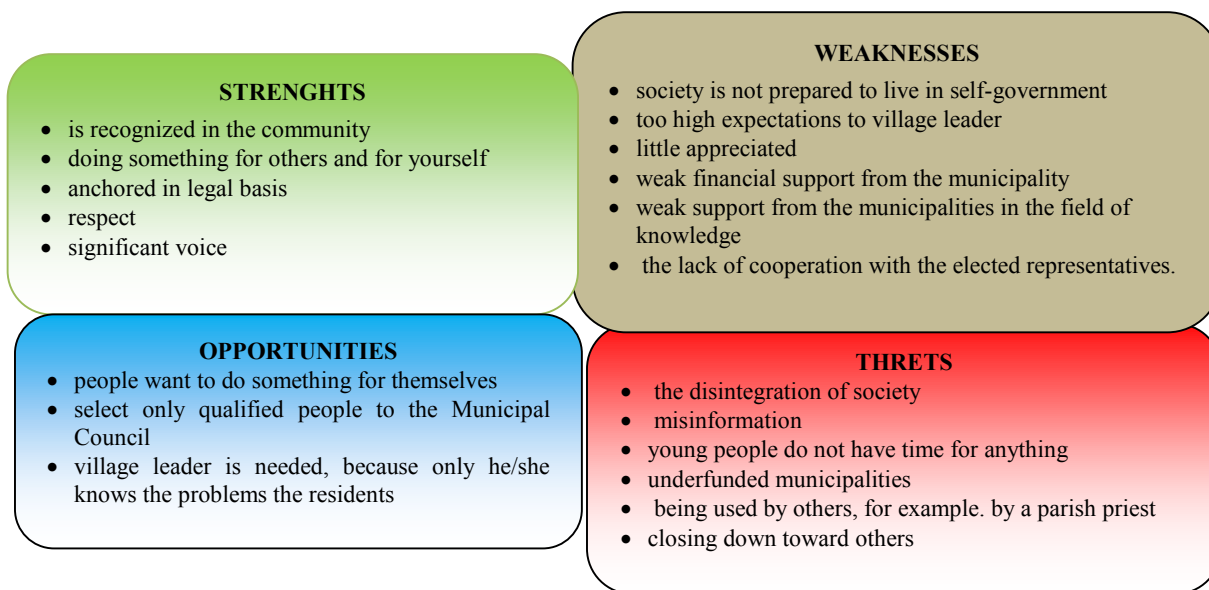


Figure 3. SWOT analysis of village leader in community. Source: own elaboration.

The gathered evidence of the four tasks of the competency workshop allowed to name the competencies, establish its description and then propose indicators of behaviors characterized by a given competency. Describing the indicators required a reference to the role of village leader in his/her own surroundings so that the obtained characteristics allow to understand competencies accurately. The result of the competency workshop is presented in table 1, as the list of competences with the definitions and the behavioral observation scale.

Table 1.*The competency model of village leader*

The name of the competences + description	The observational scales
Being social activist – the desire to help others and contribute to the development of society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is open to new initiatives and wants to do something for others • by the attitude he/she can encourage others to work • shares his/her ideas, and assists others in their initiatives • selflessly works for the community-not looking for any kind of profits
Belonging – enjoying working in a team and social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • willingly cooperates in all county events • easily establishes contacts and maintains them • is not afraid to ask for help • is assertive, but also shows empathy
Creating security – creating the climate of predictability, structure and governance, the ability to act in every situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soothes conflicts, acts as a mediator • controls own emotions • is easily intimidated, is brave • believes in his/her right and has a sense of self-dignity
Optimism – treating the office as a hobby, focusing on pleasure and joy from being a village leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can find a way out of every situation, • joyfully performs the tasks • is creative and has open attitudes to the tasks • derives pleasure from the results and takes advantages of them

Source: own elaboration.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research shows that the competency model of a village leader proposed by the authors, confirms the essential nature of this role in the local community. Confirms also the role of a village leader – a community activist, as recommended for people who want to play it. The authors are aware that the topic of a village leader competences is barely touched and requires further study, particularly when it comes to the perspective of the characteristics of men and women performing this role.

Further research in this area can contribute to a greater appreciation of the office both by the people who are village leaders as well as the citizens who don't appreciate the role a village leader in the creation of a secure community.

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