

Poland, a workforce in transition: Exploring leadership styles and effectiveness of Polish vs. Western expatriate managers*

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Given the cultural differences between Western Europe and Poland, differences are expected in leadership styles and behaviours between Polish and Western managers. Our study explored Polish employees' perceptions and attitudes toward expatriate Western versus local managers. The main method was surveying Polish employees working under Western managers in three mid-size companies. We supplemented the survey with in-depth interviews with five West European middle managers working in Poland. We found that perceptions of local and foreign managers differed on several dimensions. While Polish employees generally perceived Western managers' style as more preferable, they also demonstrated ambivalence about working with expat versus Polish managers.

Angesichts der kulturellen Unterschiede zwischen Westeuropa und Polen, können Unterschiede in den Führungsstilen und Verhaltensweisen zwischen polnischen und westlichen Managern erwartet werden. Diese Studie untersuchte die Wahrnehmung und die Einstellung polnischer Mitarbeiter bezüglich westlicher Expatriates im Vergleich zu lokalen Managern. Hauptsächlich wurden polnische Mitarbeiter befragt, die unter westlichen Manager in drei mittelgroßen Unternehmen arbeiteten. Ergänzend wurden Tiefeninterviews mit fünf westeuropäischen mittleren Führungskräften, die in Polen arbeiten, geführt. Die Autoren fanden heraus, dass sich die Wahrnehmung der lokalen und ausländischen Manager in mehreren Dimensionen unterscheidet. Für die polnischen Mitarbeiter schien generell der westliche Managerstil als wünschenswert. Jedoch zeigten sie eine Ambivalenz gegenüber der Zusammenarbeit mit ausländischen oder polnischen Managern.

Key words: Poland, leadership, culture, values, Eastern block, European management (JEL: M12; M54)

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1. Introduction

In May 2004 the European Union experienced its largest change and enlargement ever, when 10 new countries acceded to the Union. This major change in EU composition was motivated by economic factors as well as by socio-political ones. This enlargement of the EU was especially significant and challenging since most of the 10 countries joining the EU were formerly part of the USSR-lead *Eastern Block*, characterised by a long tradition of state-controlled, Soviet-style communist economic policies. A big worry for the EU was to which degree and how fast can these economies adopt themselves to the central and western European economies that characterised most EU nations. Poland, with a population of over 38 million people was, by far, the largest of the new EU member countries. A major challenge that faced the Polish economy since the early 1990s has been the implementation of a more market-oriented economy (Oechlin 1991). As part of this economic shift, there was an influx of expatriate managers to Poland who assumed managerial positions both in Polish companies as well as in the rapidly growing group of multinational and international companies that established operation in the country (Zinovieva 1993). The number of work permits granted to foreign citizens in Poland in 2008 was by 75% higher than three years earlier and exceeded 18 thousands (Kafarska 2009). Because the compensation package of an expatriate manager is, on average, three times higher compared to local manager's compensation, the effectiveness of the expatriate managers is an especially crucial issue for the parent company (Petersen/Partners 2012).

The present study is concerned with investigating Polish employees' perceptions of their Western (European) expatriate managers and with assessing the relative effectiveness of these managers' leadership style compared to Polish managers. It has been established by now that a universalistic approach to management does not hold. That is, we know that nations' cultural textures affect the type of organisational practices that emerge in a certain nation and, furthermore, the relative appropriateness of using certain management processes and practices (e.g., Hofstede 2001; House et al. 2004; Schwartz/Sagiv 1995).

A broad conclusion from the above-cited studies is that managers should adopt their approach and action to the culture they operate in or to the culture where the majority of their employees belong. Indeed, one of the areas that occupied cross cultural management scholars' attention has been the study of leadership styles across cultures (e.g., Dorfman 1996; House et al. 2004). Studies that looked at leadership styles across nations found both similarities and differences in the prevalence and effectiveness of certain leadership styles (e.g., Aycan 2008; House et al. 2004). For example, Bass et al. (1979) found that managers, across a variety of cultures, preferred to get things done while using less authority. Smith/Patterson (1994) found that managers in 25 countries were more satisfied performing activities where they had higher discretion. At the same time,

numerous studies reported that some leadership attributes are culture-specific, such as charismatic style or autonomy (e.g. Ah Chong/Thomas 1997; House et al. 2004).

2. Polish leadership style studies

Up to date, relatively few studies examined the leadership issues facing Western expatriate managers working in former Soviet-block countries. The few studies that empirically examined organisational leadership in Poland (most of them employing pre-EU accession samples) indicated that Polish managers, compared to their peers in Western and Central Europe, tended to employ an autocratic approach (Maczynski et al. 1994). According to one of the findings of the GLOBE study, which sampled middle managers in Poland in the second half of the 1990s, Poland scored the lowest among 20 European countries, which included Turkey, Russia and Slovenia, on the leadership dimensions of ‘Interpersonal Directness and Proximity’. This means that Polish managers tend to be lower on leadership prototypical attributes such as **Inspirational** leader (characterised by enthusiasm, encouragement, morale boosting, and motivational among others), lower on **Integrity** (includes honest, just and trustworthy) and higher on **Face Saver** (indirect, evasive), **Administrative** (orderly, good administrator) and **Self Centred** (self interested, non-participative, asocial). Poland was ranked around the middle among the same countries on the dimension of leader **Autonomy**, which includes traits such as individualistic, independent, autonomous and unique. In that regard it appeared similar to the countries in the Anglo and Nordic clusters (Brodbeck et al. 2000).

Interestingly, in their later study, Maczynski et al. (2010) found out relatively higher scores on Power Distance and lower scores on Humane Orientation on the part of Polish managers being studied in the year of 2008/2009 as compared to the year 1996/1997. Polish managers of 2008/2009 believed more strongly than Polish managers of 1996/1997 that an autocratic style is associated with leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, following their comparative study of leadership styles, Mehta/Dubinsky/Anderson (2003) concluded that “in Poland a directive leadership style will have the strongest relationship with motivation”. On the other hand, like in most transitional East-European countries, a gradual change in work-attitudes has been occurring and some authors suggest that the new generation of Polish organisational members may prefer a more participative and less autocratic leadership style (Jago et al. 1996).

In a more recent, post-accession study, 183 Polish managers were asked to use a self-assessment method and to compare themselves to Western counterparts (Uzycki 2009). When completing the self-assessment, respondents were asked to evaluate Polish managers as a group and not to refer to themselves personally. As respondents worked in international companies they were also asked to compare Polish managers (as a group) with Western managers (as a group). The

greatest percentages of interviewed managers were from companies with German, American, and Scandinavian capital (24, 19, and 16% respectively). British and French capital each represented 5% of participants with the remaining 31% being employed by other countries.

Uzycki found that Polish managers perceived themselves very positively in terms of flexibility, creativity, and diligence. They also indicated that they were definitely more flexible (less flexible – 13%, the same – 35%, more flexible – 52%), creative (11%, 39%, 50%), and diligent (5%, 42%, 53%) than their Western counterparts. The respondents believed that they were reasonably good and more or less equal to the Western managers in the areas of openness to other cultures, time management and task-fulfilling. Participants evaluated least favourably their soft and interpersonal skills. Although only 22% declared to be ‘not effective’ and ‘somewhat effective’ in communication, 48% indicated that Polish managers are less effective in communication than Western ones (as compared to 8% who expressed an opposite opinion). 42% of respondents believed that Polish managers are poorer in teamwork than Western managers (7% held an opposite view). The score for conflict resolution skills was higher but still rather negative (28% – worse; 8% – better) and a similar picture emerged regarding ‘partnership approach to subordinates’ (37% – worse; 17% – better). One of the author’s conclusions is that a Polish manager is more a manager than a leader and that people management is the most important area for improvement and development.

The most recent study investigating Polish managers’ attitudes was carried out by Mironski (2013) and included a relatively large sample of 445 Polish managers. The study examined Polish managers’ tendencies in regards to McGregor’s Theory X-Y (McGregor 1960). The questionnaire used included previously validated attitudinal and behavioural self-report measures based on Kopelman and colleagues’ work (Kopelman et. al. 2008; Kopelman et. al. 2010).

Mironski found that while, overall, Polish managers placed themselves closer to attitudes and behaviours representing theory Y than theory X, their actual attitudes were closer to theory X than their self-declared behaviours. The study findings suggest that while Polish managers’ attitudes have moved closer to their counterparts in Western Europe, their practices are more resistant to change, bearing more similarity to past practices. As for the effects of demographics and experience, the study found no differences in reported attitudes and behaviours between males and females, MBA-graduates and non-MBAs. Length of work experience, though, was a significant predictor, with a positive relationship between length of experience and tendency to espouse Theory Y attitudes and behaviours. Thus, younger and less experienced managers tended to score higher on Theory X characteristics.

Overall, the few recent studies we reviewed above indicate some variation in the orientation of Polish managers' style and attitude and how it compares to managerial styles of non Polish managers. However, we argue that one cannot fully understand the nature of the Polish managerial style without obtaining complementary and comparative perspectives coming from other sources. What is missing from the studies reviewed is a direct examination of two types of organisation members: Polish non-managerial (including those at lower supervisory roles) employees and expat managers. Thus, our core research question is: what are the perceived differences between Western and Polish managers working in Poland? We aim to shed more light on this issue by combining insights from Polish employees, whose perspectives on management styles complement those of Polish managers and from expatriate managers whose perspectives can be compared with those of Polish employees and managers.

3. Method

3.1 Design

Our data collection methods included both quantitative (surveys) as well as qualitative (in-depth interviews) methods. We opted for using a mixed-method design in the present study for several reasons. First, and following the gaps identified in the literature above, one of our important aims was to collect data from a representative sample of Polish non-managerial employees that would allow us to compare their perceptions of Polish and Western managers. To that end, we sought to use a survey method, which would allow us a formal comparison of perceptions and would also follow from an established work on leadership and managerial competencies.

Secondly, acknowledging that our study, which has been framed as an exploratory given the relative scarcity of published studies in this specific area, would benefit from a more in-depth insight, we added two open-ended questions to the survey and conducted a small number of semi-structured interviews with Western managers in Poland. Using mixed-method allows for examining the phenomenon from two different perspectives, helping to identify similarities and differences in effects (e.g., Johnson/Onwuegbuzie/Turner 2007). Given the limited access we had to expat managers in Poland, it was not feasible to use a survey or other quantitative methods to collect data from expats.

For the survey of Polish employees, we first identified companies in Poland where West European managers were working. To obtain a more representative sample, we chose to contact three midsize companies under different EU nations ownerships, spanning three different industries, and located in Poland's two largest cities: Consulting (French/Polish owned; Krakow), Construction and Project Management (Belgian; Krakow) and Telecommunications (U.K.; Warsaw).

3.2 *Participants*

We distributed the surveys only among employees who worked in departments managed by West European managers; the employees contacted represented more than 50% of the overall workforce in the surveyed companies. Participants were contacted via email by one of the managers in the relevant company and asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire. The survey was accompanied by a cover letter, where we provided participants with information and rationale as to the aim of the survey, indicating completion deadline. Once completed, the surveys were returned by email directly to one of the authors.

Of the 357 employees contacted, we received 34 completed questionnaires, accounting for nearly 10% return rate. Over 41% of the respondents worked abroad and 16 of the 34 participants have lived abroad. The largest group lived in France (36.4%) followed by Germany (22.7%) and the UK (13.6%). Twenty-two (65%) were women; 65% of the sample were aged 31 - 40. In regards to educational qualifications, all participants reported that they completed their secondary studies and nearly 65% obtained a Masters degree. The largest group (26.5%) studied economics, followed by studies in Finance (17.6%) and Engineering (14.7%). In terms of tenure with the company, 26.5% spent 1-2 years; 44% 3-5 years and 20.5% 6-8 years. In terms of role in their companies, 32% worked as consultants, 8% were in lower management, 26.5% in middle-management, 8% in upper management and 18% in administration.

3.3 *Instruments*

We designed the questionnaire according to best practices (Freed 1964; Levine/Gordon 1959; Punch 2005) and, aiming to maximise completion rates, we started the questionnaire with easier to answer questions, followed by more difficult ones. In order to make the questionnaire more interesting and to minimise 'response sets', we varied the type of questions we asked (Berdie et al. 1986). Before finalising the questionnaire, we pilot-tested it with two Polish employees who had relevant international work experience. We proceeded to modify the survey based on the feedback obtained.

The questionnaire was comprised of several parts. The first part included demographic items as well as questions on experience of working with Western managers; the second part queried participants on the nature and extent of their interactions with Western managers, followed by a third part, where we asked participants to indicate which items in a list of seven potential barriers (e.g., language barrier; level of authority) they saw as most important in the context working with Western European managers. These barriers were identified based on studies in international HRM and cross-cultural management (e.g., Hilb 2006; Smith/Peterson 1988).

In part four we presented participants with a list of 13 characteristics that relate to managerial behaviours and aspects and employees' perceptions of job-related aspects (e.g., manager's integrity; employee's level of responsibility), which we have adopted from studies on management style and competencies (e.g., McCall/Hollenbeck 2002). We asked them to compare their experience working under Polish managers versus Western managers and to indicate, for each of the areas, whether a Western European manager did better, same or worse on that item.

In the last major section in the questionnaire, drawing on Laurent's (1997) and Hilb's (2006) studies on Hard-Type and Soft-Type organisational cultures, we created a list of 14 adjectives that describe managerial traits and modes of behaviour (e.g., Active; Task Oriented) pertaining to the above two types and asked participants to indicate which traits characterised: A. Polish managers; B. West European managers; C. managers who are successful in Poland.

3.4 Interviews with expat managers

To supplement employees' survey and in order to gain insight into expatriate managers' perspectives, we conducted individual semi-structured interviews, ranging between 40-90 minutes in length, with five junior-middle managers who have been working in Poland. This sample was obtained by contacting 27 international companies operating in Poland and asking them to provide names and contact information of junior to mid level Western managers in their company. We managed to track down several managers of this list and five of them agreed to be interviewed. All interviews were conducted in the workplace in English and a digital voice recorder was used in addition to note taking.

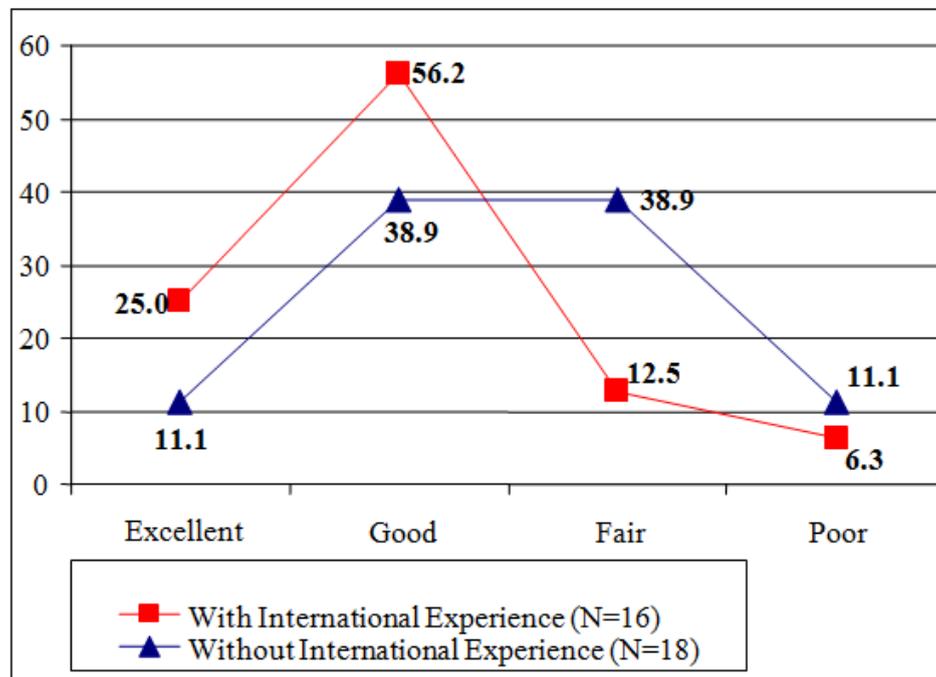
Three were male and two were female and their ages ranged between 36 and 55. Two were classified as junior managers and three as middle managers. Each of the three middle managers had overall managerial experience of over nine years and the two junior managers had managerial experience ranging from 4-7 years. Four of the five managers worked for over a year in Poland, with an average of 2.4 years among the five of them. These managers were working in the transportation, telecommunications, construction and banking & finance industries.

4. Results

Over 75% of survey respondents indicated that they found differences between Polish and Western European managers' styles. When asked about the quality of their professional interactions with Western managers on a 5-point scale ranging from 'Not acceptable' (1) to 'Excellent' (5), the average was 3.74 with 65% of the sample indicating that their interactions with Western managers were either 'Good' or 'Excellent'. We conducted a further analysis of the results by splitting employees into two categories: those who had international experience (N=16) and those without international work experience (N=18). Results indicated that

employees' international exposure related to their assessment of expatriate managers: as Fig. 1 shows, internationally experienced employees indicated more positive interactions with expatriate managers ($M = 4$) compared to Polish employees without international experience ($M = 3.5$).

Figure 1: Polish Employees' International Experience and their Rating of Expatriate Managers



We asked employees to indicate which are the highest barriers in their daily interactions with Western managers. Of the seven potential barriers listed, the most problematic aspect, by far, was considered *cultural differences*, which over 75% of surveyed employees reported as a hindrance in their day-to-day interactions. The second most problematic issue reported was *language barriers*, indicated by 47% as a barrier, while 44% believed that expatriates' *management style* created barriers and 32% saw Western managers' *working methods* as a problem. When asked whether fluency in Polish language would help a Western manager to be accepted by local employees, 65% responded in the affirmative.

The next section of the survey aimed at comparing employees' experience-based perceptions of Polish vs. Western managers' managerial competences, based on a given list of 13 items that included both task as well as relationship related attributes. We defined as 'major' a difference of at least 10% in responses to whether one managerial group was better or worse than the other on each given item.

We found major differences in nine out of the 13 professional areas we asked about. Table 1 presents these dimensions, indicating the % of participants who perceived Western vs. Polish managers as better on that dimension (the remain-

ing responses, completing the percentages to a total of 100%, indicated both manager groups as equal on that dimension).

Table 1: Differences in perceived competency of West European vs. Polish managers (%)

Dimension	Western Managers More Competent	Polish Managers More Competent
Manager's Competence	8.8	20.6
Employee's level of responsibility	14.7	26.5
Manager's authority	23.5	35.3
Overall job satisfaction	38.2	8.8
Manager's social interaction	38.2	8.8
Manager's integrity	52.9	2.9
Manager's tolerance	55.9	8.8
Flexibility	58.8	11.8
Feedback given on performance	58.8	8.8

From table 1 it can be observed that while Polish managers were seen as superior on three of the listed dimensions, Western managers were perceived as superior on six dimensions. We also note that larger differences exist in the dimensions where Western managers are perceived as superior with over 50% of participants indicating that Western managers outperformed Polish ones on four dimensions. Polish managers were rated more favourably on 'manager's competence', 'employee's level of responsibility', and 'manager's authority'; all three dimensions are relatively task-oriented in nature. On the other hand the six dimensions where Western managers were seen as superior were 'overall job satisfaction', 'manager's social interaction', 'manager's integrity', 'manager's tolerance', 'flexibility' and 'feedback given on performance'; the majority of these competences are related to interaction quality and interpersonal relations or to personality traits.

Next, we report responses as to which typical management-related traits participants associated with Polish and Western managers. Table 2 summarises these results, presenting the ten traits that were most frequently chosen for each national group and indicating in parentheses the percentage of participants who indicated them. The eight traits marked with an asterisk are traits that a large portion of respondents (at least 47%) indicated as important for being successful as manager in Poland. The most frequently associated traits with Polish managers were, in descending order of frequency, Independent; Reserved; Social; Talkative and Task Oriented. The most frequently indicated traits for Western European managers were: Sensitive; Tolerant; Easy Going; and Friendly.

Table 2: Traits Most Associated with Western vs. Polish Managers

Western Manager	Polish Manager
Sensitive * (58.8)	Insensitive (61.8)
Tolerant * (55.9)	Intolerant (64.7)
Easygoing (55.9)	Not easy-going (58.8)
Open-minded * (52.9)	Not open-minded (58.8)
Friendly * (55.9)	Unfriendly (52.9)
Not reserved (55.9)	Reserved (55.9)
Talkative * (52.9)	Talkative * (52.9)
Helpful (52.9)	Social * (55.9)
Active * (52.9)	Task oriented (52.9)
Not single-minded (58.8)	Independent * (58.8)

Participants then indicated which of the same list of traits they considered as important for managerial success in Poland. The four traits that were indicated most frequently as relating to managerial success were Social (55.9% of participants); Independent (67.6%); Tolerant (70.6%); and Active (73.5%).

When asked participants to indicate, on a 5-point scale (5 being most favourable), how successful their current Western European manager's performance was, over 58% indicated they were successful or very successful, with an average response of 3.62. On the other hand, less than 12% were dissatisfied with their Western managers: 8.8% of employees indicated that their Western manager was "not successful" and 2.9% indicated that their Western managers were "not successful at all". However, when asked whether they'd prefer to work with a Polish or Western manager in the future, 38.2% answered that they would prefer to work with a Polish manager, a similar percentage indicated that they are indifferent, while only 23.5% preferred to work with a Western manager.

We supplemented the Polish employees' surveys with interviews with five expat managers working in Poland. What we learned from these interviews tends to generally correspond to what we learnt from employees' surveys. Confirming our findings from the survey, Western managers believed that their Polish subordinates' international experience positively related to the quality of their interactions with them. The Western managers reported that they felt appreciated and respected by their Polish employees and that local employees tended to avoid conflict or disagreement with them. The interviewed managers confirmed the importance of commanding the local language; however, it was felt that the crucial part was not so much mastering the language but rather having some Polish vocabulary and improving their language skills consistently over time. They felt that in Poland, as in other countries they worked in, they gained more accep-

tance from local employees if they demonstrated willingness to learn the local language.

5. Findings and discussion

Our main aim in this study was to explore Polish employees' perceptions of Western (European) expatriate managers' leadership styles as compared to Polish managers. We were also able to contribute to the existing literature by discovering which traits are perceived as characteristic of successful managers in Poland, and examining which barriers may prevent expatriate managers in Poland from achieving higher effectiveness with their supervisees and, overall, to gauge the level of satisfaction that Polish employees have with Western managers. By collecting data from a diverse employee population and from expatriate managers we addressed the gap in the literature which so far has focused mainly on surveys and interviews with Polish managers.

Overall, we found that Polish employees and managers perceived marked differences between the styles and characteristics of Western expat managers versus Polish managers. Our findings indicate that Polish employees have fairly high appreciation of the expat managers they worked with. Of interest is that this attitude differed depending on whether the Polish employee worked abroad or not. While this result makes sense, it is an important empirical reminder that international exposure significantly shapes former Eastern Block countries' employee attitudes toward foreign managers and, possibly, affects their actual working relations with them as well.

In terms of explanations, one mechanism that comes readily to mind pertains to the 'contact hypothesis', which was shown to influence group dynamics in general and attitudes among culturally diverse organisation members, in particular (see Rosenblatt/Worthley/MacNab 2013). In short, this hypothesis states that, under the right conditions, more familiarity and more frequent interaction between members of different social groups will result in more positive attitudes from each group members toward the other.

Employees reported that the most prominent barrier they perceived as hindering their daily working experiences with expatriate Western managers was *cultural differences*, indicated by a majority of employees. Other issues that were seen as problems by nearly half of the respondents were *language* and *management style*. The prevalence of cultural differences as a barrier clearly indicates the importance of providing cross-cultural management training to both local employees as well as expatriate managers; recent studies indicate that even relatively short training interventions can create meaningful improvements in cultural competency and that these improvements are especially pronounced among individuals with little or no international experience (Eisenberg et al. 2013).

Expatriate managers are perceived by Polish employees as “people-oriented”, whereas Polish managers are seen as “task-oriented”. Additionally, Polish managers were rated very favourably on “manager’s authority” which we interpret as an indication that Polish employees are comfortable with the relatively autocratic managerial style in Poland (Maczynski et al. 2010). Of special interest is the result on managerial integrity, a dimension where Polish managers had strongly lagged compared to Western managers. This corresponds with the GLOBE findings reviewed above (Brodbeck et al. 2000), which reported that Polish managers were lower than their counterparts in Europe on the *integrity* dimension. Our findings may also relate to those of a study that reported concerns of MBA students in Poland over ethical issues at work, specifically those relating to recruitment and hiring, performance appraisal and promotion and abuse of authority (Ryan 2006).

We can draw several conclusions from table 2: first, which is in line with the results in table 1, it appears that the traits associated with the two managers’ groups are fairly distinct, indicating that Western managers are rated as more relationship-adept and better in the interpersonal dimensions while Polish managers are seen as more competent in several task-oriented dimensions. Secondly, considering the traits indicated by Polish employees as ones that are important to possess in order to succeed in Poland, it appears that, overall, Western managers’ personality profile is seen as better fitting for successful leadership in Poland than the profiles of local managers: most of the former traits were associated with success, while most of the latter traits were not.

Given that in four of the managerial competencies especially marked differences are noted, with over 50% of participants indicating that Western managers are better, one of the applied conclusions and, indeed, recommendations of this study is that Polish companies’ executives should take it as an area of priority to invest in enhancing their Polish managers’ integrity, tolerance, flexibility and feedback giving. These managerial competencies determine how effective an organisation is and, consequently, how successful it will be.

Our findings suggest that Polish employees associate effective management with traits that are mostly characteristic of the Supportive Leadership style (for a related study see Lang et al. 2013). Furthermore, they indicate that these traits are more often found in expatriate, rather than Polish, managers.

These conclusions are very much in line with self-assessment and comparative studies on Polish managers mentioned above (Uzycki 2009). While both managers and employees in Poland seem to be aware of certain deficiencies in the leadership style of Polish managers, there is certain ambivalence in employees’ attitudes. Thus, although Western managers were rated more favourably on many dimensions, it seems that cultural and social differences are strong enough so that more Polish employees prefer to work with local managers than Western

ones, perhaps due to Polish employees desire to be higher on Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), which can be interpreted as a desire for higher level of familiar elements and lower levels of dealing with new work elements. Polish managers surveyed in the GLOBE study (House et al. 2004) indicated a preference for having a higher Uncertainty Avoidance (values 'As Should Be') than they currently have (practices, or 'As Is'). Thus, while Polish employees and middle-managers recognise that Western managers possess more desirable leadership attributes, this preference is offset by the desire for more familiar workplace environment, which is delivered by Polish manager, with their familiar management style.

Den Hartog et al. study (1997) points to a related explanation of an existing gap between Polish employees' desires for a certain management styles on the one hand and their readiness in practice, on the other hand, to espouse and work under such styles. Den Hartog et al. (1997), whose study was based on the GLOBE methodology and data, surveyed middle managers in Poland and found that they preferred to have organisations with much lower power distance compared to what they had (in the mid 1990s) and that they indicated that Polish organisations should be much higher in Humane Orientation compared to what they were at the time. Humane Orientation is a value dimension that refers to social encouragement and rewarding of behaviours displaying fairness, altruism, generosity and care to others (House et al. 2004). Similar results were reported by a team of GLOBE researchers (Bakacsi et al. 2002), who found the Poland resembled in this way several other former East European countries and, more recently, by Catana/Pucko/Krzykala-Schaefer (2013).

The interviewed expat managers, who described the typical Polish employee as one that works best under directive leadership style and indicated that, compared to Western employees, Poles are more dependent on a strong authority figures, loans further support for this 'dual state of mind'. It seems that Polish employees are still more comfortable with leaders who display directive and authoritarian leadership styles. This profile characterises managerial styles in countries that were for many decades under a Soviet influence.

The above conclusions echo analysis by other researchers of the Polish management system who concluded that excessively dominant centralised planning, which typified Soviet-era management shaped behaviour that did not support responsibility taking and developing independent decision making skills (Maczynski et al. 1993; 1994; 2010). Additionally, according to the GLOBE project, the Participative Leadership Style although viewed positively was rated less favourably in Eastern Europe than in Germanic Europe, Nordic Europe and Anglo culture clusters. While in most culture clusters Self-Protective and Autonomous leadership styles were perceived rather negatively, respondents from Eastern Europe accepted them slightly more than those from Western countries (House et al. 2004).

To summarise, our tentative conclusion is that while Poland has been politically independent for over 20 years now and, as an EU member for the past decade, it has increasingly harmonised its organisational practices with those in other EU countries, its organisational environment and managerial attitudes and practices are still in transition and differ from those found in Western European countries. At the same time, the desire among Polish managers and employees to see changes that will bring the management style in Poland to fit closer with practices that they observed among Western European managers is clearly noted.

6. Implications

Our study has several implications for expat companies and managers who operate in Poland:

- A. To be more effective, Western managers who are sent to work in Poland need to be made aware of and understand the Polish workforce ambivalence about leadership values, where they desire more Western management style but may not be yet fully comfortable with it. Expatriate managers going over to Poland need some training to help them adapt their style, to a degree, to the combination that works well for Polish employees. Specifically, it would be beneficial to equip expat managers with some Polish language training and enhance those attributes that Polish employees feel that local managers are superior on relative to Western managers.
- B. When choosing Polish employees, HR managers in foreign companies need to be aware that those who have prior experience of working with Western managers will take less time to adopt to expat managers than those employees lacking such experience. This would be especially important in the early phases of expat managers' role in Poland since our findings suggest that Polish employees who did not work abroad could have more resistance to Western management style and it would be desirable to minimise resistance levels while the manager is learning the local culture.
- C. Create training and coaching programmes for Polish employees of Western subsidiaries that would help them understand the logic behind the different managerial practices used by Western managers. This would help employees adapt better to Western leadership style, while, at the same time, decreasing the uncertainty and novelty that working with Western managers carries with it.

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