CHARISMA AND EMPATHY OF UNIVERSITY MANAGERS AND TEACHERS

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Abstract

Universities need to develop themselves as institutions of education, research, wisdom and breakthrough, but also as open managerial systems, with their own processes, dynamics, limits, and growth potential. The skills and competences of the university managers predict the skills and competences of the teachers, and these predetermine the competences of students. Thereto the need for inspiring and responsible behavior at universities underlines the importance of charisma and empathy as the demanding but appropriate (perhaps essential) competences of university staff. Based on these ideas, a paper searches theoretical and practical aspects of charisma and empathy, their possible mixture, and inspirations on how these competences could be improved at the universities from the managerial point of view. Methodological part of the paper supports the overall importance of charisma and empathy of university managers and teachers by presenting results of two questionnaire surveys participated by students of University of Žilina, Slovak Republic. Final part of the paper presents a set of recommendations in the field of helping managers and teachers when cultivating their charismatic and empathic competence.

Key words: charisma, empathy, motivation, university teachers, surveys

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Introduction

At present, dynamics of global tensions and needs of knowledge-based economy load new visions, missions and roles to universities (Bakoglu et al., 2016), with guiding education in a proactive approach (Hinton, 2012), deepening applicable research, and disclosing possibilities for real co-existence and cooperation around the world. In such re-building processes, university managers "have to find the most efficient ways to balance their university's position," (Stukalina, 2015). They have to realize that the strongest pillar of the universities' future success consists in their personnel, especially teachers, scientists, and managers. Personality profile or profile of skills and competences of university staff reinforces the importance of university and importance of the teachers who act as drivers, influencers, trainers,

facilitators, harmonizers, and confirmers of the student's personality. Mentioned roles could be performed effectively only when based on both the technical or intellectual part of the university managers' and teachers' potency and their social, progressive and positive behavior. This indicates that the competent university management has to asses, understand and grow the university managers' and teachers' personality, and especially their motivation and will for own progress. A need for *prosocial, i.e. cultivating and motivating behavior* of the university managers and teachers arises now.

Based on mentioned above, an *intention of paper* consists in search of theoretical and practical aspects of charisma and empathy and their possible mixture at the universities. In addition to analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalization of theoretical opinions, various attributes and overall importance of charisma and empathy of university managers and teachers are supported also by results of two questionnaire surveys participated by students of University of Žilina, Slovak Republic. Obtained results show that the students really confirm the positives of both searched terms, and at the same time, understand their negative aspects and complexity on the part of teachers. Connecting theoretical and practical known, the final part of paper presents a set of recommendations on how the universities could (or better: should) help managers and teachers when cultivating their charismatic and empathic competence.

1   Charisma and empathy at the university

Charisma is almost indefinable, as if only a hypothetical, imaginative characteristics or competence that approaches and attracts others to the person. It is a certain fluid that motivates others to follow a charismatic personality, share with the charismatic all positive and negative feelings and attitudes, and move together the dreams into the reality.

Charisma is legitimated by the respect that people have for the attributes of individuals (Clifton, Hamm & Parker, 2015: 255). However, "charisma as a form of personal strength or influence – sometimes with hypnotic effects – can serve not only good but also bad intents," (Adair, 2006: 218), because the level of charismatic competence lies in the hands of the individuals themselves and depends only on whether they want or will build and develop it (Caudron, 1998) and whether they will use it pro-socially or egoistically. It means, positive impacts of charisma have to be thoroughly carried out and be so much strong that they can overcome the negative aspects of the managers and teachers with 'bad' or egoistic charisma.

Empathy, i.e. empathic concern, as next phenomenon searched in this paper, is 'other oriented' in that it involves feelings for the other – feelings of sympathy, compassion,

tenderness, sorrow, etc. (Batson, Ahmad & Stocks, 2011). A person projects one's thoughts and feelings with an intention of asserting one's individuality or seeking understanding and empathy from others (Kim & Sherman, 2007) and simultaneously hopes that desires, motives and reasons disclosed in/from the others are decrypted correctly and with the utmost truth.

Prosocial behavior, especially the empathy, when is connected with and confirmed by a cultivating and inspirational behavior, especially the applied charisma, put the personality of university managers and teachers on the level of objectively acclaimed master and spontaneously followed experts, i.e. *great academicians*. However, it is not easy for them to achieve full and harmonic connection of charisma and empathy. On the one hand, the charisma and empathy can develop and make more attractive the personal, pedagogical and expert profile of university managers and teachers. On the other hand, the intentional development of their charisma and empathy is sometimes like an unwanted, undesirable or even rejected by them (because they do not understand the positives of these competences, or they are too busy for trying to develop such competences, etc.). In other words: despite the fact that both these phenomena have a common intention, i.e. to understand others (managers, teachers and students) and help in their effort, their content itself, chosen paths, utilized means, tools, and many other nuances, are different.

2   Relations of charisma and empathy

In regard to an importance and desirable impacts of the charisma and empathy application at the progressive universities, "new learning opportunities have to be created along with a supportive climate in which change, divergent thinking and professional growth are emphasized," (Cekmecelioglu & Ozbag, 2016: 244). In such situation, the university can transform itself to a *charismatic and empathic organization*. According to Mullins (2007), in charismatic organization, the authority is legitimized by belief in the personal qualities of the leader and their strength of personality and inspiration (p. 82). This can instigate the university management to activate the charismatic and empathetic competence of university and faculties leaders (rector, vice-rectors, deans, vice-deans, heads of departments, etc.) as well the teachers because of "it is possible to develop elements of charisma … only it is needed to avoid danger of natural dependence of the followers," (Conger, 1999). It is also possible to develop (at least basic) elements of empathy; only it is needed to avoid danger of failure in mastering the apathy or demotivation occurred inside the teacher (Blašková & Blaško, 2017).

According to Donovan (1997), "it seems likely charisma is reducible to empathy, since the end result would be indistinguishable. On the other hand, if charisma is a quality of the charismatic, it seems more plausible that the same variables are employed as those which generate empathy, but that they interact differently," (1997: 459). Clifton, Hamm & Parker (2015) even in this field opine that 'empathetic authority' is a better term because charisma is often associated with divinely-granted attributes while empathy reflects the capacity that most people have for vicariously experiencing and responding to the feelings of others (p. 256).

However, if the university's top management can harmonize these characteristics, i.e. apply their charismatic and empathic competencies effectively, and transfer their inspirational activity to other managers and teachers, the university can gradually become much more successful. But, top managers must ensure that they do not leave too much influence in the wrong hands, and the generated enthusiasm is not a destructive force of the university future.

3　Methods

Charisma can become an instigative factor, positively influencing the behavior and processes at the university. On the other hand, properly applied managers' charisma can also help teachers to make it easier to establish relationships with other teachers, to maintain them at a high level, and to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings. At the same time, it will allow teachers to work with colleagues who can be relied upon and with who the bold scientific plans can be carried out. According to Cornelius-White (2007), charisma implies that teachers truly care about their students. For this reason, we decided to obtain students opinions on the importance of charisma and empathy and their possible application at the university.

3.1　Survey on empathy

On the sample of 100 students of University of Žilina, we performed a questionnaire survey on academic empathy in January – February, 2017. We focused on students of study program Management. A survey was participated by 67 female and 33 male. The Likert's 5-point scale was used in classic questions and questions with pre-defined statements.

Through two questions, we asked students to evaluate the *importance of dimensions of empathy* that the university teacher should have. The questions contained a pre-defined list of these empathetic dimensions: affective, identifying, cognitive, evaluative, altruistic and regulative. The purpose of first question was to identify those dimensions that the respondent considers important (the first part of Table 1). In a subsequent question, the task of respondent

consisted in choice the only one of these dimensions – the most important dimension of university teacher's empathy (the second part of Table 1). The results show that students consider the most important a cognitive and altruistic dimension of empathy; these two dimensions are very closely related and even interconnected. It is very important for students that the teacher (who collaborates with them and educates them) tries to understand the feelings they are experiencing during their studies and tries to help them naturally.

Tab. 1: Importance of key dimensions of empathy

Dimensions of empathy	Overall importance of dimensions		Most important dimension	
	Frequency	% of all	Frequency	% of all
Affective	9	9.00	0	0.00
Identifying	41	41.00	5	5.00
Cognitive	82	82.00	40	40.00
Evaluative	42	42.00	14	14.00
Altruistic	76	76.00	38	38.00
Regulative	19	19.00	3	3.00
Total			*100*	*100.00*

Source: own study

Subsequently, we asked students on agree with the statement that the teacher *reduces his or her professionalism* by the empathic approach to them. Up to 89% of students (absolutely or rather) disagreed with this negative assumption. We consider very positively that no student has agreed with this statement. Subsequently, we have completed this closed question on an open question where we asked students to express their open views on the subject. The students absolutely agreed that the empathy is a supportive for their teacher's professionalism: students cooperate much better with a teacher who uses empathy in their mutual relationship in comparison with the teacher who does not have it. Most of these respondents also expressed that they *achieve better results* especially in cooperation with the empathetic teacher.

3.2. Survey on charisma

We have decided to perform also a further questionnaire survey, focused on charisma. Survey was realized in September 2017 on the sample of 100 students and absolvents of University of Žilina (of which 63 students and 37 absolvents). From the viewpoint of study forms and programs, we focused on all groups of students and absolvents: bachelors, masters and PhDs of study programs Management, Informatics and Computer Engineering.

In the survey, we defined seven positives of the charismatic teacher's behavior, based on previous surveys and opinions of other authors. We asked the respondents to say whether or not they agree with these assertions. In Table 2, the students were the most affirmed (up to 84% of them, of which 40% fully agree) that the effect of charisma consists in more positive relationship between teacher and student. Another important achievement is the agreement that the teacher through charisma can bring his/her enthusiasm to students (up to 79% of students, of which 48% agree absolutely). From these results we can see that students feel they themselves are pushing forward to get a higher performance and develop their own qualities.

Tab. 2: Positives of charismatic influence of teacher on students

Scale	Absolutely agree	Rather agree	Agree/disagree	Rather disagree	Absolutely disagree
Statement	**Due to charisma, the relationship between teacher and students is more positive**				
% of students	40.0	44.0	11.3	3.0	0.0
Statement	**Teacher can transfer his/her enthusiasm to students**				
% of students	48.0	31.0	19.0	0.0	0.0
Statement	**Teacher sees problems from students' viewpoint and students from the teacher's viewpoint**				
% of students	16.0	23.0	39.0	17.0	3.0
Statement	**Teacher charisma encourages students' creativity and courage to more challenging projects**				
% of students	40.0	36.0	18.0	2.0	0.0
Statement	**Teacher charisma involves students in a partnership relations for joint improvement**				
% of students	19.0	40.0	29.0	8.0	2.0
Statement	**Teacher charisma activates students' autonomy and readiness for their future career**				
% of students	20.0	33.0	33.0	10.0	2.0
Statement	**Charisma of a teacher has a positive effect on the cultivation of students' charisma**				
% of students	22.0	54.0	17.0	4.0	1.0

Source: own study

These findings are largely a challenge for higher education to develop a charismatic influence to students, and thus positively influence students not only in more effective mastery their study but also in shape their personality and chances to increase the frequency of success.

3.3 Relations of charisma and empathy

According to Donovan (1997), "the precise relationship of charisma and empathy requires further and future clarification," (p. 459). Utilizing this inspiration, we included also questions on a possible combination of charisma and empathy into the questionnaire. As seen in Table 3, the confirmation of our claim (confirmed by 56% of respondents) is very pleasing that *it is*

possible to achieve a successful combination of charisma and empathy on the part of university managers and teachers.

Tab. 3: Combination of charisma and empathy

Scale	Absolutely agree	Rather agree	Agree/disagree	Rather disagree	Absolutely disagree
Statement	**It is possible to achieve a successful combination of charisma and empathy of university senior staff and teachers**				
% of students	15.0	41.0	28.0	10.0	1.0
Statement	**Combination of charisma and empathy is inspirational and beneficial for students**				
% of students	42.0	34.0	10.0	7.0	2.0

Source: own study

An interesting result is that up to 39% of students have disagreed with this claim. Probably the students had a previous experience with a teacher who tried to be friendly to them at the expense of his/her other desirable qualities. Thus, we can admit that if the manager or teacher cannot manage to *give the right degree* of empathy and charisma to other teachers or students, the resulting combination of these strong competencies will not work effectively.

In this regard, the second part of Table 3 presents that 76% of respondents (absolutely or rather) agree with an assumption about *inspirational impacts* of these phenomena combination on students. Such a successful combination can cultivate their behavior and personality even in later working and private lives. This confirms that despite the extreme difficultness of this developmental process – process focused on achieve this combination, students believe in and call for this strong mixture at the university.

For deeper searching, we put into *relation these two questions:* a) possibility of successful combination of charisma and empathy of university managers and teachers; b) positive impact of this combination on teachers' work and student results. Table 4 presents that the greater the positive effect of charisma and empathy is expressed, the higher is the assumption (belief) of students that the managers and teacher will be able to achieve this mix.

In further calculation, done through a chi-square test in a significance level 0.05%, we compared the calculated value at degree of freedom 12 with a table one that is 21.026. Because the calculated chi-square value was higher (38.224), we can talk about the *proven dependency between these factors*. Even, it is of great significance (.0000). Correlation points out that it is beneficial for teacher motivation and student results to support the development of empathy and charisma of all university staff.

When relating our results to other surveys, e.g. survey of social skills led by Milaszewicz & Nagaj (2017), conducted on the sample of 592 students of 4 European countries, confirms

that helping people in need is one's duty. This was expressed by 31.9% of the respondents from Lithuania, 21.5% from Poland, 19.7% from Slovakia, and by 16.9% from Spain.

Tab. 4: Cross-table on combination of charisma and empathy and positive impact

			Successful combination of charisma and empathy of university senior staff and teachers					*Total*
			Absolutely agree	Rather agree	Agree/ disagree	Rather disagree	Absolutely disagree	
Positive impact on teachers' work and student results	Absolutely agree	Count	10	18	6	4	0	*38*
		Expected Count	6.1	15.6	11.8	4.2	0.4	*38.0*
	Rather agree	Count	6	18	5	3	0	*32*
		Expected Count	5.1	13.1	9.9	3.5	0.3	*32.0*
	Agree/ disagree	Count	0	5	16	2	1	*24*
		Expected Count	3.8	9.8	7.4	2.6	0.2	*24.0*
	Rather disagree	Count	0	0	4	2	0	*6*
		Expected Count	1.0	2.5	1.9	0.7	0.1	*6.0*
	Absolutely disagree	Count	0	0	0	0	0.0	*0*
		Expected Count	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	*0.0*

Source: own study

On the other hand, in the field of support interactions, research of Don & Hammond (2017), performed on 80 respondents, confirms that support seekers' motivation and behavior were the primary contribution to effective support interactions. And because of the closer relations among the university staff and between the staff and students increase the academic results, through the charisma and empathy exertion, the university position can be stronger.

Conclusion

The wise economy forces universities to examine critically their performance, and puts permanently increased demands on the university management. The quality of managers' and teachers' competences predetermines the resultative competency of the university and all its students. In this regard, following measures can be recommended for the universities:

- Accept the importance of successfully exerted charisma and empathy on the side of managers and teachers, define an action team, and provide a budget for this process;
- Work out and communicate a persuasive vision of potential impacts of the charisma and empathy when intentionally applied from the side of managers and teachers;
- Analyze the current level of charisma and empathy of both managers and teachers on the principles of their willingness and sensitiveness of analytic techniques;

- Work out a map of frequency of the most important disposers of charisma and empathy at particular faculties (managers, teachers) and rectorate (managers, staff);

- Transfer an inner energy on defined managers and teachers in their projecting and planning the adequate methods and timetable for training in charisma and empathy;

- Direct (personal, targeted) assistance, facilitation and consultation for trained managers and teachers in the necessary cases;

- Involving students, other managers and teachers into the process of managers' and teachers' gradual application of charisma and empathy;

- Permanent support and motivational feedback of achieved results and impacts on the side of trained managers and teachers, and subsequently touched students.

Of course, it is necessary to help participated managers and teachers when project and build grounds and perspectives of/for their future academic action and career: application of learned characteristics of charisma and empathy (taken from the role-model managers) enables the managers and teachers not only to progress their own future success but also to share and disseminate the prosocial behavior to the others (managers, teachers, students) and all society.

Acknowledgment

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