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## **LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS IN EASTERN EUROPE: LITHUANIA AND POLAND CASES. A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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**Summary:** The purpose of the present article is to present and attempt to explain the management process from the perspective of leadership. The article is based on the empirical studies carried out in Poland and Lithuania on the managers' population. It also indicates the results of the research in this area carried out worldwide. The results of the studies give grounds to draw interesting comparisons and conclusions as to the attitudes and the behavior of the managers in these two countries.

**Keywords:** leadership, Poland, Lithuania.

### **1. Leadership – recent research perspectives**

The global economy, internationalization, and other phenomena constitute challenges for managers in business organizations. Moreover, they also give a possibility of improving the competitiveness of the organizations and increasing market value.

However, this is not such simple indeed, it imposes many requirements for managers – the decision-makers. It is their knowledge and skills that often influence the market success of an enterprise [Rakowska, Sitko-Lutek 2000; Senge 1988, pp. 330-349].

With regard to the proposed topic of the research, the status of theoretical knowledge is very diverse. With regard to the issues concerning management, we can say that it is satisfactory, although it still lacks practical examples and the descriptions of specific cases, particularly regarding modern management [Katz 1955; Boytatzis 1982; Mullins 1992; Thornton, Byham 1982]. There is also a lack of methods or specific indications, even the specific tools for examining each managerial function [Sułkowski 2002, pp. 9-20]. Its specificity is certainly shaped by the country and the environment in which we grow [Bjerke 2004, p. 19]. The gap will be filled by presented research results. In addition, it can be concluded that the cross-cultural studies are not well-developed in general.

The studies regarding the knowledge, skills, and managerial roles in Poland do exist. In principle, however, they vary from HR management issues to the research of psychologists [Listwan 1993/1994; Chełpa, Nawara 2002; Bartosik-Purgat 2006, p. 147; Liu 2003]. The studies that show the attributes of executives which are analyzed in the perspective of classical management functions are residual in general. In addition, there is really no comparative research (between countries).

Indeed, managers largely influence the long-term effectiveness of an organization. [Kotter 1988, pp. 21-26; Griffin 1996, p. 493; Kostera *et al.* 1988, p. 422]. A unique combination of the characteristics, skills, knowledge, and attitudes of managers creates jointly a pool for the development of a company. Looking at this area of research creates an impression that the previous studies were predominantly descriptive and that there is a lack of the research conducted using the same tool in different cultural areas. [Steinmann, Schreyögg 1998, pp. 400-404]. It appears that conducting cross-cultural research is of particular importance when it concerns areas geographically close and, therefore, culturally, although different in terms of the level of economic development.

The matters related to managers and their impact on the effectiveness of the organizations were analysed and studied in the Polish and world literature with respect to certain aspects [Thierry *et al.* 1994, pp. 69,173; Wodecka-Hyjek 2001, pp. 81-82; Oleksyn 1999, p. 7]. Having carried out literature studies in the area, we can state that there are not enough results of research studies and analyses, actually comparing selected problems of the management in different countries. Most cross-cultural studies relate to the impact of national culture on managers' behaviours in their workplace and the so-called "cross-cultural management", which are typically limited to the multicultural team management [Hofstede 2000; Zander, Butler 2010].

The examinations of the attitudes, knowledge, characteristics, and behavior of executives are generally extensively carried out. Despite the increasing number of empirical studies, there is a gap that the proposed research will be able to fill at least partially [Korczyńska 2000, pp. 510-519; Senge 1998, pp. 330-349; Hunter 2007; Yammarino *et al.* 2005; Rowold, Heinitz 2007; Graen *et al.* 2010].

Cross-cultural research requires the specific pluralism of research methods (the choice of research methods, as well as the subject and object of cultural studies may determine the results of research [Ochinowski, Grzywacz 2003, p. 251; Konecki 1985, p. 18; Draht *et al.* 2008].

A manager of tomorrow is the manager that takes into account cultural diversity and the cultural context in his or her management activities [Crossant 2008]. The one that has the vision and courage to continually learn and develop. Therefore, we can confidently say that the presented research area is not yet fully examined and described and referring to the changes on the market, especially the European Union markets, we point out its cognitive and pragmatic value.

## 2. Research methodology

The idea of the research project was initiated by the Vilnius University. The research is meant to be the empirical verification of managers with respect to management functions, such as planning, organizing, directing and motivating, and controlling. The issue seems trivial to the point of view that is available in the theory; however, we can observe a significant lack of practical studies that are devoted to the evolution of the new management approach and avoid the teaching of “purely academic” nature, which has a particular value.

In the era of globalization and the opening of some countries to the others, we cannot omit the aspect of the organizational dynamics in different cultures. The research recognizes international aspects, being the management exemplification in the sample of Polish and Lithuanian managers.

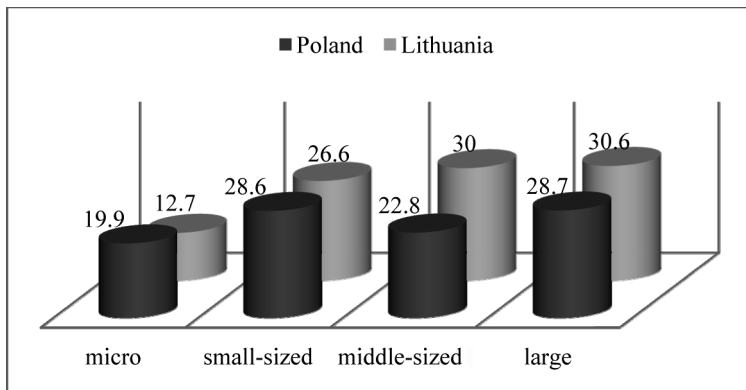
The purpose of the present research is to examine selected aspects of behavior, characteristics and managerial skills from the perspective of cross-cultural management. Researching managers' attitudes and characteristics in the various cultural areas with diverse levels of development substantially enhances the knowledge of the management field. Our research can achieve the following scientific and practical objectives: the analysis and the systematization of the various approaches addressing attitudes; the behaviours and the characteristics of managers; conceptualizing and systematizing managers' skills from the perspective of management functions; the identification of managers attitudes, skills, and behavior; the assessment of managers' knowledge and competences.

It is also important to take into account the cultural aspect in the research, which gives the possibility to develop methods of research useful not only from the standpoint of the business in Poland, but also in Lithuania and possibly in other countries. The results of the research will certainly be a basis for the formulation of interesting conclusions concerning managers' attitudes and behaviours in these two countries.

The empirical studies were carried out in Polish and Lithuanian companies, and also a general model was developed that helped in describing and researching the attitudes, skills, and knowledge of managers, understood from the perspective of implementing management functions in terms of organizational effectiveness.

The research included managers of different management levels in the organizations operating in Poland and Lithuania. The organizations of different sizes and with varying types of activity underwent the study, which allows us to determine the extent to which management tools are used from the perspective of the industry or the size of the organization.

The results of the research were ordered by the following specific criteria: the size of the organization, the share of foreign capital, the type of activity, the age of respondents, sex, seniority, and level in the hierarchy.

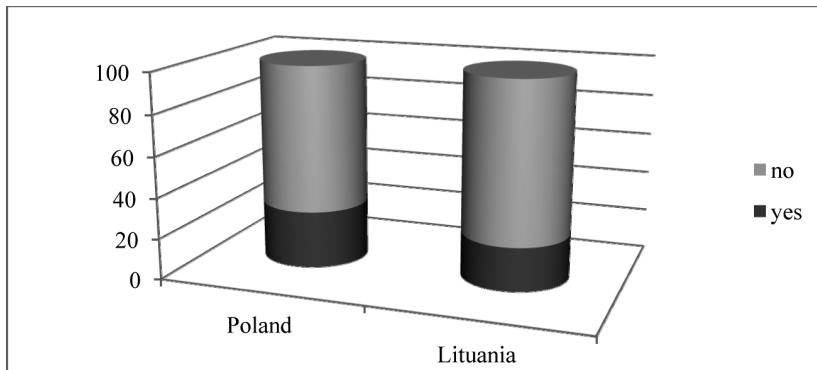


**Fig. 1.** The structure of the researched sample – organization's size

Source: authors' own study.

The sample group was surveyed and interviewed. Finally, the managers of 502 organizations in Poland and 507 managers in Lithuania were surveyed. Figures 1, 2, and 3 present the researched sample in detail.

As shown in Figure 1, the structure of the sample, due to the size of the organizations in both countries was similar. Differences are observed in micro- and medium-sized organizations (*circa 7%*).

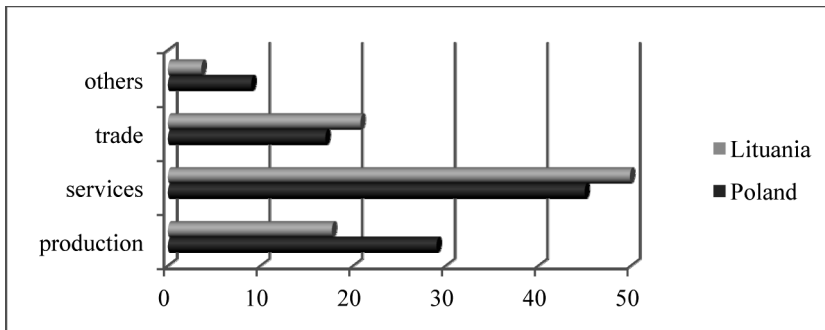


**Fig. 2.** The structure of the researched sample – companies with foreign capital

Source: authors' own study.

The structure of the sample, taking into account the capital ownership of the research subjects is at the similar level in the Polish and Lithuanian organization. Foreign capital in the capital structure of the company means the answer “yes”. This is undoubtedly the effect of the globalization, whereby foreign capital becomes increasingly dominant in national economies.

Referring to the type of business, it should be pointed out that the largest share in the study is for the services in both Poland and Lithuania (over 40%). This means that *de facto* we have the largest supply of such companies, which shall conform to the trends observed throughout the world, where the share of service companies supporting the structure of the economy is the largest and is the result of the so-called “knowledge-based economy” (see Figure 3).



**Fig. 3.** The structure of the researched sample – organization's branch

Source: authors' own study.

**Table 1.** The structure of the researched sample – respondents

	Variable	Poland	Lithuania
Sex	Female	49%	47.3%
	Male	51%	62.7%
Seniority	less than 1 year	13%	7.4%
	up to 5 years	49%	43.5%
	up to 10 years	16%	22.3%
	more than 10 years	22%	26.8%
Management level	Top level	22%	27.1%
	Middle level	54%	46.8%
	First-line level	24%	26.1%
Age	less than 30	53%	28%
	31-40	25%	38.6%
	41-50	12%	20.6%
	51-60	9%	11.6%
	more than 60	1%	1.2%

Source: authors' own study.

The studies were mainly carried out using surveys with the help of interviews. The research method is mainly the critical analysis of Polish and foreign literature on the subject to identify the different concepts of identifying the characteristics,

skills, attitudes, and knowledge of crucial importance for organizational efficiency. The results of the study were analyzed and interpreted. Table 1 shows the structure of the tested respondents.

It is worth noting that men dominate among the Lithuanian managers, whereas in Poland the proportion is equal. Interestingly, most of the respondents worked less than five years (more than 50% of respondents). In both populations, 50% of the managers are middle-level managers. Their participation in the survey probably is due to their greater availability than the top managers. What is also interesting is that Polish managers are usually young people (53% up to 30 years). The research trial diversity gives the possibility of obtaining a wide variety of responses and thus a more objective diagnosis of the situation.

### 3. Research results

The research focused on all the functions of management. In this article, we present only the results concerning only the directing/leadership. We shall now describe the results.

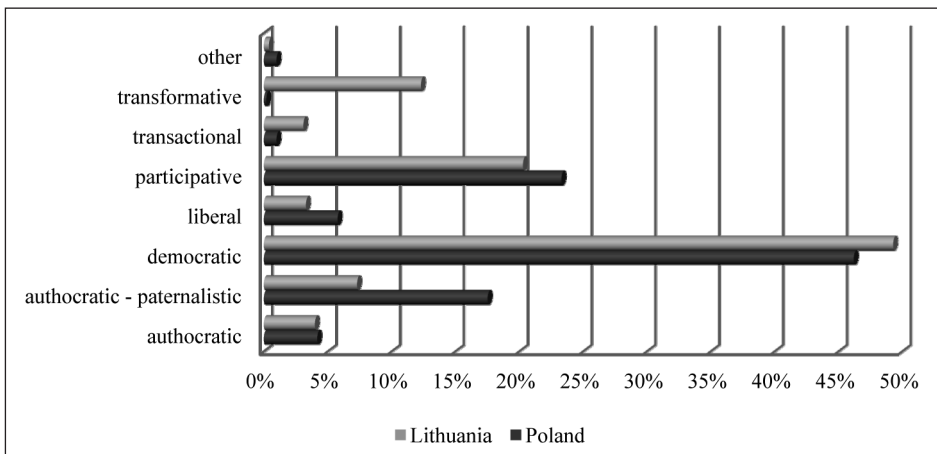
Forming teams, and it should be stressed that today teamwork is the basis for organizing tasks and objectives, the managers of the Polish and Lithuanian enterprises (59% of responses) to the same extent indicated that their decisions are more based on the specialization in the area than on universal skills (41% indications) (see [Day *et al.* 2006; Ensley *et al.* 2006]).

In the opinion of the respondents, the position of the direct manager is the problem-solver, co-ordinator (46% and 54%) rather than the dictator. The respondents also pointed out an important role as a strategist (38% of Polish managers and 32% of Lithuanian managers).

Similar responses concerned the research on the most used leadership style. What is interesting is the number of indications of transactional and transformational leadership style (see Figure 4). In transactional leadership style, there is a continuous exchange between the leader and team members. The transactional leader is waiting for other organizational actors who must respond to staffing team. In transformational leadership style, the mutual association between leaders and participants brings them to a higher level of motivation and morality [Zawadzka 2000, p. 48; Burns 1978; Armstrong 1997, p. 230]. The managers from Lithuania are more transformational than managers in Poland. In general, the largest number of responses deals with democratic (*ca.* 50%) in both populations.

In the case of surveying the opinion related to the perceptions of their own position's sources in company (see Table 2), the respondents can indicate more than one answer. The results in this area are presented in Table 2.

Here the most often indicated answers were: skills and competencies and formal position in the group of Polish respondents. In the Lithuanian population, we also interviewed skills and competencies and formal position with an emphasis on the first.



**Fig. 4.** The structure of researched sample – organization's branch

Source: authors' own study.

**Table 2.** The sources of leading position

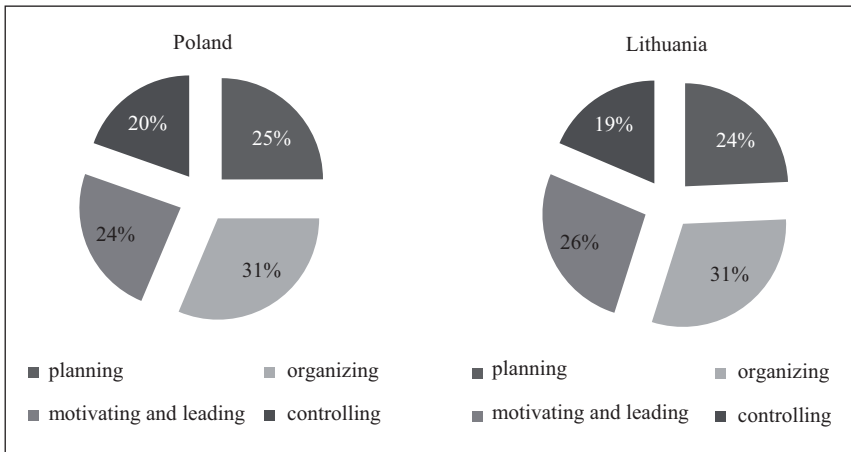
	Poland	Lithuania
Formal position	51	36
Expertise knowledge	29	24
Skills and competencies	71	78
Being stockholder/owner	11	18
Charisma	15	18

Source: authors' own study.

It is interesting to compare these results with the opinions on the sources of power. In this case, the respondents had to choose one of three alternatives: formal positions, expertise knowledge, or personal attributes. Polish managers mainly indicated formal position (52%) and the managers reviewed in Lithuania indicated expertise knowledge (49%). Personal characteristics in both populations were seldom indicated.

We also tested the opinions about the structure of the time spent on the implementation of the various management functions. Figure 5 presents the answers.

Taking into account the objectives of this paper, we must emphasize motivating and directing as managerial activities. Polish respondents indicated 24% (see Figure 5) time spent on the implementation of these activities, while Lithuanian managers 26% (see Figure 5). The differences in the responses are not significant. Similarly, it looks like the situation with other functions. We can believe that cultural

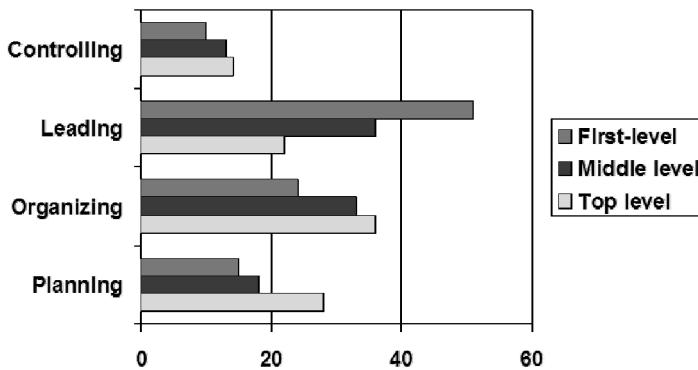


**Fig. 5.** The structure of the time distributed among managerial functions

Source: authors' own study.

and economic considerations do not affect the structure of the time spent on the implementation of the various management functions.

At this juncture, we need a closer look at the difference in the amount of time managers spend on the various activities. We note in Figure 6 that the top-level manager spends about 28% of time planning, whereas the first-level manager spends about 15% of time planning. Likewise, the top-level manager spends 22% of time in the leading activity, whereas the first-level manager spends most of their time (51%) motivating and working with employees. Figure 6 depicts how managers at different levels distribute their time among the various managerial activities.

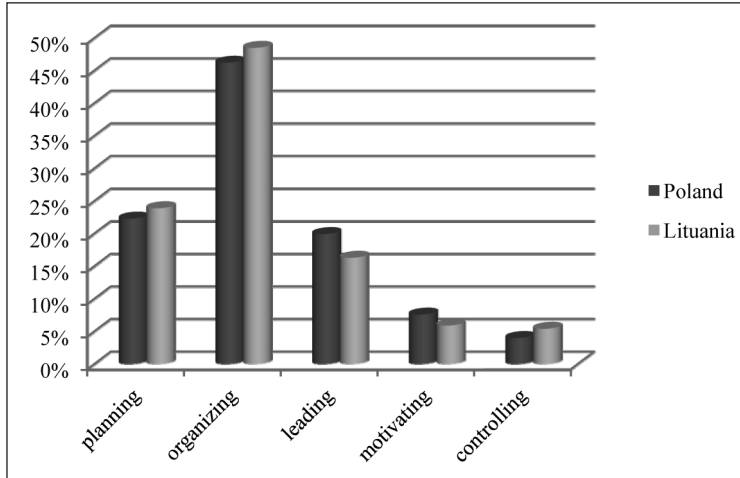


**Fig. 6.** The structure of the researched sample – organization's branch

Source: based on Jones and Gareth [2008, p. 23].

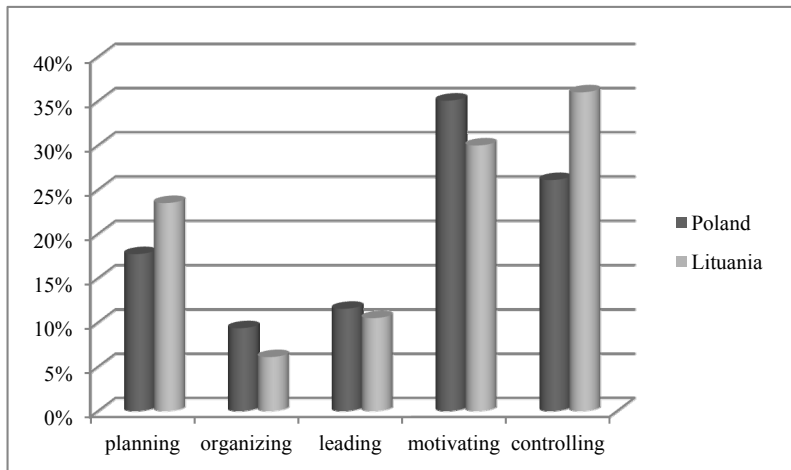


The study showed that organizing has the greatest importance for a career in the populations of managers from Poland and Lithuania (see Figure 7).



**Fig. 7.** The structure of the results – which management function's effective implementation had the most significant influence on managers

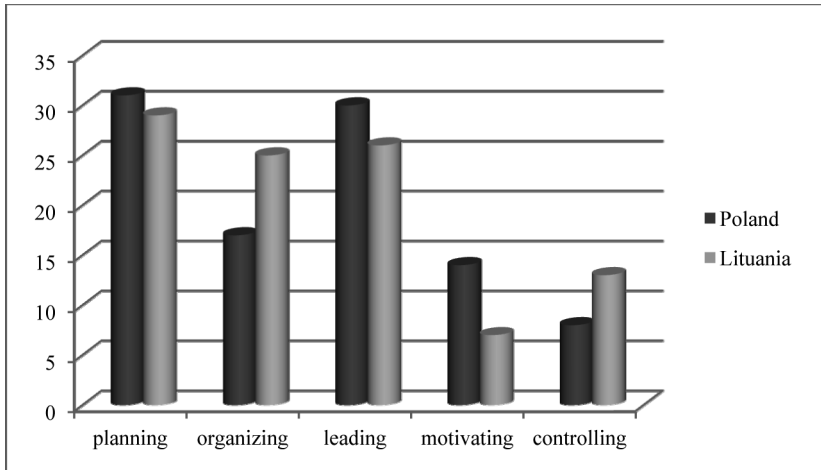
Source: authors' own study.



**Fig. 8.** The structure of the results – the implementation of which management function is the most difficult for managers

Source: authors' own study.

In turn, it appears that relatively few difficulties make the function of organizing and directing (consider Figure 8).



**Fig. 9.** The structure of the results – the implementation of which management function could be the most significant for managers' future as leaders

Source: authors' own study.

The respondents also pointed managerial functions which, in their opinion, may influence their future careers. In this case, they pointed directing as well as planning. Also organizing obtained a large proportion of indications (see Figure 9).

## 4. Conclusions

Synthetically approaching the evaluated results, we may draw several conclusions related to managerial functions. The conducted research studies allow for stating theoretical assumptions on the complex character and the importance of managerial work. The second relevant conclusion is that the data obtained in Polish surroundings are similar to those from Lithuania. A subsequent conclusion, which could be drawn, is that managers overestimate the organizing function and put the emphasis on leading as the activities influencing their future carrier. Finally, the conclusion confirms the significance of planning activities.

The empirical results let us state that there are almost no differences in the studied area. Nonetheless, the research shows that there are differences attributable to different cultures. For instance, American CEOs are driven by a need to excel in a competitive environment (they want to win) and they insist that money is less important to them than professional achievement; but it is hard to credit that given

the enormous inflation of top executive compensation packages in America in the last decade. Adaptability is a pronounced characteristic of American leadership generally. It is less common and less valued in Europe. American managers emphasize the managerial dimensions consisting of supervisory style, decision-making, and control mechanism.

The role models available for business leadership in different regions of the world are also significant. In America, with its longstanding experience with professional business leadership, the most readily available role model for the head of a company is the corporate CEO. In China and Chinese-related businesses, it is the head of a family. In France it remains the military general. In Japan it is the consensus builder. In Germany today, it is the coalition builder [Quinn 2005, p. 2].

The findings indicate that US as well as Polish and Lithuanian management styles differ significantly in overall management styles. However, an array of strands which appeared in the research studies was not brought into the discussion – some of them were intentionally omitted. The studies were designed to elicit clear conclusions on a strictly defined part of reality.

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## **PRZYWÓDZTWO W KONTEKŚCIE PROCESU ZARZĄDZANIA W EUROPIE WSCHODNIEJ: PRZYPADEK LITWY I POLSKI. ANALIZA PORÓWNAWCZA**

**Streszczenie:** W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań przeprowadzonych w Polsce i na Litwie. Badania dotyczyły szeroko rozumianych zagadnień związanych z postawami, umiejętnościami i kompetencjami kadry kierowniczej. Wyniki odnoszące się do funkcji kierowania wskazują, że nie występują istotne różnice w badanych populacjach kierowników w tym obszarze.