

THE PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE OF DEPARTMENT HEADS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The main problem addressed in our research is to identify the socio-psychological determinants of the managerial competence of department heads in higher education institutions. Based on this objective, the study examines the degree to which managerial and leadership qualities are manifested among department heads working within the higher education system, as well as the factors influencing these qualities.

Keywords: head of the department, social function, psychological determinant, higher education, leadership, communication, team management, transformational leadership

In order to diagnose the formation of managerial competence and the expression of attitudes toward organizing the work process among department heads in higher education institutions, a specially developed socio-psychological questionnaire was conducted. This questionnaire included scenarios characterizing attitudes toward the effective organization of department activities and allowed for the examination of respondents' views on factors influencing positive management, as well as the importance of leadership qualities. The research survey was administered among a group of respondents, and the collected data were processed and presented in tables and diagrams.

In particular, during the course of the study, we sought to investigate the factors that contribute to the effective organization of departmental activities, as well as the respondents' attitudes toward these factors. To achieve this, the participants were asked the question: "Which factor do you believe determines the effectiveness

of a department?” The responses given by the participants were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. (Figure -1).

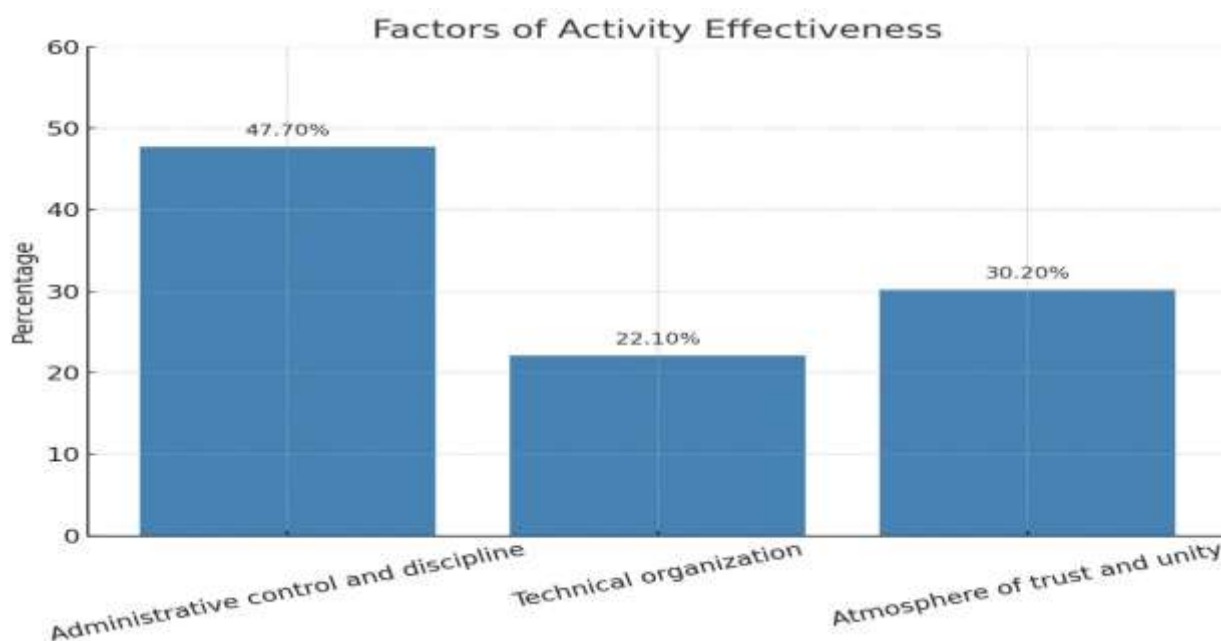


Figure -1. Responses regarding the factors contributing to the effective organization of department activities (N=320)

According to the results presented in Figure 1, the majority of respondents—47.7%—emphasized that strict management styles have a positive impact on the effective functioning of departmental activities within the higher education process, choosing the response option “Administrative control and discipline.” These results indicate that most department heads believe that the establishment of effective administrative control systems, the enforcement of strict discipline, and the use of methods requiring precise analysis are of primary importance in ensuring effective management processes.

At the same time, 22.1% of respondents supported the answer option “Technical organization,” indicating that they believe a more technical approach to organizational tasks is necessary in the management process. The results suggest that participants recognize the importance of improving the material and technical base in higher education institutions, creating favorable conditions for faculty to engage in professional development, and integrating modern information

technologies—all of which are considered to have a certain positive impact on management processes.

It was found that 30.2% of respondents chose the response option “Atmosphere of trust and unity” in relation to the question about factors contributing to the effective organization of departmental activities. This indicates that a significant portion of department heads recognize the positive impact of socio-psychological factors—such as collaboration in interpersonal relations, mutual trust between leaders and faculty members, comprehensive support for one another, and establishing a united approach in the pedagogical process—on effective professional activity and staff management.

The above analysis reveals that respondents expressed diverse opinions regarding the factors contributing to the effective organization of departmental activities. Nevertheless, it can be observed that the majority of participants consider a strict management system and continuous monitoring of the work process as decisive factors in ensuring effective department management.

During the research, we aimed to explore respondents’ understanding of managerial competence and their attitudes toward it. To achieve this, participants were asked the question: “What do you think constitutes the foundation of managerial competence in department heads?” The responses provided were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Respondents’ perceptions of the foundational elements of managerial competence (N=320)

№	Response Options	Percentage Chosen
1	Sense of responsibility in the department head	61.2%
2	Superiority of managerial qualities	84.5%
3	Richness of professional experience	51.3%
4	Intellectual approach to the work process	80.2%
5	Support from department faculty	30.8%
6	Optimization of management processes in higher education	36.4%

7	Absence of negative emotional states in the head	67.4%
8	Establishment of positive interpersonal relationships	74.3%
9	Possession of knowledge, skills, and competencies	76.3%
10	Having an academic degree and title	12.8%

Note: The total percentage exceeds 100% because respondents were allowed to choose multiple answer options.

As seen from the results presented in Table 1, 61.2% of respondents identified a sense of responsibility in the department head, and 84.5% highlighted the superiority of managerial qualities as the core elements of leadership competence. According to their views, prioritizing a sense of accountability, approaching work with responsibility, fully accepting obligations, and possessing the ability to inspire others, unite them toward a common goal, and influence people are crucial for ensuring effective management processes. In particular, respondents emphasized that well-developed managerial qualities in a leader and the ability to properly guide department members play a central role in effective departmental leadership.

Additionally, 51.3% of respondents emphasized the richness of professional experience, while 80.2% highlighted the importance of an intellectual approach to the work process as key components of managerial competence in department heads. These findings suggest that respondents believe extensive work experience, long-term involvement in leadership roles, as well as acting with intellect and engaging in deep reflection when making decisions, all significantly contribute to the development of managerial competence. In particular, the majority of respondents stressed that intellectual capacity is one of the leading factors in a department head's effectiveness, and they emphasized the necessity of applying this capability efficiently within management processes.

30.8% of respondents stated that support from department faculty, and 36.4% emphasized the optimization of management processes within the higher education system, form the basis of leadership competence. The results indicate that some department heads place importance on being positively received and supported by

their colleagues, believing that such support can positively influence the demonstration of leadership qualities. Meanwhile, other respondents pointed out that when higher-level institutions facilitate the work of department heads and create conditions for organizing activities in a more innovative and optimal manner, it lays a foundation for the development and consolidation of their managerial competence.

Alongside this, 67.4% of respondents identified the absence of negative emotional states in the department head, and 74.3% emphasized the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships as important foundations of managerial competence. These figures indicate that department heads perceive the ability to remain non-aggressive, to be free from stress that may arise during work processes, and to manage negative emotional states as essential to effective leadership. Additionally, efforts to establish positive relationships with colleagues and the effective use of sincere communication methods are regarded as positive aspects that contribute to successful management.

76.3% of respondents believe that possessing knowledge, skills, and competencies within the scope of one's professional activity plays a crucial role in the development of managerial qualities among department heads in higher education. Meanwhile, 12.8% consider having an academic degree and title as significant in this regard. These findings suggest that the majority of department heads believe it is essential for a leader to have sufficient subject-specific knowledge and to effectively apply professional skills and competencies—factors that are directly linked to managerial competence. Additionally, some respondents expressed the view that holding an academic degree and title can also influence the successful implementation of management processes.

The results presented above indicate that respondents hold differing views and attitudes regarding the foundations of managerial competence. However, qualities such as the superiority of managerial traits, an intellectual approach to professional activities, the possession of relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies, as well as

the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships, are perceived as the most prominent and leading factors compared to other aspects.

Based on the results of the socio-psychological survey, it can be concluded that respondents express differing views regarding the factors contributing to the effective organization of departmental activities and the foundations of managerial competence. These differences may be explained by variations in their departmental environments, working conditions, worldviews, and endopsychic characteristics.

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