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Expectations towards Global Organisational Leaders

Abstract

This article analyses issues about organisational leaders who have an impact on behaviour internationally. According to leadership categorisation theory, social identity and leadership theory, the expectations of employees are the result of many different processes which come out during the process of socialisation. People have some ideas about what constitutes a successful leader, which they compare with different managers' behaviour and image created in, for example, international organisations. The article presents ideas from and results of different international studies presented in the literature about this issue as well as my own pilot studies on expectations towards global organisational leaders which exist on the Web. The article presents circumstances of formed leadership relationships on a global scale. In conducting my research I sought to determine the significance of socio-cultural changes in the process of creating a model of expectations towards global organisational leaders, and also to illustrate the similarities and differences brought about by the context of the occurrence of a leadership relationship.

Keywords: global leader, organisational leadership, social expectations, cultural context.

1. Introduction

According to the leadership categorisation theory (Kozusznik 2005, pp. 117–118) and the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg *et al.* 2001), employee expectations are the result of many different processes which occur during the process of socialisation. People have some ideas about what a successful

leader is which they then compare with different managers' behaviour and the image they see created in, for example, international organisations. The set of features a leader is expected to exhibit is observed in behaviour, which is treated as the externalisation of one's personality, values and attitudes. If people observe behaviour that is consistent with their expectations, they start calling the person behaving that way a leader. Behaviour consistent with expectations causes the organisational leader to gain credibility.

This article presents ideas and results of different international studies presented in the literature concerning this issue as well as the results of my own pilot studies on expectations towards global organisational leaders which may be found on the Web. If organisational leadership is understood as "a relationship superordinate with subordinates (or co-workers, depending on the particular type of organisational leadership), aimed at achieving goals – visions, dreams, plans and values – based on respect and trust the qualifications of leaders, and often the fascination with them, rational or irrational commitment to the co-created vision of development" (Haromszeki 2010b). The relationship is based on having followers who confirm the existence of leadership (Haromszeki 2010b) – the most important questions are: What are the expectations of global organisational leaders? How do these expectations show up in the mind and behaviour of employees of international companies which have branches in different cultures around the world?

Other more particular questions are: What is the role of unified patterns of behaviour characteristic for the Internet and teaching in a similar way at different business schools around the world? What is the role of specific characteristic values according to relativism for local cultures to understand individually or absolutist values show up lately in increasing popularity of different national and religion moves?

This article seeks to determine the significance of socio-cultural changes in the process of creating model expectations of global organisational leaders and to show the similarities and differences because of the context of the occurrence of a relationship.

2. Accounting for Patterns of Behaviour – Does Place Still Play a Role?

Two factors play a crucial role in shaping expectations of organisational leaders over national borders (national and regional cultures) – formal education in business schools and the Internet, which is a forum where values and attitudes are created in the course of discussion: relativism (behaviour characteristic of

a particular cultural context) contra absolutism (behaviour expected from everyone according to the canon of rules). Such discussion of different opinions shapes the image of an ethical and successful organisational leader. It could also lead to the creation of expectations towards organisational leaders more or less related to the cultural intelligence approach (Livermore 2009).

Organisational behaviour differs greatly between cultures (Alvesson 2002, Bjerke 2004, Bjerke, Mesjasz & Hajdukiewicz 2004, Geertz 2000, Hofstede 2000, Schein 1992, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2002), but in looking at organisational leadership development programmes at the best business schools in the world (according to *The Financial Times Ranking of Business Schools* 2012), we find that they share similarities, inspired by training methodology done in the United States, Great Britain and France. Tailored to individual needs, the programmes are designed to shape future leaders and, according to the universities, result in a very high percentage of people achieving success in managerial positions after graduation. The universities present statistics on successful graduates, broken down by sector and level of management. This information plays a crucial role in creating expectations towards leaders and the desire to apply similar behaviour in future professionals.

Managers strive to be well-educated leaders, prepared to make informed decisions in a variety of social, cultural, economic and market conditions, and to engage in creative, active and integrated thinking which encourages current and strategic actions. Employees judge their supervisors by these criteria. The success of the educational programmes described above is based primarily on the novel, multi-path approach of non-linear training offered. This incorporates the advice of scientists and experts, the opportunity to gain practical skills in individual and team activities, and stimulants to “doubt”, which leads students to ask questions, an essential component of the overall philosophical underpinnings. These multilevel educational programmes offered by the leading business schools builds the students’ confidence, facilitates communication and networking and the awareness of the dominant role of human capital in the organisation and relational capital in the business environment and prepares them to not make mistakes in their role as organisational leader. T. Kawka and A. Suchodolski proposed a similar approach to the role of organisational leaders in creating new circumstances for building human capital relationships in new socio-economic conditions (Kawka 2010, pp. 268–276; Suchodolski 2010, pp. 727–736). They show different expectations towards the process of creating a new quality of management relations with employees and the role of changing workers in the 21st century organisation.

Because the Internet’s role in blurring the boundaries between users has descended from different societies, virtual space levels civilisation and cultural

differences. The increasingly broadened access to information and resources the Internet provides has improved people's knowledge, skills and ability to use them. It is an important component of the process of socialisation and learning, and of building an individual image of a successful leader. Increasing self-consciousness brings about different expectations of organisational leaders, which sometimes grow out of mass culture more than national and other regional cultures.

The shaping of relationships on the Internet is particularly influenced by freedom – that is the unrestricted possibility of communicating within the limits defined by the law. Freedom interpreted in such a way triggers in people the unhindered desire to exchange thoughts and ideas (Haromszeki & Jarco 2013, pp. 200–216). Internalising specific norms and values through this conduit may be more successful than learning in schools, where there is opposition to teaching methods and a lack of engagement when teachers are not treated as authorities. The greater confidence in virtual relationships may also be the result of a lack of trust in real world relationships and lack of integrity organisations such as companies exhibit. Leaders of virtual relations – people who exist on the Web – easily gain followers across both state and administrative divisions. Additionally, the world of the Internet and use of ICT tools on the Web can shorten the time it takes to bridge the competence gap between developed and emerging economies (Haromszeki & Jarco 2012, pp. 194–213).

Another important issue for leaders is to achieve reliability as the basis for operating effectively. The pragmatic and praxeological approach existing in the world of prevailing situational leadership requires that a leader have the necessary (socially expected) qualities. The significantly different natures of traditional and virtual relations means that the process of becoming reliable follows different patterns. The world of virtual relationships, unlike the world of traditional relationships, doesn't set the models of features, behaviour, attitudes based on the expectations arising from social and cultural contexts. The virtual world, which is much more uniform and is constantly changing as a result of the latest technological innovations, draws special attention to flexibility, dynamism, and the attractiveness of the message as the basis for the establishment of a leader's reliability in the scope of a given activity on the Web. The world of the Internet, which is constantly dynamically changing, provides the grounds for thinking that the feeling of unique identity and the fascination with a leader refer to one specific activity or idea. A leader that seeks to be influential has to be attractive to his or her followers throughout the fulfillment of a task. In addition, the leader's image should be consistent not only within such an activity but also in the entirety of information that can be found about this person on the Internet.

Observation of activities created in the Internet space reveals that the majority of them are based on expressing emotions in a more unlimited manner.

Such activities are possible because the freedom to express opinions and uncompromising attitudes is more significant in the virtual world – it is difficult to find them expressed to such a degree in the world of traditional relations arising from the values prevailing in given cultural circles, which often limit the expression of emotions in a natural, totally free and culturally unrestricted manner (considered to be undesirable or even deviant activities).

What is expected from leaders in virtual and traditional relationships is completely different (Haromszeki & Jarco 2013, pp. 200–216). Qualities expected in the virtual world include creativity (inventiveness), persuasive skills, the ability to interest people (including by shocking them), a constant readiness to communicate, interact and be available as a leader, interdisciplinary knowledge, the ability to anticipate, and charisma (Haromszeki & Jarco 2013, pp. 200–216). These qualities correspond to a 2013 analysis done by B. Feder, according to whom, until recently, knowledge, skills and abilities were enough to gain competitive advantage. At present, there are also other factors of fundamental importance such as the power of imagination, mental abilities, initiative, trustworthiness, the ability to predict and to use language that followers may identify with.

Totally different expectations exist towards leaders in the world of traditional relationships (Haromszeki & Jarco 2013, pp. 200–216). The most important are charisma, the desire to dominate, mental stability, equilibrium and resistance to stress, firmness, and the ability to speak and be objective in interpersonal relations. The order of features characteristic of leaders in the world of traditional relations confirms the earlier results concerning leadership relations, management styles (preferred by the superiors and expected by those managed) characteristic of Eastern and Southern Europe – strong authority, an autocratic approach, and taking full responsibility for decisions (Koopman *et al.* 2001, pp. 7–22; Maczyński & Wyspiański 2011, pp. 7–18). Much less uniform patterns suggest that there are those who support maintaining the existing social identity components (nation-states, regions) of the modern world. On the one hand, there is a systemic camp that emphasises the autonomy of the individual and the need for co-existence of different cultural areas based on human rights and cultural relativism. This approach stems from the growth of human consciousness and is opposed to the irrational treatment of others (people, transcendent power) by governments. Changing conditions require leaders to possess the necessary knowledge about cultural differences and to have adapted flexibly to the situation according to their cultural intelligence (Livermore 2009).

On the other hand, various strains of nationalism and religious fundamentalism that relate to the long-drawn and consistent sets of norms and values determining human behaviour that show a strong sense of separateness are becoming increasingly popular. They seek to maintain independence and national identity

based on the antagonistic attitude towards imperialist cultures and popular culture, which promote patterns of behaviour that promulgate hedonistic values.

3. Research Problem, Questions and Methods

Research Problem

The main research problem in this study concerns the similarities and differences in expectations of global organisational leaders according to the way of creating an image of the successful leaders and character of a leadership relationship.

General Research Questions

- What type of global leaders is expected in the second decade of 21st century?
- If, according to results presented above (Haromszeki & Jarco 2013, pp. 200–216), the importance of communication via the Internet increases in the near future and starts changing the organisational structures of international companies, will creativity play a major role in future leadership relationships?
- Will features characteristic of regional (national) cultures – for example, in Poland, a charismatic, strong and dominant leader – still play the most important role in organisations not based on the anonymity of relationships (like we have on the Internet) (see Alvesson 2002, Bjerke 2004, Bjerke, Mesjasz & Hajdukiewicz 2004, Geertz 2000, Hofstede 2000, Schein 1992, Trompenaars & Hampden Turner 2002, Koopman *et al.* 2001, pp. 7–22, Maczyński & Wyspiański 2011, pp. 7–18)?

Particular Research Questions

- What will be the real impact of changing the way we communicate from traditional to virtual means?
- What, if any, factors characterise generation change?
- Does the strategic approach to leading people still play an important role in changing reality?
- Are there strategic competences which help leaders find the right path in rapidly changing reality?
- If unified systems of education and patterns of behaviour and the increasing importance of human capital promoted in the literature have analogue confirmation in practice or in international organisations, do they still promote one's own (become from one culture) leaders and not assess candidates for the position of leader in accordance with a rational, pragmatic and praxeological approach?
- Is there an international system of values which normalises the behaviour of the ethical organisational leader?

Research Methods

In this study I have used critical analysis of the usefulness of theories and findings (including my own previous studies) to describe the similarities and differences of expectations of global organisational leaders.

4. Critical Analysis of Chosen Ideas and Findings

S. Kahai presents an interesting discussion about the role of the Internet in creating leadership relationships (2010). He argues against J. Champy's conviction that "leadership does not change in a Web 2.0 World, because leadership requires relationships and personal engagement and technology does nothing to alter this requirement in leaders" (Kahai 2010). Kahai assumes that "in a Web 2.0 world, our norms and expectations about effective leadership are changing. With proliferation of technology-mediated virtual teams, there is greater need and expectation for leaders to provide us with an inspiring purpose and structure that hold the team together and propel it forward despite the numerous challenges of working virtually. Our values and cultures may be changing such that we seek different qualities in a leader. Our younger generation, which is growing up in an open, tell-all culture, is likely to seek similar information-sharing qualities in its leaders" (2010).

In the light of this conviction, it is important determine the core behaviour expected by "Generation Y employees" towards global organisational leaders. According to J. Noone (2014), Generation Y workers have four key expectations:

- "Global collaboration: they expect to collaborate with colleagues globally and not be confined to a small network of contacts within their specific area,
- Direct and instant access to management: They expect more direct and more frequent communication with managers. The hierarchical distance the baby boomer generation accepted is not acceptable to Generation Y,
- Co-creation: They expect to co-create and work transversally to solve real business issues. Executing tasks or parts of a system or process will frustrate them greatly,
- Control/personalised work: they expect to have more control over their work and be able to personalise their work to suit their personal routine".

This new reality is like "playing chess with thousands of factors", which could play an important role in creating and maintaining global leadership relationships. This approach creates many scenarios for rapidly changing circumstances. We have to try to predict which competences will be crucial in virtual or quasi-virtual reality, which is and will be an important part of the process of socialisation. Maybe we have to assume, like I. Wanasika (2009), that in this new reality the most

important factor is absorptive capacity, which is the flexibility to adopt and create a strategic approach to leadership relationships in an organisation. Absorptive capacity enables the CEO to learn, synthesise new information and embrace new paradigms (Boal & Hooijberg 2000, pp. 515–549). Absorptive capacity is derived from cognitive capacity theory (Fiedler & Garcia 1987) and is described by Cohen and Levinthal (1990, pp. 128–152) from a path-dependency and innovation perspective of the firm. According to Wanasika, prior related knowledge confers the collective ability to recognise the value of new information, assimilate it and apply it to new ends. The following is expected from global organisational leaders in today's prevailing conditions:

- conceptual skills and a high level of abstraction – in order to be innovative, leaders must possess creative thinking skills (Mumford, Connelly & Gaddis 2003, pp. 411–432),

- future orientation – key leadership behaviour includes articulating a future orientation and an inspirational vision based on powerful imagery, values and beliefs (Waldman, Javidan & Varella 2001, pp. 355–381; Haromszeki 2010a).

- risk-taking – in the making of strategic choices, risk-taking is one of the instrumental variables that determine spectacular success or failure (Ganster 2005, pp. 492–502).

Researchers and managers at the Center for Creative Leadership propose a new approach to the strategic roles of the leader. One of the researchers, M. Johnson (2010, p. 28), presents the most important issues characteristic for leaders operating internationally. His and his coworkers' studies conclude that leadership should be used in the plural, because their results don't confirm that one person could be "a supreme leader". They state that "Complexity – those events, technologies and people – all conspire to make it well-nigh impossible for one person to lead any kind of globally responsible entity on their own". 40 years of conducting studies has led them to create a definition of leadership: "leadership begins with individuals in leadership positions, but it doesn't end there. It's not simply the number or quality of individual leaders that determines organisational success, but the ability of formal and informal leaders at all organisational levels to pull together in the support of common goals that ultimately makes the difference". According to Johnson (2010, p. 28), instead of specific features, employees expect collective leadership informally created through the exchange of ideas and solving problems, especially during times of crisis. Johnson adds that human resources and organisational development professionals play a major role in this change.

M. Stor presents interesting information on the role of a strategic approach of managers in the process of globalisation (2011). The behaviour of managers, although they exist in international organisations, is often more characteristic for national cultures and their stereotypes about foreigners than the conviction

that international leadership relationships should be forged according to cultural intelligence (Livermore 2009). Stor observed the mistrust towards foreigners in various international (e.g. German, Japanese and Korean) organisations with branches in Poland. Foreign managers don't want to use Polish proposals, even when better solutions could save the organisation from serious problems. This contradicts modern expectations and recommendations described in the literature.

According to J. D. Magwood (2011), it is suggested that leaders that use an anthropological mental model have a propensity to understand cultural uniqueness (Hesselbein & Goldsmith 2006). Magwood (2011) continues: "understanding various cultural norms and expectations and demonstrating ethical accommodating behaviors will alleviate the obstacles and realities associated with mistrust. For hundreds of years, foreign countries resist interacting with companies from developed nations because of lackluster trust and related anxiety (Grosse 2000). However, savvy and astute global leaders leverage their cultural expertise to extract the diverse richness of universal workers. The socio-cultural expectations of global workers and their communities increasingly prefer to do business without the threat of corruption and environmental destruction (Kubasek, Brennan, Browne 2003)".

Stor's findings suggest that our changing world is not so modern as some scientists suppose. National character continues to play a crucial role in behaviour dictated by traditional relationships, which is culturally and historically diverse and could be a relatively constant feature that occurs more frequently in one group than in others (Haromszeki & Jarco 2012, pp. 194–213). This is confirmed by various intercultural studies. For example, there are real differences between expectations of organisational leaders in societies treated as being very similar – Czechs and Slovaks (who existed in a single country for a half century). In the Czech Republic organisational leaders are expected to be effective bargainers (to negotiate effectively, intelligently and always be informed). Organisational leaders should be inspirational, diplomatic and boost morale, decisive, communicative, trustworthy, interested in temporal events, act logically, and be dynamic – which means being highly involved, energetic, enthused, visionary and a team integrator.

For Slovaks the most effective leaders should be kind to others, be able to unify people, be diplomatic, visionary, inspirational, and administratively competent. They should have personal integrity, be performance-oriented and decisive, should think about the future and be strongly performance-oriented through empowering team-work and team-spirit. They should empower decentralisation, informal relations and not lose control in an organisational environment, encourage subordinates to take initiative, sustain the participation of team members in decision-making, be pragmatic and encourage open relationships in teams (Čater & Lang 2011). The world of human relationships is more complicated than

differences between national cultures. In analysing expectations of organisational leaders, differences in organisational cultures that exist in three sectors of the economy – public, private and NGOs – should also be taken into account. NGOs differ strongly from other types of organisations. According to my own research, only employees of NGOs expect from their leaders honesty, trust and passion in creating and implementing activities at work (Haromszeki 2013).

These issues have a relationship with my own previous studies about ethical leadership. In them (Haromszeki 2010a, Haromszeki 2010b, Haromszeki 2012a, pp. 158–167, Haromszeki 2011, Haromszeki 2012b, pp. 66–80) I present results showing that one of the most important features of successful organisational leaders in developed western societies is the ethical leadership with high importance of trust. Promoted in different educational programmes in business schools around the world and company training programmes, this approach builds long-term relationships, which are expected in theories of human capital management. Contrary to expectations, the problem of a lack of trust exists in international organisations (some of them are presented in this article). A pressing question is how to change this situation. L. van den Akker *et al.* (2009) present interesting research about ethical leadership and trust as the most important expectations of organisational leaders. They analysed the relationship between ethical leaders' behaviour and trust in that leader. Apart from results in support of previous knowledge about this issue – “the more leaders act in ways followers feel is the appropriate ethical leader behaviour, the more that leader will be trusted. Thus, the relationship between ethical leader behaviours and trust is influenced by the congruence of desired and observed leader behaviour (displaying ethical consistency, securing ethical behavior, contextualizing success and encouraging transparency)” (Van den Akker *et al.* 2009, p. 15) – the four researchers discover that:

- The respondents only expect their leaders to demonstrate their moral values to them on a professional level; they are not interested in leader morality in their private lives.

- The respondents prefer more specific guidance through coaching rather than intense dialogue about ethics with colleagues (Van den Akker *et al.* 2009; see also Paine 1994).

These are some very interesting conclusions. The increasing role of coaching finds confirmation in many different studies presented in this paper and we may assume that guidance through coaching will appear as a major expectation in the near future. The first difference is surprising, because the increasing role of the Internet and virtual relationships cause global organisational leaders to become public people. Their image can easily be checked using information about their professional and personal lives, which makes it possible to compare their private

and professional moral behaviour. The role of the professional relationships seems less important than the increasing need to discover information about others, especially their shortcomings and mistakes.

5. Conclusion

It is difficult to say that common expectations exist towards global organisational leaders. If we assume that principles characteristic in the world of virtual relationships become a dominative (determinant) in a quasi-virtual future world, we would start talking about a set of expectations with a worldwide scope. Their character will be the result of systems of values competing against each other: an absolutist approach according to the main religions and a set of features characteristic of Internet. The “bridle” for expansion of the Internet values and the maintenance of principles characteristic for Christian and Muslim doctrine will be the increasing role of national and regional cultures with the political and financial support that has lately become evident.

Different expectations of organisational leaders can be observed, but global trends related to values characteristic of the Internet show the increasing need of modernity/change based on creativity, ethical behaviour and professionalism understood as rationally using ICT tools in creating a human and relational capital approach.

Sometimes these declared expectations and approaches promoted in the literature and the best business schools around the world “collide with reality” in different parts of the world, which is less democratic and not based on the real assessment of individual qualifications and competences but more related to the values of national cultures and limited trust in people from different cultures.

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Oczekiwania wobec globalnych liderów organizacyjnych

Artykuł jest próbą diagnozy i analizy kwestii dotyczących przywódców organizacyjnych, którzy mają wpływ na zachowania w przestrzeni międzynarodowej. Oczekiwania pracowników zgodnie z teorią kategoryzacji przywództwa i teorii tożsamości społecznej i przywództwa są wynikiem wielu procesów, które pojawiają się w trakcie procesu socjalizacji. Ludzie przechowują w pamięci idee skutecznego przywódcy, które odnoszą do różnych zachowań i wizerunku menedżerów kreowanych m.in. w międzynarodowych organizacjach. W artykule zaprezentowano idee i wyniki różnych badań międzynarodowych istniejące w literaturze podejmującej taką problematykę oraz wyniki pilotażowych badań własnych na temat oczekiwań wobec globalnych liderów organizacyjnych funkcjonujące w Internecie. W uwarunkowaniach przedstawionych w artykule tworzone są relacje przywódcze o globalnym zasięgu. Prowadzone badania są próbą określenia znaczenia zmian społeczno-kulturowych w procesie tworzenia modelowych oczekiwań wobec globalnych przywódców organizacyjnych i pokazania podobieństw i różnic zależnych od kontekstu występowania relacji przywódczej.

Słowa kluczowe: przywódca globalny, przywództwo organizacyjne, oczekiwanie społeczne, kontekst kulturowy.