



Article

Signs of a Manager's Leadership in a Quality Educational Institution: Cases of the City and District Centre of Lithuania

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Abstract: One of the problems in Lithuania is the shortage of heads of educational institutions; many schools are looking for teachers, and there is a constant shortage of teaching staff. In addition, the issue of quality education is often debated. The article analyses the concept of a quality educational institution: the attributes and personal qualities of a manager-leader. The research was conducted in two schools in Lithuania (a large city and a district centre), which are characterised as high-quality educational institutions. These schools in Lithuania are highly rated in terms of pupil achievement, external audit data, and statements made by school communities in public space and social networks. The aim of the study is to investigate the attributes of a leader of a quality educational institution and its leader. The study used a qualitative methodology: semi-structured interviews with school leaders, teachers, and parents of students belonging to the school council. Qualitative research was chosen because it would be difficult to reveal the meaning of the problem using a quantitative method, as each respondent has his or her own individual opinion, which depends on his or her experiences. The data were analysed according to coding categories. According to the study, it can be stated that for a leader of a quality educational institution, it is very important to follow such principles as respect for others, knowledge of others, democratic values, belief in colleagues and their abilities, and lifelong learning should be part of the daily life of the educational community.



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1. Introduction

Leadership in an educational institution is understood as is the ability to motivate a group of people to act in harmony towards a common goal. It is the act of guiding employees and colleagues towards a strategy that is in line with the organisation's expectations. Žydzūnaitė (2019) associates leadership with flexibility, adaptability, change, wisdom, values, morality, and many other phenomena and terms that are not static and unchanging, and leaders or groups of leaders have a significant impact on engaging people, achieving quality in any area, fostering enthusiasm, boosting employee morale, etc. A leader is always a kind of operating model, but one that is not standardised and unique because he or she needs to find authentic ways of doing things each time. A leader is the person in a group who has the personality and leadership skills that naturally lead others to follow. In today's Lithuanian strategic documents, the leader is emphasised as a community mobiliser. The document *National Education Strategy 2013–2022* (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerija 2014) aims to introduce a culture of quality in education based on data analysis and evaluation, ensuring coherence between self-management, social partnership, and managerial leadership. The document *Concept of a Good School* (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerija 2015) states that the factors that make a school work as an organisation are the educational and learning environment, education/teaching, school staff, the school community and its learning, and leadership and management, which all contribute to the achievement of the school's mission. Clear direction (Baciu 2019), principles, and values are important in assessing a good school in terms of good, competent

management, the main ones being improvement, learning, positive attitudes, and trust in other people (Seashore Louis and Robinson 2012; ASCD 2017). It is not easy to put into practice all the things stated in the documents regulating the content of education in Lithuania, which is why it was decided to carry out a study on how the work is organised in educational establishments, which are characterised by a high quality of education.

2. Background

2.1. Definition of a Quality Leader in the Management of an Educational Institution

Leadership is understood as a process, and leadership in education results in successful learning for the educational community and high-quality learning at all levels (national, regional, and school). All changes in the education system, at both national and municipal level, are linked to the quality and achievement of student learning (Valuckienė et al. 2015). All managers must be responsible, competent, and willing to work (Duevel et al. 2015; Kitson 2018). Principals take into account the specific circumstances of the schools they lead as they affect the well-being of the school and the success of pupils' learning (Shaw 2015). Leaders need to have autonomy to act in their work, as this is the only way that ideas and solutions will be born that are not constrained by any power frameworks (*Education and Training, Monitor, Finland* (European Union 2019)), but such autonomy only works properly if managers are competent, aware of the common good (not selfish), and committed to the success of society as a whole. This is why Finland stresses the need to attract the brightest, most committed people to schools in the first place. To remain a leader, it is necessary to continuously improve (Sahlberg 2011; Sjøby 2015). The Finnish approach to school leaders is thus that only the most talented and committed people become school leaders, and that the state gives them every opportunity to put their ideas into practice while at the same time demanding that they continually improve and innovate.

The leader could be a role model in changing the culture of the educational establishment, for example, by being a promoter or initiator of physical activity. The community will then rethink the forms of education, abandoning some of the activities in the standard school classrooms (Köykkä et al. 2019). As Avolio et al. (2009), the guide should focus on international experiences. In addition, managers need to spend time living in different cultures (Ang et al. 2006) in order to be prepared to lead successfully across cultures (Osland et al. 2006).

2.2. The Competences Necessary for a Managerial Leader and Their Expression

The professional competence of managers is essential for effective management. The competences of managers of educational establishments can be defined as the sum of the knowledge of general and specific skills required for successful professional performance and for the successful implementation of the functions set out in the job description. As with any manager, principles like respect for others, knowledge of others, democratic values, faith in colleagues and their abilities, and lifelong learning should be the norm. The European Commission's Joint Committee of Teachers in European Schools (2018) has endorsed the Guidelines for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in European Schools (*Supporting Key Competence Development: Learning Approaches and Environments in School Education* (European Commission 2019), 2018-09-D-69), with the aim of ensuring the implementation of the eight key competences in a coherent and harmonised way. It emphasises the development of general competences like communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competences and basic technological and scientific knowledge, digital competences, cultural awareness and expression, entrepreneurship, citizenship, personal, social, and learning competences. International documents (OECD 2019, 2020b; UNESCO 2021) provide guidelines for school leaders on cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, creative thinking, learning-to-learn, and self-control; social and emotional skills, such as empathy, self-efficacy, responsibility, and cooperation; and practical and physical skills, such as the use of new information and communication technologies. Abdallah and Forawi (2017) and Baciú (2019) argue that a

school leader's success depends on his or her education, skills, experience, and ability to plan strategically. A school leader's vision, ideological direction, management strategies, and high standards set an example for all staff. Phipps and Prieto (2011) argues that a leader must lead by example to be inspirational, which motivates and encourages followers to perform at the highest level or even exceed expectations. The leader motivates other teachers by example. He or she also has a basic understanding of management, a sense of direction, and a vision of the perfect institution. An educational institution will be successful if its head takes responsibility for the success of the school, leads in teaching and learning, encourages the development and retention of competent teachers, and builds a strong school community. It is essential for the leader to coordinate and balance effort, attention, and time in managing all areas because if one area becomes dominant, the other areas will simply not develop (Abdallah and Forawi 2017; Phipps and Prieto 2011; Matthews 2011; Tichnor-Wagner 2019). Human resources and technology are important, chosen according to academic needs. Many studies emphasise the importance of striking a balance between all areas, and the ability to balance this is the highest level of managerial competence (Kelechukwu 2011; Sanzo et al. 2011; Tran and Buckman 2017). The right leadership fosters a drive for improvement, both for the school itself and for every child and young person, and with the right leadership, schools are strongly focused on their missions and in control of their own futures. A good school leader sets priorities for school development from continuous and detailed evaluation of their own performance (Matthews 2011). The development of pedagogical leadership depends on effective planning and a collaborative approach to teaching, assessment and evaluation, etc.

Fullan (2019) identifies one of the problems with educational leadership as a lack of understanding and contextual knowledge of the whole, as strategies are often based on individualistic ideas. This is where the fundamental problem lies because educational leadership must be about the whole, i.e., the organisation as a single organism, because it is a social phenomenon. One individual leader, no matter how good he or she is, will not achieve a global breakthrough. A leader is significant to the extent that it is important to change the overall culture of the organisation, to improve working conditions, to strengthen community cooperation, etc. In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities for digital content are emerging. Fullan et al. (2020) and Fullan (2019) suggest that the school of the future needs leaders who make decisions in a more responsive and flexible way. Their distinctive qualities are: to be constantly interested and looking for what can be done or adapted, to communicate immediately and openly with others, to have an excellent grasp of the content of the problem and to solve problems sensitively, and to believe in a better future. These leaders not only change the way others think, but also their emotions. They have the common good of humanity at their core, and this is the value proposition that motivates them to act. A good leader is not only a leader with content-related skills, but also with team-building skills that give confidence in the leader and his or her competence. It is important for a leader-manager to have two things: to do their job professionally and to lead the team with the compassion and judgement needed to achieve the goal. Getting along with your team is also an important factor; it is important to communicate clearly and respectfully. When problems and conflicts arise, you need to intervene early and maintain a balance so that it does not affect staff productivity. Complex problem and conflict resolution is discussed by Fullan (2019) and Fullan et al. (2020). According to the authors, it is no longer enough to solve problems in a "technical" way, but a complex solution approach is needed, tailoring solutions to the specific situation.

2.3. The Concept of a Quality Education Institution

One of Lithuania's educational content strategy documents, the Good Schools Concept (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerija 2015), states that the quality of education is every school's aspiration; fostering the creativity of school communities; and promoting sustained improvement initiatives based on shared leadership principles (Grille and Kauffeld 2015; Hallinger 2005; Hoch et al. 2010; Pearce and Manz 2005; Small and

Rentsch 2010; Wang et al. 2014). Quality education is associated with leaders who bring people together to achieve a common goal. Educational leadership focuses on the learning process, progress, and achievement of pupils, but also on the learning and continuous improvement of staff, especially teaching staff. This requires change, which the leader of each organisation should reflect on in detail (Sutton 2016) and ensure that change is as smooth as possible and delivers the desired outcome (Nelson and Sassi 2005; Robinson 2011). The work of instructional leadership is characterised by the integration of knowledge, the resolution of specific situations, and the development of trust (Robinson 2011; Seashore Louis and Robinson 2012). Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) argue that leadership can create a good organisational culture if trust is fostered in the organisation. Employees and leaders need to trust each other in order to have a positive organisational culture.

In a quality education institution, the role of the teacher as a leader is emphasised (Hargreaves and Fullan 2019). Teacher leadership is not a substitute for, but a complement to, managerial leadership. Teacher leadership is above all a means of achieving high quality teaching and learning in schools (Chapman et al. 2011; Hattie 2009; Helmke 2012). The most important tasks of teacher leadership are to improve student teaching and learning (Thangeda et al. 2016), as well as to fulfill the teacher's professional duty of collaboration (Blandford 2016). Teachers lead not only in the classroom, but also outside the classroom, contributing to the school community and encouraging others to adopt better educational practices (Alton-Lee and Raukura 2012). Marzano et al. (2011) suggests that teacher leadership is considered to be one of the most important factors in the success of many areas of schooling. In addition, the quality of education is also linked to the continuous learning and development of teachers (Gleason 2017), as only teachers who are up-to-date with the latest educational methods, the latest developments in science, and the potential of information technologies can be the creators of the quality of an education organisation.

Targamadze (2019) emphasises that the most important signs of a good school are high achievement and progress. The quality of education is linked to the contextuality and distinctiveness of schools (Valuckienė et al. 2015). In addition, a quality school should be fundamentally concerned with the emotional and psychological well-being of its pupils, which is why bullying and violence prevention activities are included (Prøitz 2018; Standish and Nygren 2018). The values dimension of schooling is also highlighted as a priority in the OECD (2019) document: *personal values describe how a pupil is as a person and how he or she wants to set and pursue meaningful life goals; social values describe the principles of interpersonal relationships, how a person treats others, and how he or she deals with conflict situations. Cultural attitudes relating to social well-being, which encourage communities to work effectively, are highlighted; societal values determine the prioritisation of cultural and social groups; human values relate to the well-being of humanity.* They are manifested through traditions that pass from one generation to the next. It is important that the school provides a stimulating environment that emphasises each child's success in learning and motivates him or her to be eager to learn (Blandford 2016; Gleason 2017).

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data Analysis Strategy and Methods

Research problem: What personality traits distinguish high performing educational leaders?

The aim of the study: to investigate the characteristics of a leader of a quality educational institution and the hallmarks of a quality educational institution.

Objectives of the study:

1. To carry out a theoretical analysis of scientific literature in the context of the manager-leader of an educational institution and work with the community;
2. To describe the attributes of the concept of a quality educational institution and its leader;
3. To reveal what makes an educational institution quality and what criteria could be used to define a quality educational institution.

There is a lack of research in Lithuania on the qualities of the manager of a quality educational institution and on the ways of working together. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the attributes of a quality educational institution and the qualities of its manager in the case of a school located in the centre of a city and a district. The study considered the participants as unique individuals and sought to uncover the personal views of each of them. The qualitative data analysis started with data collection, recording, and structuring. It is important to keep returning to the data from the first stage in order to see details or insights that may have been overlooked but are important for the research (Adams 2015; Brown and Danaher 2019; Evangelinou-Yiannakis 2017; Žydžiūnaitė and Sabaliauskas 2017).

The empirical research was based on a phenomenological approach of practice (Kairė 2021; Van Manen 2007, 2014), where the research focuses on practitioners, on their everyday activities, and on their experiences. Furthermore, the focus was on the practitioners' practical activities, and the study both helped to reflect on these and to prepare the individual for professional practice. In such a study, the researcher focuses on the respondent's multiple experiences and their expression in the statements, selecting the fragments of the statements that best reveal the content of the experience of the subject (Kajokienė 2010; Kairė 2021; Smith and Osborn 2003; Van Manen 2007, 2014). Van Manen (2014) does not see phenomenology as a descriptive or merely interpretive approach but combines them and seeks a balance between the processes of description and interpretation. The description of the meanings of the phenomenon under investigation allows revealing its essence. However, interpretation is also necessary since phenomena are associated with meanings that are not only clearly visible but also hidden. Both aspects of the study of the phenomenology of practice (description and interpretation) are realised through two interrelated methodological axes that best characterise this approach: reduction, which Van Manen (2014) identifies as a philosophical method applied from the very beginning of the research being carried out, and excitation, which he considers to be the philosophical method of the phenomenology of practice, applied during the process of writing the phenomenological text.

As the participants selected for the study come from different educational institutions and different environments (city and district centre), we presented the data in different contexts; we identified logical relationships that will help to reveal the attributes of a leader and link them to a high performing educational institution. The institutions selected for our study were not random, and both institutions in the region were judged to be of high quality (based on pupil achievement indicators and external evaluation data).

To process the data, a *thematic content analysis method* (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002; Kardelis 2005; Lambert and Lambert 2012; Žydžiūnaitė 2019; Žydžiūnaitė and Sabaliauskas 2017) was applied, in which statements or phrases are linked according to the logical relations of thought. The empirical data was categorised according to the language and experience of the participants. The method of data analysis was insight-driven; the process of analysis was interpretive. The main data analysis strategy chosen was comparative; the interpretative comparative data analysis was carried out within categories covering the experiences of school leaders, teachers, and parents in the analysis of the attributes of a leader in a quality educational institution.

Study instrument. In order to make the interviews focused, a semi-structured interview was chosen (Žydžiūnaitė 2019; Žydžiūnaitė and Sabaliauskas 2017). This study was chosen to investigate the characteristics of the head and deputy head of a high-performing educational institution: capturing the attributes of the leaders and their experience in building a high-performing organisation.

Rationale for semi-structured interview questions. The interview questions were designed to reveal similarities and differences in views on the same issue by interviewing the heads of the institutions, the teachers who are supervised by these heads, and members of the community (parents), who are actively involved in the life of the school community as members of the school council. The aim was to find out how the same entity is characterised

by those with different interests and responsibilities working in the same school (see Table 1).

Table 1. Semi-structured interview questions exploring the attributes of a managerial leader and their expression in an educational institution and their rationale.

No.	Question	Relevance of the Question to the Research Problem	Signs
1.1	Tell us about your experience as a managerial leader. What are the qualities of a managerial leader that you would identify as essential for a high quality educational institution? Please argue.	The question is addressed to the manager-leader. The question aims to uncover the experience of manager-leaders, to find out what qualities manager-leaders themselves identify as necessary for a quality educational institution.	The question explores the personality traits of a manager-leader (Duevel et al. 2015; Fullan 2019; Fullan et al. 2020; Kitson 2018; Sahlberg 2011; Søby 2015)
1.2	Tell us about your experience of dealing with your manager. What are the qualities of a managerial leader that you would identify as essential for a high performing educational institution? Please argue.	The question is for teachers and parents. The question aims to uncover the staff member's experience of interacting with their manager-leader, to find out what qualities staff members identify as essential for a quality educational institution.	Teachers' and parents' experiences of interacting with a manager-leader when the manager-leader's personality is revealed (Duevel et al. 2015; Fullan et al. 2020; Kitson 2018; Sahlberg 2011; Søby 2015; Fullan 2019)
2	What competences do you think a manager-leader in education should have?	The question is addressed to all participants in the study. The question seeks to find out the competences of a leader in an educational establishment.	Manager-leader competences (Abdallah and Forawi 2017; Matthews 2011; Phipps and Prieto 2011; Tichnor-Wagner 2019)
3	What are the characteristics of a quality education institution? What are the criteria for determining whether an educational establishment is performing well? What is the role of the manager in this case?	The question is for everyone. The question seeks to find out how different stakeholders define the concept of a quality education institution.	Signs of a quality education institution (Grille and Kauffeld 2015; Hallinger 2005; Hoch et al. 2010; Pearce and Manz 2005; Small and Rentsch 2010; Wang et al. 2014)
4	Do the community trust you? Please give reasons and examples. And do you trust the community?	The question is for the manager-leader. The question seeks to clarify the importance of the issue of trust and the value base of the educational institution.	Manager-leader values. Trust as a value foundation (Blandford 2016; Gleason 2017; OECD 2019; Prøitz 2018; Standish and Nygren 2018)

From the data presented in Table 1, we can see that the study aimed to investigate the personality traits of the educational institution manager and their expression in specific practical activities, which would allow determining what personal qualities a leader manager possesses, who is able to create a community of quality educational institution. In addition, the aim was to investigate the attributes of a quality leader and organisation that are recognisable in educational practice and that will be revealed by the experiences of the research participants. It was also planned to extract assumptions from the participants' responses that would help to predict and link the attributes of the manager that help him/her to emerge as a leader in the organisation and to clarify the value foundation. Different informants (managers, deputies, teachers, and parents) from different communities in the educational establishment were selected. This choice of participants helped to see the subject from different perspectives.

Ethics of the study. All the respondents voluntarily participated in the investigation and were informed about the substance of the investigation and adherence to the ethical principles of the investigation. Consent was obtained from each participant in their participation in the interview and its recording. Respondents were informed that the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provider would be ensured. The anonymity

of the subjects is ensured, as the names of all subjects will be known only to the researcher during the data analysis. Participants were informed about the aim and objectives of the study and agreed to participate in the study in good faith and by personal consent. When collecting the data, the text of each interview was recorded, and the interview texts were transcribed and compiled into separate computer files while maintaining the subject's confidentiality and respecting anonymity. The course of the investigation was approved in accordance with the procedures of the Vytautas Magnus University Academy of Education by the Ethics Committee at its September 2020 meeting. This study was conducted in Lithuania. The data were presented after translating the responses of the participants into English.

3.2. *The Context of the Schools Selected for the Study*

Marijampolė School was chosen because it is the most popular educational institution in the region, ranking 17th in terms of the quality of education in Lithuania, according to the journal "Ratings" (Grigaliūnaitė 2021). The school community is focused on academic activities and students' achievements. Good motivation of pupils and purposeful activity of teachers lead to high results of the state matriculation exams of gymnasium pupils. The school is characterised by a harmony between history and modernity: each student is taught to develop a deep sense of citizenship and love of the homeland and Lithuanian identity, and active learning methods are applied in modern classrooms and spaces. The microclimate in the gymnasium is good, and relations between members of the community are based on respect and trust. The Gymnasium is a health-promoting school, with a healthy physical and psychosocial environment as one of its priorities. It is also important to mention that the school organises learning festivals, competitions, quizzes, and conferences where pupils take part in presenting their research results, reading their theses, and holding debates. The ideas for the content of the events are proposed by members of the student council.

The Vilnius school is special because 30% of pupils with disabilities are successful. The school's educational methods and approaches are suitable for all learners. The educational environment allows the whole educational community to feel comfortable and work well. The school has modern calming areas, two classrooms for pupils with intellectual disabilities, and all the necessary support specialists, not just teachers. A cooperative learning approach has been implemented throughout the school, where educational activities are planned and implemented by several cooperating teachers.

3.3. *Study Participants*

One school in Vilnius and one school in Marijampolė took part in the study to obtain the necessary data for the study, and 11 people voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. The cases selected for the study were informative from the research point of view: highly qualified managers, teachers, school board members, and parents were selected by criterion sampling. In Vilnius, there were: 1 manager-leader, 3 teachers, and 2 parents. In Marijampolė, there were: 1 manager-leader, 2 teachers, and 2 parents. In the data analysis, the informants were coded according to the order of the interviews and the group V1–V2 available at managers-leaders, M1–M5 available at primary school teachers, and T1–T4 available at parents (see Table 2).

The data in Table 2 shows that teachers and school leaders had a lot of experience (at least 10 years or more). In addition, some teachers were rated as having high quality performance, having the highest qualification in Lithuania as an expert teacher (document *Teacher Attestation Regulations* (Ministry of Education and Science 2007, p. 1)). We would like to highlight the fact that all the people who took part in the study (administrators, teachers, and parents) are active members of school councils and, therefore, have a good knowledge of the activities taking place in the school. The School Council is the highest self-governing body of the school and is made up of pupils, teachers, parents/guardians, and representatives of the local community. The school council is accountable to the members of

the school community who elected it (*Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania 2023*, current version, Article 60). A member of the School Council is a person who has the knowledge and skills to contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals of the educational institution and the mission of the educational institution. Each year, the school council shall evaluate the annual performance report of the head of the school and submit its decision on the report to the authority exercising the rights and duties of the school owner. The Head of School shall participate in the activities of the Council but shall not make decisions.

Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents.

Respondent No.	Gender	Position	Years of Work Experience	City
D1	Male	Director of the school	30	Marijampole
D2	Female	Deputy Director of the school	10	Vilnius
T1	Female	Expert-teacher of primary school	25	Marijampole
T2	Female	Teacher of primary school	22	Marijampole
T3	Female	Expert-teacher of primary school	30	Vilnius
T4	Female	Teacher of primary school	15	Vilnius
T5	Female	Teacher of primary school	10	Vilnius
M1	Female	The pupil's mother	-	Marijampole
M2	Female	The pupil's mother	-	Marijampole
M3	Female	The pupil's mother	-	Vilnius
M4	Female	The pupil's mother	-	Vilnius

D—Director and Deputy Director, T—Teacher, M—Child's mother.

The time of conducting the study. The study was carried out remotely between September 2020 and March 2021.

4. Results

4.1. Developing the Personality Traits of a Manager-Leader in Practice

In explaining the experiences of the head of the educational institution and of the teachers and community members working with him/her, they were asked to express them, highlighting the qualities of the head. How the experiences were analysed can be seen from the categories and sub-categories identified in Table 3:

Table 3. Experiences of the personality traits of a manager-leader in practice.

Categories	Subcategories	
	Vilnius	Marijampole
Manager-Leader Experience	Pedagogical experience (D1, D2, T1, T2, T3, T4) Management experience (D1, D2, T1, T2, T3, T4)	
Manager-leader personal characteristics	Inspiring, mobilising, tolerant (D2, T3, T4, M4, D1, T1, T2, M1, M2)	
	Incentivising employees (D2, T3, T4)	
	Responsible (D2, T3, T4, M3, M4)	
	Empowerment to act (D2, T3, T4, T5)	
	Innovative (D2, T3, T4)	
	Creative (D2, T3, T4, T5)	
	Reliable (T3, T4, M3, M4)	
	Hardworking (T4, M3, M4)	
	Cooperative (T3, T4, M3, M4)	
		Open (D1, T1, T2, M1) Diplomatic (T1, T2, M1, M2) Understanding (T1, T2, M1, M2) Listening to staff (D1, T1, T2) Fair (D1, T1, M1) Consultative (D1)

D—Director and Deputy Director, T—Teacher, M—Child's mother.

The leaders of both schools have extensive teaching and managerial experience. This was mentioned by both them and the teachers who took part in the study. The experience of the leaders is also reflected in the seniority data.

4.2. Personal Qualities of a Manager-Leader

Inspiring and mobilising the community. It is important to note that the qualities of a community mobilising leader were mentioned by the participants of the study in both educational institutions. . . . *It is important to inspire the staff of the institution, to ignite them and to achieve the goal together. Of course, the ability to form teams and to do it together as a team is very important*, said D1. *Leadership is about inspiring or convincing people that this is needed, with particular emphasis on what the school is working for*, said D2. *Tolerance is very important, allowing staff to express themselves, listening to staff views*, said T2. *A manager is a team person, a team leader, wherever they work*, said T4. This is a very important personal characteristic of a leader manager, which contributes to building a community in an educational organisation. It was mentioned by both managers and teachers during the survey. Community mobilisation as an aspect of successful school leadership is also emphasised by other researchers, such as [Seashore Louis and Robinson \(2012\)](#), [Day and Sammons \(2014\)](#).

Empowerment to act. We believe that it is not only about mobilising the community, but also about empowering it to act. This aspect was very clearly highlighted by both the Vilnius City leader and the teachers. *To help teachers believe in themselves, in their competences and in their ability to do this, we have set up this steering group*, said D2. . . . *Having a lot of ideas and encouraging not only to spread those ideas but also to gather, let's say, teacher leaders who could and would be willing to implement all the ideas*, said T3. . . . *able to take responsibility and be able to delegate some activities*, said T4.

The personality traits of a manager-leader were responsibility, encouragement, diplomacy, creativity, understanding and listening to employees, and fairness. Examples of responses describing these qualities are given in Table 4:

Table 4. Statements demonstrating the personality traits of a manager-leader.

Manager-Leader Personality Trait	Example of a Statement from an Interview
Responsible	. . . <i>above all, to demand of yourself and others, to be an example to the team, to be responsible, reliable, hard-working and humane</i> . T4
Diplomatic	. . . <i>it's safe with the director, and he tries to handle all situations diplomatically</i> . T2
Incentivising employees <i>I just try to encourage and activate teachers to take part in different projects, not only to look at Lithuanian experiences, but also to look abroad</i> D2. . . . <i>is able to encourage, know and recognise teachers</i> . T3
Creative	. . . <i>the leader will encourage the teachers, if the leader is innovative and creative, if the leader is looking for project ideas, if the leader is looking for project ideas, if the leader is looking for people for himself or herself, if the leader is looking for working groups, then I think that's what I see in a leader who's not afraid of ideas, of innovations, and who's not only encouraging himself or herself to come up with ideas and to encourage teachers to come together and to put them into practice</i> . T3
Understanding	. . . <i>especially during the quarantine of COVID-19, they tried to understand the staff, they just tried to reassure</i> . T2
Listening to staff	. . . <i>I have to know people very well, to be able to listen to them, to hear one of the most important things</i> D1. <i>Allowing employees to express themselves, listening to employees' opinions is important</i> . . . T2
Fair	<i>Our Head of School is fair to everyone</i> . M1

D—Director and Deputy Director, T—Teacher, M—Child's mother.

From the statements in Table 4, we can see that manager-leader behaviour is associated with responsibility, fairness, understanding, and the ability to listen and understand others.

4.3. Manager-Leader Matter Competence

The study sought to find out which competences the participants identified in a managerial leader. Table 5 shows how the analysis of the data led to the identification of the attributes of the managerial leader's competences by category and subcategory.

Table 5. Experiences of the manager-leader's expression of matter competence.

Categories	Subcategories	
	Vilnius	Marijampole
Management adherence to the principles of organising activities	Applying shared leadership principles team building (D2, T3, T4, M3, M4) High managerial competences (T3, T4, M3, M4)	Employees follow the manager, trust his/her performance, and are consulted on objectives (D1, T1, T2, M2)
Clarity of performance measurement indicators	Encouraging active engagement by agreeing objectives and means of achieving them (T3, T4, M3, M4)	Employees feel that they are important (positive evaluation management predominates) (D1, T1, T2, M1, M2)

D—Director and Deputy Director, T—Teacher, M—Child's mother.

The manager-leader applies shared leadership principles team building. The Vilnius city leader and other participants in his school's study stressed the importance of shared leadership: D2 said, *if we apply the principles of shared leadership, then it's not necessary to be that special leader, because I know if I am the one initiating, inspiring, I can also burn out. The whole implementation of the educational content and the educational process in the school depends on the capacity of the leader of the educational institution, he relies on others*, said M4.

Employees identify high managerial competences. Our Head of School has the ability to organise, mobilise and lead people. He is not only a good teacher but also a good manager said T4. He is able to express his managerial competences when necessary and to take appropriate decisions, said T5.

Encouraging active engagement by agreeing objectives and means of achieving them. T3 spoke of how the leader . . . encourages staff to engage in active and interesting activities.

Employees follow the manager, trust his/her performance, and are consulted on objectives. When I make any decision, I first listen to the employees, make sure my solution works for them, discuss it and find a solution that works for everyone. It's important that the whole team, all employees, are involved in the decision, so that it works for everyone, not just for the manager, said D1. Our manager is an authority, he can lead the team, the employees trust him and his ideas, said T2.

Employees feel that they are important (positive evaluation management predominates). Our school staffs feel that they are important to the manager-leader, said T1. The leader is able to motivate others, make decisions based on the opinions of others, is not afraid to take risks, and accepts and supports the initiatives of other employees, said M1. The use of performance indicators is based on the concept of positive evaluation, where positive performance indicators are highlighted and those to be improved are linked to the direction and priorities for further action.

4.4. Signs of a Quality Education Institution

In the context of the attributes of a quality educational establishment, the aim was to highlight the role of the manager. The analysis of the survey data highlighted the role and experiences of the manager as an indicator of quality performance (see Table 6):

Table 6. The signs of a quality education institution and the roles of the manager.

Categories	Subcategories	
	Vilnius	Marijampole
Creating the right microclimate	Positive microclimate (D1, D2, T1, T2, T3, T4, M1, M2, M3, M4) Smooth communication (D1, T1, T2, T3, T4, M1, M2, M3, M4) Safe environment (D2, T3, T4, T5, M1, M2)	
Making progress	Pupils' achievements and learning progress (D1, D2, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, M1, M2, M3, M4) Mastery, subject competences and continuous professional development of teachers (D2, T2, T4, M1, M2, M3, M4) Community, togetherness, focus, cooperation, feedback (D1, D2, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, M3, M4)	
	Novelty, innovation (D2, T3, T4) Institutional culture (T3, T4) Exclusivity, uniqueness of the institution, personalisation, teachers' individual, unique methodologies (T3, T4, T5, M3, M4)	Achieving higher goals (T1, T2) Showing leadership (T1, T2) Opportunities to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities (M1, M2) Individuality, uniqueness (M1, M2)
Performance evaluation system	Internal evaluation (D2, T3, T4) External evaluation results (D2, T4, T5) Compliance with national agreements (T3, T5)	Set of criteria (D1, M1, M2) Taking into account the region's opportunities (M1, M2)
External opinion	Good feedback from pupils' parents (M3, M4) Integration of the child into society after leaving school (M3, M4)	Good feedback from social partners, students and parents (D1, M1, M2)

D—Director and Deputy Director, T—Teacher, M—Child's mother.

When analysing the data in Table 6, we would like to underline that the outstanding features of both quality education institutions were the creation of a **positive microclimate**, smooth communication, and a safe environment.

Making progress. Both institutions identified a number of similar attributes in the survey, including high teacher excellence and continuous improvement, high student achievement, focus and collaboration, and feedback. In Vilnius City, all teachers mentioned individual methodologies, uniqueness in the city, innovativeness, and fostering the culture of the institution.

Performance evaluation system. On this aspect, the Vilnius City study participants highlighted national, external evaluation, and internal evaluation arrangements. Meanwhile, the representatives of the district centre mentioned regional opportunities, as well as a set of criteria.

External opinion. Feedback from pupils, parents, and social partners is important for both school communities. Indeed, if a school performs well, it is quickly noticed and appreciated in the community, city, or region.

4.5. Trust in the Leader

At the end of the interviews, the leaders were asked whether they trusted the community and, conversely, whether the leaders themselves were trusted by the community. The responses were analysed and structured (see Table 7):

Table 7. Signs of community trust in the leader.

Categories	Subcategories	
	Vilnius	Marijampole
Community trust	A sense of trust (D1, D2)	
	Employee appreciation (D2) Constant communication and clarification of priorities builds trust (D2)	Showing listening, attention, compassion, understanding (D1)

D—Director and Deputy Director.

The leaders of both cities feel a sense of trust and, at the same time, confidence in their community, as can be seen from the information in Table 7. Trust is felt through the gratitude, attention, and understanding shown by employees.

5. Discussion

The results of the study are close to the portrait of the contemporary globally-minded school leader presented by Tichnor-Wagner (2019). First of all, a globally-minded leader needs to have a very clear direction of travel for the school, facilitating its development, and working towards a shared mission and vision that encompasses the competences. The researcher also emphasises and tries to promote all learning opportunities to develop the competences of students, staff, and the leader. A good manager must continuously develop and apply his/her managerial competencies, as they help to structure the institution's operations, bring clarity to the staff, and put in place the processes needed for more effective work and communication (Kelechukwu 2011; Sanzo et al. 2011; Tran and Buckman 2017). All of this promotes job performance and team behaviour among all employees and increases the focus and advantage of the whole institutional team.

From the responses from the study, we can see that the head not only mobilises, but also encourages each member of the community to be an active contributor to the school, and the head strengthens teachers by trusting them. All this is very important in the modern concept of schooling, where every member of the community feels responsible for the performance of the educational institution (Fullan 2019; Fullan et al. 2020). Participants in the study stressed the importance of following ethical behaviour norms (*Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* (OECD 2015)). By adhering to ethical standards themselves, the manager can act responsibly: working with the community to develop and implement the mission and vision of the institution, providing leadership, and establishing a clear action plan to achieve it (*Future of Education Skills* (OECD 2020a)). The idea expressed by the Vilnius manager is very close to the ideas of Harris (2010), Harris and DeFlaminis (2016), Harris and Jones (2020), and Harris et al. (2021) because by sharing activities, the manager demonstrates that he or she is trusted by his or her community and that the members of the community feel noticed and appreciated when working in such a team.

Participants in the study associate managerial competences with community mobilisation and decision-making. These insights of the participants are similar to the findings of other researchers (Kelechukwu 2011; Sanzo et al. 2011; Tran and Buckman 2017). The insights also emphasise focus and organisation of activities according to the principles of modern pedagogy (Chapman et al. 2011; Hattie 2009; Helmke 2012).

Participants in the Marijampole study emphasised the authority of the manager and mutual trust. All this includes not only managerial competence, but also a value foundation (OECD 2019; Prøitz 2018; Standish and Nygren 2018). Indeed, all of these indicators are closely interlinked, as a positive microclimate is primarily associated with safety (Prøitz 2018; Standish and Nygren 2018). Again, these indicators are close to the insights from other researchers who stress the important role of teachers in school communities when it comes to their competences and qualifications (Chapman et al. 2011; Hargreaves and Fullan 2019; Hattie 2009; Helmke 2012; Thangeda et al. 2016). They stress the importance of constant communication and listening (Al-Amri et al. 2016). In our opinion, this value aspect of schools can be linked to the OECD (2019) document, which emphasises personal values, social values societal values, and human values. Fostering a culture of trust is thought to encompass all these value groups.

Summarising the characteristics of a quality education institution, it can be mentioned that the characteristics identified in Lithuania are similar to the quality conventions of other countries; for example, the William Glasser Institute in Ireland presents the characteristics of a quality education institution in the context of a national convention (*Characteristics of a Quality School. National Convention* (William Glasser Institute Ireland 2022)), mentioning such characteristics as leadership-based management, strong community cooperation, the importance of the microclimate, and students' achievements based on teamwork and social

integration. Søyby (2015) also highlights the importance of collaboration between leaders, students, and teachers, as well as the integration of students into society.

6. Conclusions

The aim of the study was to describe the personal qualities of the manager of a quality educational institution and the working methods used in the organisation. The results of the study showed that the role and competence of the leader is crucial for a quality education institution. The majority of respondents unanimously said that one of the most important factors for improving the quality of an educational institution is an innovative leader who applies the principles of shared leadership, mobilises the community, and strives for progress. The empirical data analysis shows that a leader must have the judgement and balance, not only to be knowledgeable in his/her field, but also to have the necessary human qualities to lead his/her team with quality. Leaders make a significant contribution to the success of a high performing educational institution. Especially in the modern Lithuanian context, where there is a shortage of teachers, a leader must be able to convince not only professionally, but also personally. This requires excellent communication skills. City and district centre informants unanimously identify that the quality of a leader to be a good educational leader is to believe in his/her community, students and the impact of education, and in the possibility to change certain processes or persistent weaknesses. It is essential to believe in what the school is trying to achieve and to communicate your enthusiasm and motivation for change to those around you.

The personal qualities most frequently identified by participants in the study of city and district centre schools were the following: inspiring, mobilising, tolerant, encouraging, responsible, empowering, creative, trustworthy, open, diplomatic, understanding, listening, and motivating. Participants in the district centre school survey highlighted the qualities and competences of a leader are linked to the attributes of a quality education institution as a whole, such as the high level of competence of the team of teachers, innovativeness in order to express a high level of professionalism, support for the learning outcomes of the students, and the continuous renewal and unity in the pursuit of the objectives. Meanwhile, representatives of the city school argued that all of these attributes of educational quality can be achieved by creating an environment based on a culture of trust, in which every member of staff and the community feels a sense of responsibility.

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