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**MANAGER OR LEADER?**  
**LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT AT LOCAL**  
**GOVERNMENT LEVEL**

**KIEROWNIK CZY PRZYWÓDCA?**  
**PRZEWODZENIE W ZARZĄDZANIU KRYZYSOWYM**  
**NA POZIOMIE SAMORZĄDOWYM**

*Leadership is the art of accomplishing more  
than the science of management says is possible.*

General Colin Powell

**Abstract:** The article presents the importance of leadership competences of management units managers in local government and their impact on the achievement of objectives resulting from the Act on Crisis Management of April 26, 2007. Crisis management in public administration must be flexible and effective. The management theory indicates the role of human resources in the efficient and effective performance of tasks, both in public and non-public organizations. It should be noted that proper identification and development of the required competences of staff, particularly of the leaders/ managers of crisis management units, determines the quality of performance and the number of tasks fulfilled. Crisis management and liquidation of all types of crisis situations mean that human life and health are at stake. In such situations, the leadership competences of managers in the effective elimination of existing threats play a vital role.

The development of leadership competences, among managers / heads of crisis management units, requires constant advancement, because of its specific character of activities which are carried out under extreme stressful conditions. Due to this specificity, leadership in crisis situations requires change in approach to the crisis management staff trainings conducted for the local government administration. In that respect, the author proposes to adapt the solutions used to shape and acquire leadership competences implemented by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, NATO and applying them in the training programmes of the management staff of the crisis management units at local government level.

**Keywords:** manager, leader, leadership, crisis management, local government

**Streszczenie:** W swym artykule autor przedstawia znaczenie kompetencji przywódczych kierowników komórek zarządzania kryzysowego w samorządzie lokalnym i ich wpływu na realizację celów wynikających z ustawy o zarządzaniu kryzysowym z dnia 26 kwietnia 2007 roku.

Zarządzanie kryzysowe w administracji publicznej musi cechować elastyczność i efektywność działania. W teorii zarządzania od wielu lat wskazuje się na rolę zasobów ludzkich w sprawnym i efektywnym wykonywaniu zadań, zarówno w organizacjach publicznych, jak i niepublicznych. Należy zauważyć, że od właściwej identyfikacji wymaganych kompetencji oraz rozwoju tych kompetencji, szczególnie wśród naczelników/kierowników komórek zarządzania kryzysowego, zależy jakość i liczba realizowanych przez nich zadań. W zarządzaniu kryzysowym, podczas likwidacji wszelkiego typu sytuacji kryzysowych, niejednokrotnie zagrożone jest zdrowie i życie ludzkie. W tych sytuacjach istotną rolę odgrywają kompetencje przywódcze kierowników w sprawnym likwidowaniu występujących zagrożeń. Rozwój kompetencji przywódczych wśród kierowników/naczelników komórek zarządzania kryzysowego wymaga nieustannego doskonalenia, ponieważ związany jest z działaniami prowadzonymi w warunkach ekstremalnych, przy występowaniu silnych uwarunkowań stresogennych. Przywództwo w zarządzaniu kryzysowym, z uwagi na swoją specyfikę, wymaga zmiany podejścia w programach szkoleń kadry zarządzania kryzysowego, prowadzonych dla administracji samorządu lokalnego. W tym zakresie autor proponuje adaptację rozwiązań stosowanych w zakresie kształtowania i nabywania kompetencji przywódczych realizowanych przez Siły Zbrojne RP, NATO i zastosowanie ich w programach szkoleń kadry kierowniczej komórek zarządzania kryzysowego administracji samorządu lokalnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kierownik, przywódca, przewođenje, zarządzanie kryzysowe, samorząd

## Introduction

Management theory has long been pointing to the role of human resources in the efficient performance of tasks, both in public and non-public organizations. Organisations managed in modern way should put particular attention to well-balanced and multi-faceted development of human resources at all levels of management. In addition to training, development and improving professional qualifications that are necessary to perform the jobs, special attention should be focused on improving social competences. With regard to the managerial staff, an important role is also played by leadership competences, often understood as a set of: knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences and attitudes that characterize employees who perform their tasks efficiently<sup>1</sup>. It should be noted that the right identification of the required competencies and the development of these competencies among employees determines the quality and number of tasks performed by them. Particular attention should therefore be paid to the management competences of persons holding the functions of heads of crisis management departments. Key role in the group of competences is played by leadership competences, as these are competences vital for eliminating threats to health or life.

The role and tasks of crisis management units at local government level are regulated by the Act on Crisis Management of April 26, 2007<sup>2</sup>. Crisis management as evidenced by the Act is based mainly on teamwork, hence the leadership should be referred to in the context of the team and organization. The situation is particularly relevant to crisis management, where it is necessary that the subordinates exercise a lot of physical, mental and emotional effort, which always accompanies activities related to saving health and human life. Crisis management carried out by local self-government administration is composed of full-time departments dealing with crisis management and civil protection. They were appointed for the substantive implementation of tasks resulting from the legal regulations in force in the area of security, and they are subject to the county governor or mayors of towns with poviats status. The size of these units depends on the size of the poviats, towns, their specificity and the size of the tasks performed by individual poviats or towns. These units are managed by managers / heads, who execute tasks and are authorised by starosts or mayors of towns. Their main tasks in the field of crisis management include the preparation of crisis response plans and programs, and, above all, they play the role of coordinators of actions in the field of crisis management. Conducting preventive actions requires managerial competences, understood as a set of knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes. The literature on the subject contains many typologies of professional competences. One of the typology was presented by R. Walkowiak<sup>3</sup> as: professional, social and business competences.

<sup>1</sup> T. Majewski, *Zarządzanie kompetencjami*, AON, Warszawa 2012, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Dz.U. 2007 nr 89, poz. 590, art. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 12a, 13.

<sup>3</sup> R. Walkowiak, *Model kompetencji menadżerów organizacji samorządowych*, Wyd. UW-M, Olsztyn 2004, p. 225.

Present article focuses mainly on social competences, understood as knowledge about the attitudes and behaviour of individuals and teams and the ability to cause actions in accordance with the goals of the organization and its members. In the case of threats to public safety, social competences play the more significant role, because in the interpersonal aspect they relate to, for example, teamwork skills, verbal and non-verbal communication as well as active listening, etc. In the aspect of leadership, these competences are related to influencing subordinates, for example, team-building, motivating subordinates, care of good working atmosphere, shaping the organizational culture or selecting and assessing subordinates, but also solving conflicts. The action of managers in a turbulent environment with high dynamics and unpredictability of threats also requires high resistance to stress, which – in its turn – affects the quality of decisions taken.

For over thirty years the author of the present article has been encountering with the presented conditions and their impact on the crisis management process. The author's experiences are related to both command and management in the conditions of danger, and are the result of observations and experiments related to the conduct of rescue operations and various types of field-practice. The experience and observations made by the author show that the ability to manage in crisis situations is often not very effective if the manager does not possess leadership competences. Hence the key question in the title of the article "Manager or leader?" in crisis management conducted by local governments. An attempt to answer this question consists the content of the article.

## 1. The essence and importance of leadership in management

Leadership is a difficult/ not an easy concept to define. According to the Polish language dictionary, it is the leading, commanding and directing<sup>4</sup>. However, in the approach presented by J. MacGregor, it is „a two-way process in which certain people with specific motives and goals, in competition or conflict with others, mobilize institutional, political, psychological and all other resources to activate, engage and satisfy motivations of their your followers”<sup>5</sup>. Stoner and C. Wankel identified leadership with management saying that „managerial leadership as a process of guiding and influencing activities of group members related to tasks”<sup>6</sup>. In that case, it is important to identify the leadership with leadership, which was made by J. Stoner and C. Wankel, defining „managerial leadership as a process of guiding and influencing group members' related activities.” In this case, it was made by J. Stoner and C. Wankel defining „managerial leadership as a process of guiding and influencing the group of people related to this”. In the context of crisis management, it is worth mention-

<sup>4</sup> *Słownik języka polskiego*, t. II, PWN, Warszawa 1995, p. 1015.

<sup>5</sup> J.M.G. Burns, *Leadership*, Harper and Collins, New York 1978, p. 425.

<sup>6</sup> GJ. Stoner, C. Wanke, *Kierowanie*, PWE, Warszawa 1997, p. 382.

ing B. Szulc who indicates that the leader „is a man followed by others and not only out of external coercion supported by, for example, the power of law or custom, but for some internal motivation or need. This is unforced subordination, without the domination of organizational obedience, so characteristic of a highly hierarchical power”<sup>7</sup> The hierarchized authority in the process of crisis management in public administration, results from the *Act on Crisis Management* of April 26, 2007 as well as from the adopted procedures and principles of crisis management<sup>8</sup>. The explanation of leadership is related to the authority in the organization and more specifically to the sources and ranges of authority and the authority of the leader. Power, according to M. Armstrong, is defined as „the possibility of exerting influence or the possibility of setting one’s own goals or values over the goals or values of others”<sup>9</sup>. Reliance on authority: formal (by virtue of law), rewarding, extorting, expert or reference<sup>10</sup>, in crisis situations with a significant degree of threats may turn out to be insufficient for efficient management, because it is associated with increased physical and mental effort. Managers must also have the power of reference, i.e. resulting from having leadership competences - abilities, skill characteristics allowing to exert the desired influence on the actions of subordinates. The literature on the subject differs in treating leadership, sometimes management and leadership are identified, using the concepts of a leader and a manager interchangeably, but also leadership is seen as a feature of a manager. Leadership differs from management in that it is basically independent of the position of the person in charge and also of his formal authority. It is based mainly on the authority of acceptance. The leader may held the authority, though not always, but it may just as well be hold by one of the members of an organizational group who does not necessarily have to be the superior.

Leadership qualities enable managers to<sup>11</sup>:

- release the activity and initiative of subordinates;
- mobilize subordinates to re-effort in moments of physical exhaustion;
- limit the role of control;
- use your resources more efficiently (people, equipment, materials)
- effectively shape the skills and leadership qualities of subordinates.

As crisis management takes place in a turbulent environment, with high dynamics and unpredictability of events, the manager, while making decisions, cannot always seek common consent within the team. The research shows<sup>12</sup> that managers

<sup>7</sup> See: B. Szulc, *Przywództwo w dowodzeniu wojskami lądowymi RP. Koncepcja*, AON, Warszawa 2001, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> W. Lidwa, W. Krzeszewski, W. Więcek, *Zarządzanie w sytuacjach kryzysowych*, AON, Warszawa 2010, p. 40-49.

<sup>9</sup> M. Armstrong, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2000, p. 146.

<sup>10</sup> See: J.A.F. Stoner, Ch. Wankel, *Kierowanie*, PWE, Warszawa 1997, p. 259-260.

<sup>11</sup> T. Majewski, *Przywództwo w dowodzeniu na szczeblu taktycznym*, AON, Warszawa 2002, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> P.A. Kowert, *Groupthink or Deadlock: When Do Leaders Learn from Their Advisors?*, State University of New York Press. Albany 2002, s. 22-28.

focused on seeking universal consent are not among the leaders. It is managers who often do not listen to opinions before taking decisions are perceived as high-class leaders. Managers seeking universal consent make decisions too slowly, they may have little authority and thus they may be perceived as indecisive.

## 2. Leader vs. Manager

In traditional management, managers operate at particular levels of management. They use formal sources of power to achieve the organizational goals using their human and material resources. Often in that type of management which is based on ordering and controlling, managers are not able to meet the requirements and achieve the assumed level of efficiency. The staff have influence on the performance of managerial tasks and the perception of the manager's effectiveness. The collective body of staff nowadays is characterized by: high awareness, self-esteem, possession of many different skills. Attaining the state of supremacy over such conscious staff is connected with having power over it. It is not enough to be a formal supervisor, but it is necessary to build appropriate relations with the staff (team) and use other types of authority. Effective managers should increasingly use team support in their management, coordination of projects, personal participation in the implementation of tasks and, above all, bearing responsibility for the results obtained by all. As Adair points out, leadership in team work can only be based on respect, trust and not on fear or submission<sup>13</sup>. It should be noted that in crisis management, fear and forced obedience often cause paralysis, among subordinates, which still adds to the stress associated with existing threats. Such situations result in managers not being able to raise additional spirit and energy in their teams to help in the implementation of the team activities and also in disability to stimulate collective support and supplement the work carried out by the teams.

It is worth mentioning here the studies of J. Kouzes and B. Posner, who note that leadership is not an action of an individual, but a collective effort, and the success achieved is the result of active cooperation, commitment and support of many people<sup>14</sup>. Leadership in a team should be characterized by the orientation of actions, care for the involvement of all members, building trust and faith in mutual possibilities, as well as encouraging and enabling to raise the necessary skills<sup>15</sup>.

Summing up, it can be said that leadership differs from management in that the manager set tasks to their teams and observe their performance, or takes part in their implementation, while leaders "go to the head of the team and involve co-workers." Based on his experience, the author may say that not every manager must be a good

<sup>13</sup> J. Adair, *Anatomia biznesu. Budowanie zespołu*, Wyd. Studio Emka, Warszawa 2001, p. 158.

<sup>14</sup> See: J.M. Kouzes, B.Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco 2007, p. 199.

<sup>15</sup> J.R. Katzenbach, D.K. Smith, *Siła zespołów*, Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2001, p. 139.

leader, but each leader should be a good manager. Understanding the essence and importance of leadership is an important element of effective crisis management.

### 3. Leadership in crisis management

Leaders, in order to be effective in action, must demonstrate considerable skills in managing their teams, as well as be professionals for members of their groups. A great facilitation in efficient management will be their knowledge acquired in the fields of psychology, sociology and pedagogy as crisis management teams function in a specific social reality, in a turbulent environment. As E.T.Hall remarked, "While studying a human being, one cannot separate the individual from the environment"<sup>16</sup>. The environment in which people (teams) function is one of the factors shaping human personality. Man in the environment is subject to the process of socialization.

If this process runs smoothly, the better results are achieved by the leaders in managing their teams. Sometimes, it is difficult to see the leader in the manager in times of peace. However, in times of crisis, in a turbulent environment, when human life and health are endangered, team members closely observe the reactions of the leader. Efficient functioning of the team depends on the speed and accuracy of the decisions made by the leader. Practice shows that taking controversial, sometimes risky decisions is an inherent feature of crisis situations. Lack of decision or safeguard often leads to deepening of the crisis situations. Moreover, crisis situations intensify conflicts in the team. The task of the manager - the leader is then to resolve conflicts, not only by administrative means.

The key role in crisis management units is played by the managers/ head of the units. At local government level there are often personnel changes in the positions of commune heads, mayors or starostas. These changes will now be even more frequent with proposed amendments to the regulations and limiting the term of office of presidents, starostes in local governments to two terms. It should be noted that the persons holding these functions are, in accordance with the "Crisis Management" law, responsible for conducting crisis management of subordinate areas<sup>17</sup>. With such high rotation of the managerial staff, the responsibility for efficient management of crisis situations will rest on the shoulders of the mayors or starostas to a much greater extent. The head of the crisis management unit, performs duties comparable to the position of „chief of the headquarters in the army". The scope of their duties includes the elaboration of appropriate solutions and presenting them to the commune heads, presidents or starostas for implementation. In crisis management at the local government level, which is usually implemented in extreme

<sup>16</sup> E.T. Hall, *Poza kulturą*, PWN, Warszawa 1984, p. 142.

<sup>17</sup> See: B. Sowa, *Uwarunkowania sprawnego zarządzania bezpieczeństwem w powiecie w stanach zagrożenia – w świetle ustawy o zarządzaniu kryzysowym* [in:] K. Sikora, M. Domagała, E. Jasiuk (ed.), *Wpływ...*, p. 170.



conditions, it is the attitude, skills and experience of the head / manager that condition the effectiveness in ensuring safety of people and property.

In managing crisis situations, one often deals with conflicts. The author believes that skilful conflict management, especially in crisis management, strengthens the authority of the leader and reduces threats. Crisis situations can be sudden, caused by many factors, such as industrial catastrophes, acts of terror, sabotage, hence their management should have features of a reactive action to solve the crisis and stabilize the situation.

It is worth mentioning here L.P. Wootena and E. James, who listed the competences of the leader acting in crisis<sup>18</sup>:

- the ability to build trust;
- the ability to create new corporate thinking;
- ability to identify real gaps in the organization's operation;
- the ability to make wise and quick decisions;
- courage in action;
- the ability to learn in a crisis.

Summing up, one may conclude that leadership in crisis management requires managers to change their mindset and react to emerging unexpected threats in the environment. The way of leading the team in crisis situations requires flexibility and perspective thinking, the purpose of which is to anticipate the potential effects of the decisions taken. Strong leadership in crisis management makes it easier to change the organization and adapt its activities to the changing environment. In conditions of threats, leadership can be the factor that will have the greatest impact on the performance of tasks and will also prevent loss of human life and property.

#### 4. Perfecting leadership in crisis management

It is widely believed that leadership is heavily influenced by specific features, abilities, and skills that, to a certain extent, can be developed thanks to experience and situations leaders are exposed to. According to A. Amstrong, one can learn techniques that influence the results achieved by leaders. This applies to planning, organizing, delegating, communicating, motivating and controlling. However, as he claims, these techniques are effective only if the person who uses them is effective. To be effective in action, you need to improve your abilities and capabilities in the process of understanding, observation, analysis and learning<sup>19</sup>. However, assuming the paradigm of the ability to train leadership competences, it should be emphasized that these competences can only be shaped in appropriate conditions, i.e. through specialized training, as well as can be shaped by supervisors of subsequent levels of local government administration. It is therefore desirable that the issue of leadership be taken into con-

<sup>18</sup> See T. Gigol, *Kryzys przedsiębiorstwa a przywództwo*, Difin, Warszawa 2015, p. 163.

<sup>19</sup> M. Amstrong, *Jak być lepszym menadżerem*, Dom Wydawniczy ABC, Warszawa 1997, p. 28.



sideration while planning training curricula for vocational development courses and post graduate studies, especially in view of frequent rotations of staff on managerial positions in crisis management units of local administration resulting from political changes and/or local elections. Practice shows that only too often people of no leadership or managerial competences are appointed to these positions. It is especially visible in communes, where accidental people, without any experience in crisis management, are often referred to the positions of crisis management units.

Of course, shaping leadership qualities and behaviors can be done while working in positions related to crisis management but also by observing the behaviours of superiors. The author believes that the managers of crisis management units as well as their superiors (starosts, mayors, commune leaders) should to a greater extent participate in trainings taking into account the specificity of leadership in crisis management in local administration. According to the author, the leadership in crisis management units of local governments differs, for example, from corporate leadership, mostly because crisis situations entail human health, life and property. As leadership is of specific character, trainings of the leaders should be led by specialists who have experience in combating threats in crises or conflicts. Such courses are run by the Academy of Martial Art/ Akademia Sztuki Wojennej in Warsaw and should also be conducted at national security faculties of local universities. It is worth applying and transferring already tested patterns to the practice of crisis management. The guidelines contained in the US military armaments leadership manual can be helpful in that matter.

Dealing with that issue B. Szulc and L. Kanarski<sup>20</sup> have analyzed and identified factors that can be used to shape direct, organizational and strategic leadership in the Polish armed forces. The researchers distinguished the desirable features of leadership<sup>21</sup>, which, in the author's opinion, can be transferred to the crisis management units of local administration.

These are:

- physical and moral courage;
- firmness;
- endurance;
- enthusiasm;
- integrity and credibility;
- justice;
- tactfulness;
- unselfishness;
- knowledge of subordinates and care for them.

<sup>20</sup> *Military Leadership, FM 22-100*, Headquarters, Department of The Army, July 1990; quote after B. Szulc, L. Kanarski, *Przywództwo w dowodzeniu wojskami. Kształtowanie cech przywódczych*, AON, Warszawa 1998, p. 48-46.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

Summing up, while leadership is one of the conditions affecting the effective implementation of tasks in crisis management, in crisis situations it can become the key factor that determines success of effective crisis management.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, we can say that in the subject literature contains polar recognition of the necessary personality traits: one approach to leadership shows that the character traits are inborn – one acquires them with the genes; according to others – everything can be shaped.

In the author's opinion, both views are true. In the case of the manager-leader, personality traits are just as important as training and development. Leadership competences can further be shaped through self-development. Last but not least, the environment also plays a vital role in shaping leadership competences. However, by organizing the training process in the right way, the managers can achieve success that enhance their authority and through such actions managers can become professional leaders.

Referring to the title of the article “Manager or Leader?” leadership in crisis situations is an indispensable element of crisis management<sup>22</sup>, because of the turbulent aspect of the surroundings, employees often experience uncertainty, stress and only a strong leader – the manager can introduce a relative sense of security. In crisis management of local government administration, the implementation of tasks requires team collaboration. Only the manager with leadership competences can conduct effective management, because as a manager he is the stabilizing factor for the organization – on the other hand – as a leader he is willing to introduce changes to the organization that aim to adapt to the dynamically changing environment.

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<sup>22</sup> E.H. James, L.P. Wooten, *Leadership as (Un)usual: How to Display Competence in Times of Crisis*, “Organizational Dynamics” 2005, Vol. 34, p. 141-152.

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**Mgr Marek Margoński** – wyższe wykształcenie z zakresu zarządzania, bezpieczeństwa narodowego. Posiada doświadczenie w tematyce zarządzanie bezpieczeństwem państwa, zarządzania kryzysowego, obronie cywilnej, ochronie informacji niejawnych. Obecnie nauczyciel akademicki w Wyższej Szkole Bezpieczeństwa Poznaniu, doktorant Wyższej Szkoły Biznesu w Dąbrowie Górniczej, obecnie prezes zarządu sp. z o.o. zajmującej się zarządzaniem międzynarodowymi projektami edukacyjnymi.

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