

LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION AND UNION COMMITMENT IN LATVIA: DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

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The aim of the paper is to analyse the contiguity between the strategic management and leadership of Latvian trade unions and to assess member participation in decision making, communication between members and union leaders, and union commitment. The tasks of the study are to analyse literature about leadership peculiarities in trade unions, and member participation in trade union management; to justify the methodology of the study; to analyse the results of the study in order to obtain conclusions about leadership in Latvian trade unions in the context of strategic management.

The theoretical and methodological basis have been constructed using scientific literature, publications and online resources issued by the European Union countries as well as Canada, Finland, Australia and the United States. The authors have used a non- experimental quantitative research design that includes a cross-sectional design: comparative and correlational design. The results (N = 452) have been acquired by the means of a questionnaire, comparing two random groups' opinions on the research question: trade union leaders (N = 170) and members (N = 282).

In the literature review, the following issues have been analysed: the process of leadership in trade unions, its distinctive features in comparison to other types of organizations, the assessment of the impact between leaders and followers (emphasising the leadership role in the formation of a collective action), the interaction between leaders and members of trade unions forming a shared leadership to ensure democratic process management. The research provides an evaluation of contemporary (2003–2013) research on leadership and communication in trade unions.

The research results analysis: the literature analysis showed that in trade union leadership investigations most attention has been paid to analysing leaders' main personality characteristics and the extent to which leadership affects union members' satisfaction with the organisation, however, leadership aspects in regards to communication have been little researched. The survey results indicate that there are statistically significant correlations between leadership and strategic management, meanwhile discovering that there are strategy at the enterprise trade union level is mostly influenced by enterprise trade union leaders' opinions, showing lack of democratic leadership in these organisations. The overall level of enterprise trade union members' participation in making decisions can be evaluated as medium or low. The results indicate an ineffective two-way communication between trade union members and enterprise trade union leaders, revealing a leadership problem: industry trade union leaders cannot or do not want to find out members' opinions on significant issues about the trade union's activities. The leadership issue affects member commitment, which can be viewed as medium or low. The discovered problems show the possible directions of Latvian trade union strategic management improvements.

Keywords: *Trade unions, leaders, leadership, communication, strategic management.*

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations, as well as trade unions, have a significant role in the development of any democratic society. For Latvian trade unions to develop and survive in the modern changing environment, they need to develop strategic management. Whereas, to ensure it, new management methods are required, but those have not been designed for the strategic management of trade unions, nor comprehensive research about strategic management in trade unions has been performed, research that would include such significant strategic management aspects as leaders'

attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, it is topical to study if trade union chairpersons are leaders and, if they are not, what the potential solutions for improving the leadership skills are. Two-way communication is a critical strategy implementation requirement as it highlights the activity or passivity of members as followers, which in turn is linked to the chairpersons' leadership skills. The **aim of the paper** is to analyse the contiguity between the strategic management and leadership of Latvian trade unions and to assess member participation in decision making, communication between

members and union leaders, and union commitment. The **tasks of the paper** are: to analyze literature about leadership peculiarities in trade unions and member participation in trade union management; to justify the methodology of the study; to analyse the results of the study in order to draw conclusions about the leadership of Latvian trade unions in the context of strategic management. The **novelty of the research** is approved by the fact that contiguity between trade union leadership and communication has been little researched so far, as well as that there is ineffective communication of Latvian trade union leaders with union members, which impacts negatively on the union commitment.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research has been obtained by applying scientific literature, publications and online resources of the countries of the European Union, as well as Canada, Finland, Australia, and the United States of America. Modern research (2003–2013) on leadership and communication in trade unions was evaluated. The research has a non-experimental quantitative research design comprising cross-sectional design: correlational and comparative design. The results (N=452) were obtained applying a survey questionnaire. Opinions about research issue were compared in two random sample groups: trade union officers (N=170) and members (N=282). The questionnaire was designed for the data summary and the analysis of the findings to be able to distinguish two groups of respondents: lower level trade union leaders' group and union members' group. The justification for such an approach was the desire to obtain an objective view about the opinion of both groups, as well as the opportunity to compare these opinions. The research sample can be classified as a combined sampling method. The general sample group was real industry/professional and general trade unions operating in Latvia. 453 respondents participated in the survey, out of which 170 were trade union leaders and 282 were union members. Calculating according to the formula, it was concluded that the number corresponds to the required sample size. **The results of the research** approved that scientists focus on studying the main personality traits of leaders regarding trade union research, to what extent leadership is affected by the union members' satisfaction with the organization, but leadership and communication contiguity is seldom studied. The findings of the survey revealed that there is a statistically significant correlation between leadership and strategic management characteristics. At the same time this correlation reveals that there are strategy implementation problems in Latvian trade unions in leadership and communication with regards to information exchange. The discovered problems mark the directions for the improvement of the strategic management of Latvian trade unions.

Scientific analysis. Various terminology is used in the scientific literature on trade union management regarding the terms 'leader' and 'manager', but both terms are used. For example, academicians K. Fullagar, J. Barling, E. Kelloway, P. Clark and other academicians use the term 'leader', but T. Hannigan, J. Dunlop, M. Salamon use the word 'officer'. While sometimes the term 'steward' is used to refer to trade union officers in enterprises.

The literature analysis provided evidence for the statement that leadership in a trade union is a process that affects the operations of the members of organized groups, operations

that are aimed at attaining trade union goals (Clark, 2009). This definition reveals leadership as a process, the result of which is attaining goals, and to a trade union as a group of organized followers who are affected by the leader and the leader's behaviour. Research of trade unions as organizations started relatively recently – some of the first researchers that began studying the topic in the 60-ies of the previous century were J. Child, R. Loveridge and M. Warner (Dempsey, Brewster, 2009). The power typology designed by J. French and B. Raven was comparatively significant (Raven, 2001; Brauer, Bourhis, 2006), because the existence of congresses, committees and boards and decision making in them impact on the proportions of the type of the leaders' power. Research approves that expert and referent power are positively correlated to employee satisfaction and work execution; trust is most likely related to referent and expert power, conformity is most likely linked to legitimate and reward power, but resistance – to coercive power (Yukl, 2005). The authors of the present research consider that trade union leaders should not execute coercive power because it can cause member resistance and dislike toward the officer. On the contrary, members may use reward, coercive and informational power to the trade union officers as thus they may impact on the leaders' behaviour for their own benefit. Power issues are very topical as reduction of the democracy level in structural units can be observed (Rigby, Smith, Brewster, 2006).

Leadership is considered from several aspects, but the following leadership features are mentioned as the most significant: leadership is a process, it includes impact and common goals, and leadership is met in a group (*Northouse, 2009*). Leadership is a process of mutual impact between leaders and their followers in order to attain organizational goals with the help of change. Leadership can also be defined as a process through which the effectiveness of the followers' performance is increased and simultaneously the followers' motivation is maintained or enhanced, as well as their work satisfaction and other psychological welfare ways (Popper, 2004; Alimo-Metcalf, Alban- Metcalfe 2004). The process of impact is significant as a leadership cornerstone because in this process the leader communicates new ideas, receives followers' support and motivates them to change; as well as the goals – the desirable outcomes of human behaviour, in the defining of which both the leader and the followers are involved (Lussier, Achua 2001). Thus, leadership is an active and various process and to implement it, the leader is required to possess different knowledge and skills, for example, good communication skills, ability to initiate changes, ability to lead the organization to goal attainment. This is also approved by leadership research in enterprises, which focuses on the role of leadership in developing team performance (Darlington, 2009; Lichtenstein, 2010). Team performance may facilitate the solution of such issue as power and democracy in trade unions, so that trade unions would implement deliberative democracy and successful conflict resolution, which is often linked with the management of unbalanced positions of the social power (employer and employee relations) (Nirenberg 2004; Bogg, 2011). The significance of the previously discussed issues is approved by the research on the mutual impact process between leaders and their followers (Popper, 2004; Alimo-Metcalf, Alban- Metcalfe 2004). In comparison with leadership in business, leadership in trade unions is little

researched because there are no comprehensive studies about the personality, functions and roles of trade union leaders, nor about leadership styles. Since the early forties of the previous century leadership traits of the top level trade union officers, their main personality traits and to what extent leadership affects the member satisfaction with the union, as well as contiguity between leaders' behaviour and their ambitions have been studied (Knowles, 2007; Northouse, 2009). T. Hannigan has defined three roles of the national level trade union officer: steward, officer and leader. (Hannigan, 1998).

Based on the above discussed theoretical basis, *the authors of the present research have designed the definition of the trade union leader*: A trade union leader is an officer elected by the members, who through the development of an environment favourable for the followers, provides execution of the trade union functions and attainment of its goals.

Trade unions are specific and complex organizations. Academicians P. Clark and L. Grey admit that the experience and personality traits of trade union leaders should be equal to the experience and personality traits of the leaders of large enterprises (Dempsy, Brewster, 2009). Researchers emphasise the role of leadership in developing the team behaviour of trade unions (Darlington, 2009; Lichtenstein, 2010; Bogg, 2011), which determines the interaction between leaders and members (Hammer, Bayazit, Wazeter, 2009), which in turn provides grounds for the need for shared collective leadership to ensure democratic process management (Cain, 2012). Shared collective leadership is considered as a democratic management of processes. Therefore, it is emphasised that leadership in trade unions should be analysed, first of all, in the context of leaders and their followers because followers' activities, attitude and expectations impact the leader's behaviour (Cain, 2012). The summarized and analysed theories (Daft, 2005) and contemporary research about the significance of communication in the management processes (Alimo-Metcalfe, Alban-Metcalfe, 2004; Asmuß, Svennevig, 2009); communication in managing trade unions (Glass, 2003; Burchielli, 2008; Darlington, 2009; Kumar, Lucio, Rose, 2013); member commitment to unions (Johari, Ghazali, 2011) approve the need for considering the leadership issue in relation to communication, especially internal communication issues.

For example, the responsibilities of the local trade union officers in Great Britain are: negotiations with the enterprise management and managers of different structural units; decision making within their competence; executing such leadership that enhances unity within the trade union. A significant responsibility is transmitting information between the trade union and the enterprise management, as well as checking the received information. Whereas, in Germany the responsibilities of the local trade union officers include inviting members to discuss topical issues of trade union operation, organizing and participating in various activities, informing members about the decisions of the trade union committee and its operational policy, consulting labour committees before signing contracts, informing members about the collective agreements. It is emphasized that local trade union officers are the closest to the members on everyday basis; therefore, it is exactly these leaders' attitude and behaviour that often determines the members' participation level and attitude to the union (Murakami 2000).

In 1977 American academicians E. Batston, L. Boraston and S. Frenkel designed a classification of leadership styles of local level trade union officers, in which two factors were used as criteria:

- The first factor indicates delegation and representation in everyday work.
- The second factor shows the extent to which the leader complies with the trade union principles (Barling, Fullagar, Kelloway, 1992).

The trade union principles listed by the academicians are unity, team spirit and social justice. Within the framework of both factors, the authors have developed four leadership styles of the local level trade union officers: leaders, cowboys, nascent leaders and populists. As much as possible, 'leaders' represent trade union members and fully comply with the trade union principles. Representatives of this style consider that it is sometimes useful to activate members; they communicate with top level trade union officers more frequently, and they are on more equal terms with enterprise managers than 'populists'. In comparison with 'populists', 'leaders/managers' rely more on informal negotiations, less on strikes and other formal conflict procedures. 'Cowboys' fully represent members, but they are busier with executing short-term goals and their conformity with trade union principles is low. The compliance level of 'populists' is also low; however they try to delegate and consult other trade union officers and members. In difference from 'leaders', 'populists' emphasise the need to realize the members' desires and the trade union serves only as a tool in attaining this goal. The conformity level of 'nascent leaders' to the trade union principles is high and they, similar to 'populists', delegate and consult other trade union officers and members. According to E. Batston, L. Boraston and S. Frenkel's conclusions of the research, in 1977 US trade unions were more represented by 'leaders' and 'populists', less by 'cowboys' and 'nascent leaders' (Barling, Fullagar, Kelloway, 1992). The results of the analysis of the information available to the author of the present research allow her to conclude that this approach to leadership styles is the only one designed especially for trade union leaders, not taking into account the theoretical approaches developed within the framework of business management.

The most typically encountered leadership style in trade unions is the transactional one, i.e. leaders are oriented to implementing traditional trade union functions – signing collective agreements and dealing with allegations. The transactional leader determines what and in what way trade union members should do to attain the organizational or individual goals. If the leader considers that support will not be granted, sometimes even the threat of punishment can be applied. Such transactions are a policy elements of many trade unions. The leaders' responsibilities are related to their ability to identify and fulfil the members' priorities. Leaders of this style successfully operate in stable organizations, the goal of which is to maintain the current position (Clark, 2009). Leaders of this style are effective in attaining goals, they possess skills to form positive relations and lead negotiations (Cain, 2012).

Considering theoretically approaches to the leadership of various levels of trade union leaders, the authors of the present paper state that, irrespective of the specifics of trade union leaders, the overall typical trend in trade union leadership

approaches is to take over the ones of business management. According to the authors of the present paper, there exist differences in the leadership of both, but they do not exclude the possibility to apply the leadership approaches developed in business management to trade union leadership. The present opinion is grounded in the research of foreign trade unions (Clark 2009; Cain, 2012), where researchers, when studying the operation of trade union leadership, indicate such styles as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire.

Studying communication in trade unions, it has been concluded that a star-type communication model is the most frequently applied model in trade unions. It can be explained by the fact that many trade union leaders have a tendency to “store” information and disseminate it only when they consider it necessary. Whereas, decentralized communication models, for example a circle and a web, reflect free information flow between union members. Centralised models foresee fast information dissemination, but union members have few opportunities to show initiative and creativity. Ensuring effective communication in the trade union has always been based on developing “we” feeling within the union group. If union members do not trust its leaders, the quality of bottom-up communication drops because the members consider that informing leaders will not lead to the necessary outcomes (Hannigan, 1998). P. Drucker has admitted that people who work in NGOs (also trade unions) must ask two questions to themselves, regarding unions. The first question is: “What information do I need to perform my duties well?”, but the second question is: “What information should I give to other staff so that they could perform their duties well?” Employees and union members should take the responsibility for what information they provide or do not provide to the leaders or other members. To large extent, effective communication ensures trust. Moreover, it is trust that is on the basis of the feeling of belongingness to the trade union (Drucker, 2007). T. Hannigan’s and P. Drucker’s opinions reveal contiguity between communication and trust in the leader: effective communication ensures trust, but a reverse effect can also be observed – if union members do not trust their leaders, the quality of bottom-up communication drops (see Figure 1).

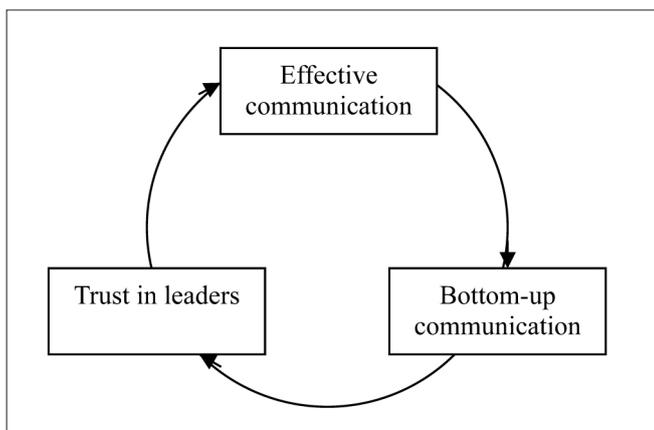


Figure 1. Contiguity between effective communication and trust in leaders

Source: author’s designed.

As research in the USA, Great Britain and other countries approves, trade union leaders should devote much time to

their communication with employees and members, but it does not always happen so, and communication does not always provide the desired results. Union leaders are largely responsible for ineffective communication and its created consequences, therefore, their task is to continuously improve their communication skills (Glass, 2003; Lucio, Stuart, 2009; Kumar, Lucio, Rose, 2013). The author of the present paper considers that to ensure effective communication, trade union leaders of all levels should use various communication channels and special attention should be paid to maintaining feedback with union members, partners and public as such.

Loyalty concepts mostly explain the different behaviour of union members – people are in trade unions due to different reasons and, therefore, their behaviour and actions are also different (Johari, Ghazali, 2011). Trade union academicians E. Kelloway and J. Barling have come to conclusions in their research that member commitment to their unions closely correlates with their participation in various trade union activities. High participation in trade union activities impacts positively on the overall effectiveness of trade unions. Thus, if a trade union wants to increase its member participation and to become more effective, union commitment should be increased (Clark, 2009). In the empirical research in Latvia the largest group of respondents was the group of trade union members (62.4% or 282 respondents), but the smallest – the group of union officers (37.6% or 170 respondents). As the survey results show, most of the respondents were in the age group 31–60. The survey results revealed the trend of aging among the members and the low involvement of young people. Regarding the education of the officers’ group, it can be concluded that higher education prevails – 70.6% had a bachelor’s or a master’s degree. A rather large number of officers (42.9%) have been trade union leaders already before Latvia regained its independence, which, of course, may impact on the understanding and attitude to leadership and communication, i.e. centralisation trends can be more exhibited in management.

The summary of Pearson chi square test indicated that there are 16 correlations between leadership and goal attainment indicators in the member group (N=282); there are 15 correlations between the leadership and strategic planning indicators and there are 14 correlations between leadership and defining the strategic direction. More detailed results are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 depicts that out of 15 possible correlations, there are 14 significant correlations ($p < 0.05$) between leadership and defining the strategic direction. There is a correlation between the frequency of consultations with the trade union chairperson and the existence of the mission and the vision, as well as the way in which the information is obtained about both. There is a correlation between the members’ opportunities to impact on the content of the decisions made in the enterprise and the industry trade union and the existence of the mission and the vision, as well as the way in which information about these issues is obtained. As well, there is correlation between the frequency of consultations with the trade union chairperson and the members’ desire to participate in developing the mission and the vision, and also between the opportunities of the members to impact on the decisions made in the industry trade union and the desire to participate in developing the mission and the vision.

Table 1. Correlation between leadership and indicators for defining the strategic direction

Leadership indicators				
Question asked		Opportunity to impact on the content of the decisions made in the enterprise trade union	Opportunity to impact on the content of the decisions made in the industry trade union	Frequency of consultations with the trade union chairperson
Indicators for defining the strategic direction	Existence of mission	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>
	Way in which information about the mission is obtained	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>
	Existence of vision	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>
	Way in which information about the vision is obtained	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>
	Desire to participate in the development of the mission and the vision	p>0.05	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>

Source: analysis of the findings of the author's designed survey of Latvian union members in 2011.

Table 2. Correlation between leadership and strategic planning indicators

Leadership criteria				
Question asked		Opportunity to impact on the content of the decisions made in the enterprise trade union	Opportunity to impact on the content of the decisions made in the industry trade union	Frequency of consultations with the trade union chairperson
Strategic planning indicators	Existence of goals	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>
	Way in which information about trade union goals is obtained	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>
	Desire to get involved in defining the goals	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>
	Need to inform society about the potential results if the goals are attained	p>0,05	p>0,05	p>0,05
	What is the enterprise management attitude to the trade union	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>
	Existence of strategy	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>	<u>P<0.05</u>

Source: analysis of the findings of the author's designed survey of Latvian union members in 2011.

Out of 18 possible correlations, 15 significant ($p<0.05$) correlations exist between the members' opportunities to impact on the content of the decisions made by the industry trade union and the existence of goals (see Table 2). There is a correlation between the opportunity of the members to impact on the content of the decisions made in the industry trade union and the existence of goals, the way in which information about the trade union goals is obtained, the desire to participate in defining goals, the enterprise management attitude to the trade union and the existence of the strategy. There is also a correlation between the opportunity to impact on the content of the decisions made by the industry and the enterprise trade unions and the mentioned indicators of strategic planning.

Results of Pearson chi square test in the trade union members' group ($N=282$) also revealed correlations between leadership and goal attainment indicators: out of 18 potential correlations, 16 are significant ($p<0.05$). It can be observed that there are more correlations between the frequency of consultations with the trade union chairperson and the goal attainment, which approves a significant importance of

communication in attaining the goals. The correlations exist between the opportunity to impact on the content of the decisions made by the industry trade union and the quality of the collective agreement, how fast the trade union can react when members' rights are violated, the salary increase for industry employees over the last 5 years, actions against the salary reduction in the industry in the last 2 years, the ability to protect employees from the enterprise management's unfair behaviour. Correlations also exist between the opportunity to impact on the content of the decisions made by the enterprise trade union and the existence of the collective agreement, how fast the trade union can react when members' rights are violated, actions against the salary reduction in the industry in the last 2 years, the ability to protect employees from the enterprise management's unfair behaviour.

The descriptive statistics of the survey findings highlighted the topical issues of leadership, communication and strategic management in Latvian trade unions. As the findings indicated, slightly more than half of the respondents – members (56.4%) and 72.9% of the respondents – officers are ready to participate in developing the goals of the industry trade union.

Comparatively, it could be observed that the potential activity regarding the trade union goals is higher among respondents than when defining the mission and the vision is considered. 42.6% of the respondents – members and 22.9% of the respondents – officers do not want to participate in developing the trade union goals, which characterises the members as potentially passive followers. The fact that slightly more than half of the respondents – members (56.4%) and 72.9% of the respondents – officers are ready to participate in developing the trade union goals approves of the members' motivation to participate in the goal development and also of the fact that so far they have very little participated in it, which, in turn, indicates that effective methods to involve members have not been used.

Analysing the obtained results, assessing the strategy implementation, the existence of ineffective two-way communication between the chairperson and the members can be observed, which simultaneously reveals a low level of participation because 24.8% of the members and 2.4% of the officers do not know whether the collective agreement has been signed. 75.9% of the officers consider that the collective agreement has been signed in the enterprise, but only 54.3% of the members demonstrate the same opinion. The number of respondents who consider that the collective agreement has not been signed is similar in both respondent groups (20.9% members and 21.8% officers). Such results indicate a negative trade union management approach because the trade union members should participate in developing the collective agreement and they should know its content.

Further, according to the aim of this paper, the authors analyse the results obtained from the assessment of strategy implementation regarding leadership, communication and union commitment aspects.

Member involvement in decision making. As Figure 2 depicts, the opinion about the opportunities to impact on the content of the decisions made by the *enterprise trade union* differs for both respondent groups.

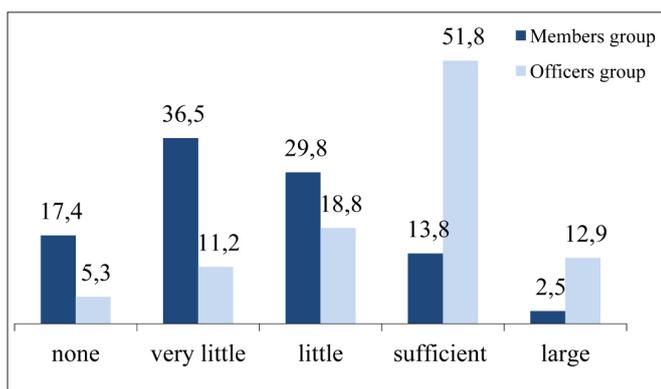


Figure 2 Distribution of the respondents' answers about the opportunity to impact on the content of the decisions made by the *enterprise trade union* (% of respondents, members group n = 282, officers group n = 170)

The answers "little", "very little" and "no" comprise 83.7% of the total response and should be evaluated as an explicit negative trend, which indicates that members have no opportunities or they do not want to impact on the content of the decisions made by the *enterprise trade union*. If members do not want to impact on the content of the decisions made

by the *enterprise trade union*, they can be considered passive followers. The answers of the *enterprise trade union* officers approve of the centralisation trend in decision making. As the survey findings indicate, the opportunity of the *enterprise trade union* officers to impact on the content of the decisions made in the *enterprise trade union* are much higher than that of the members (see Figure 2).

The opportunity of the members' group to impact on the content of the decisions made in the *industry/professional trade union* have been evaluated as large only by 1.1%, as sufficient – by 11.3%, as little – by 19.1%, as very little – by 31.6%, and a large number of respondents – 36.9% admit that they do not have such an opportunity. The answers "little", "very little" and "no" make 87.6% in total. Such response indicates insufficient communication between the *industry/professional trade unions* and their members.

Whereas, in the *enterprise trade union* officers' group slightly more respondents have evaluated such opportunities as large – 3.5%. Among others, 38.8% say that they have sufficient opportunities, 30.0% – little, 17.6% – very little, but only 9.4% of the respondents consider that they have no opportunities to impact on decision making. It is noteworthy that in the *enterprise trade union* officers' group also 9.4% of the respondents consider that they have no opportunities to impact on the content of the decisions made by the *industry/professional trade union*, which approves of insufficient involvement of *enterprise trade union* officers in the operation of the *industry/professional trade union*. In total, the answers "little", "very little" and "no" comprise 57%, which leads to another conclusion that part of the respondents do not want to be active followers and participate in decision making.

Listening to the members' opinion. Respondents have admitted that the *enterprise trade union* invites them to express their opinion about the content of the collective agreement. It has been admitted by 45.4% of the members' group and 75.3% of the officers' group. The opinion is also invited about the organization of public activities – 57.1% in the members' group and 67.6% in the officers' group, organization of a strike – 16.7% in the members' group and 30.0% in the officers' group, defining the trade union goals – 26.2% in the members' group and 41.2% in the officers' group say so. However, the answer "Other" has been selected by 11.7% in the members' group and more than half of these respondents have stated that the trade union does not at all invite members to express their opinion, which additionally approves of the decision making centralisation trend and the opinion of the authors of the present paper that members of Latvian trade unions are not sufficiently involved in decision making.

Respondents of the members' group have admitted that the *industry/professional trade union* invites them to express their opinion about the content of the general agreement (8.2%); organization of public activities (59.9%), which is the highest indicator; defining the trade union goals (24.8%), organizing a strike (22.3%). Respondents of the officers' group reveal that the *industry/professional trade union* invites them to express their opinion about the content of the general agreement (24.7%); organization of public activities (64.1%), which is the highest indicator; organizing a strike in the officers' group (35.9%); defining the trade union goals

in the officers' group (43.5%). The answer "Other" was selected by 14.2% in the members' group and 18.2% in the officers' group. Under the answer "Other" one third of the respondents has also revealed that the industry/professional trade union does not at all invite its members to express their opinion, which is a significant drawback in the operation of the industry/professional trade union, and that increases the member alienation from these organizations.

Assessment of the *frequency of communication with the trade union chairpersons* is depicted in Figure 3.

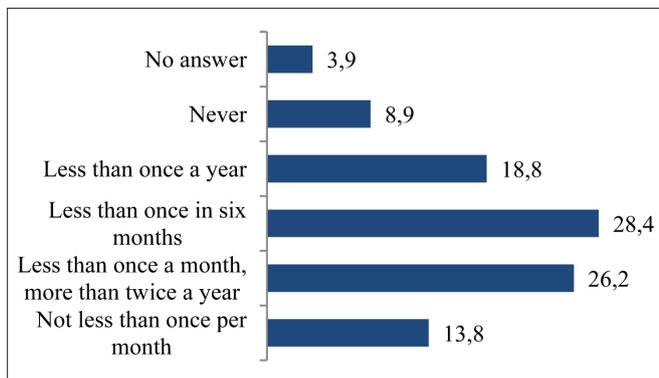


Figure 3. Distribution of the answers of the respondents of the members' group on how frequently they consult with the enterprise trade union chairpersons
(% of respondents, n = 282)

However, the analysis of the respondents' answers about the most frequently discussed issues, allows the authors to observe that the most frequently discussed issues in the officers' group at the *enterprise trade union meetings over the last year* have been organizing public activities – 62.4%, issues related to the content of the collective agreement – 61.8%, issues about the legal labour relations – 58.2% and issues about the situation in the enterprise – 57.6%. The respondents of the members' group mentioned the following issues as the most frequently discussed ones: issues related to the content of the collective agreement – 37.6%, situation in the enterprise – 35.5% and organization of public activities – 28.0%. In addition, 27.7% of the respondents in the members' group and 2.9% of the respondents in the officers' group admitted that they did not know what issues had been discussed at the enterprise trade union meetings. These respondents can be characterised as passive followers who are not interested in what is happening in the trade union. It is significant that both respondents' groups have admitted that special attention is not paid to defining trade union goals at these meetings: 35.5% in the officers' group and only 13.8% in the members' group have admitted that this issue is being discussed. In total, the answers of both respondents' groups are rather different though a little explanation is provided by the members' group's free answers in the choice "Other". Majority of these respondents have emphasised that there are no trade union meetings in the enterprise.

Way of obtaining information. Respondents' answers indicate that, most frequently in the members' group, 34.4% of the entire sample obtain information about the news in the industry/professional trade union from informal communication with the trade union chairperson, 29.1% obtain it from the industry/professional trade union homepage but

only 26.6% – at the enterprise trade union meetings. Whereas, 18.8% obtain this information from the local trade union, 17.7% – from the trade union newsletter or booklet, 16.3% – electronically from the industry/professional trade union, but only 10.3% – at the industry/professional trade union meetings. However, in the officers' group the distribution of answers is as follows: 51.8% of the respondents obtain information electronically from the industry/professional trade union, 47.6% obtain it electronically from the local trade union, 45.9% – from the trade union newsletter or booklet, 41.8% – at the industry/professional trade union meetings, but 35.3% – from the informal communication with the trade union chairperson. The survey results indicate the prevalence of informal communication in the members' group and electronically obtained information in the officers' group.

Leadership style. The results demonstrated a negative trend: 35.1% of the members admitted that they did not have information to assess the work of the chairperson of the *enterprise trade union*. According to the authors, these results approve one more time the existence of the communication problem between the trade union chairpersons and members, as well as a leadership problem – if 35.1% of the members lack information to assess the work of the trade union chairperson. According to P. Clark, it indicates the laissez-faire leadership style (Clark 2009,) at the enterprise trade union level. The authors consider that it possibly characterises union members as passive followers. The low indicator (20.9%) for consolidating union members for common work also has to be evaluated negatively, which to some extent explains the passive behaviour mentioned in the interviews and suggested by the survey findings. According to P. Clark's theory (Clark, 2009), the obtained results partially indicate the characteristics of both transformational leadership style: consolidate members for common work; facilitate implementation of new ideas; and transactional leadership style: motivate to be active using various rewards; take care that the current procedures are not changed.

The difficulties of the trade union chairpersons' to adjust to the new circumstances are approved by the fact that only 18.4% of the enterprise level trade union chairpersons suggest implementation of new ideas, which in the modern changing macroenvironment would be most desirable (see Figure 4).

The fact that 58.9% of the members' group admitted that they lack information to assess the behaviour of the chairperson of the *industry/professional trade union* should be evaluated negatively. The other answers of this respondents' group is divided like this: 24.5% of the respondents consider that the chairperson of the industry/professional trade union pays large attention to providing help to the members, 22.3% consider that large attention is paid to solving administrative issues, 19.1% – to facilitating implementation of new ideas, 18.8% – to consolidating trade union members for common work, 17.0% – to-taking care of changing the current procedures in the trade union, 11.0% consider that the chairperson of the industry/professional trade union does not pay attention to providing help to the trade union members. The authors of the present paper consider, that, according to P. Clark's theory (Clark, 2009), the obtained results partially indicate the attributes of transformational leadership: consolidate members for common work; facilitate implementation of new ideas; and of transactional leadership: motivate to be active

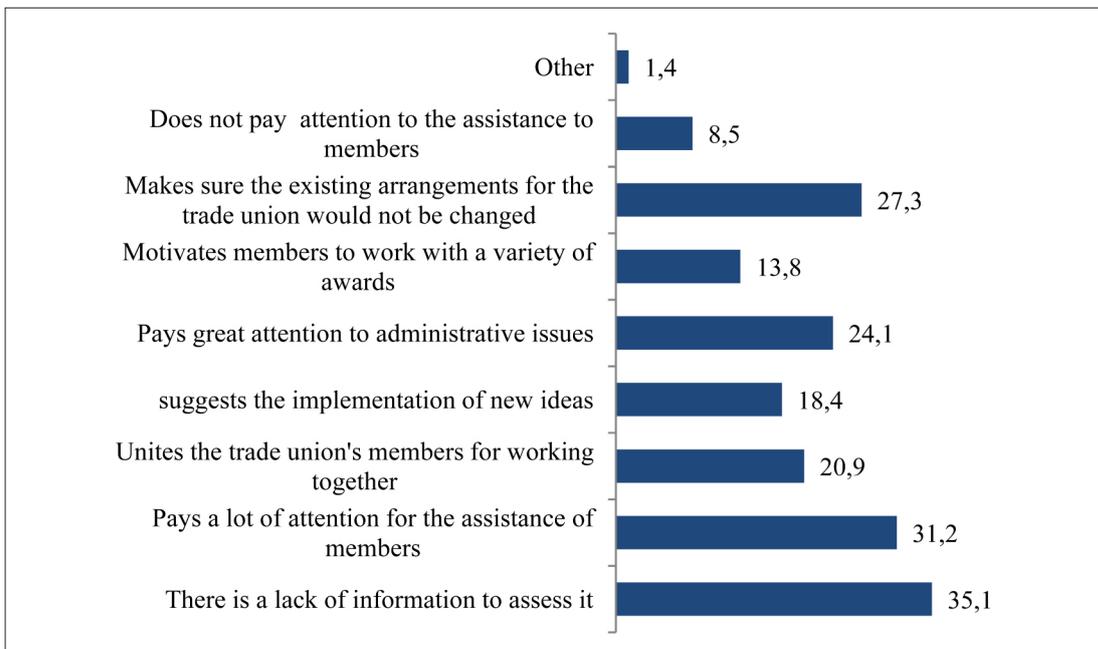


Figure 4. Distribution of the respondents' answers on how they would characterise the behaviour of the trade union chairperson (% of respondents, n = 282)

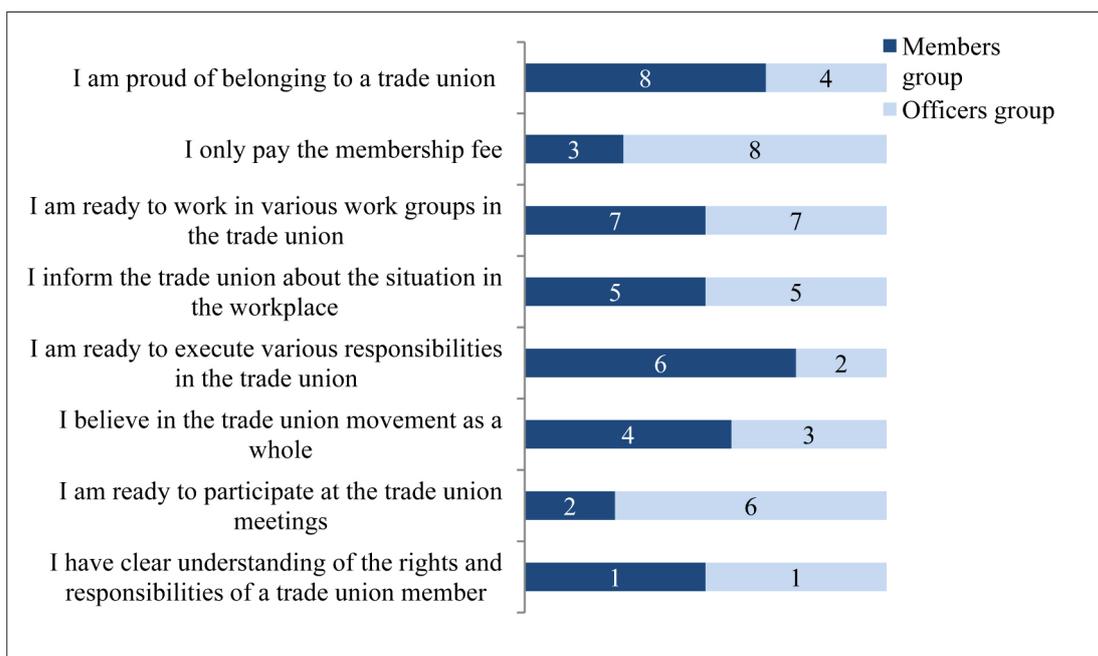


Figure 5. Distribution of answers regarding what the respondents' attitude to trade unions is (% of respondents, member group n = 261, officers group n = 127)

using various rewards; take care that the current situation does not change. Chairpersons of the industry/professional trade unions pay too little attention to information exchange with members, therefore, the survey results repeatedly indicate communication problems between the management of the industry/professional trade unions and the members, as well as characterises members as passive followers. The response "Other", which was selected by 1.4 respondents, also reveals the members' negative opinion about the chairpersons of the industry/professional trade unions in this case. Whereas, in the officers' group most of the respondents (57.6%) consider

that the chairperson of the industry/professional trade union pays large attention to providing help to the members, 54.7% consider that the chairperson consolidates trade union members for common work, 50.6% – that the chairperson facilitates implementation of new ideas, 31.2% consider that the chairperson pays large attention to solving administrative issues, 25.3% – that the chairperson takes care that the current situation in trade unions does not to change, 20.0% – that the chairperson motivates members to be active using various rewards, but only 1.8% state that the chairperson of the industry/professional trade unions does not pay attention to

providing help to the members (see Figure 4). The answer “Other”, which was selected by only 1.2% of the respondents of this group, also reveals the negative opinion about the chairpersons of the industry/professional trade unions. The results indicate that the respondents of the officers’ group are better informed about the operations of the chairperson of the industry/professional trade union; therefore, it can be concluded that there are less communication errors between the chairpersons of the industry/professional trade unions and the chairpersons of the enterprise trade unions than between the chairpersons of the industry/professional trade unions and their members.

Union commitment. Response to the question about members’ attitude to trade unions indicates various levels of commitment and to members as active or passive followers (see Figure 5). The fact that many respondents did not want to provide answers to this question is worth mentioning: only 261 of 282 members and 127 of 170 officers replied to this question.

During the research, the respondents have prioritised the offered answer choices from 1 to 8, assigning the highest priority to 1, but the lowest to 8. The answer “I am proud of belonging to a trade union”, which indicates a theoretically high commitment, occupies the last place among the members’ group. The answer “I have clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of a trade union member” has received the least number of points and takes the first position. The answer choice “I suffice by just paying the membership fee”, which occupies the third place among the members but the last place among the officers, indicates the lowest commitment level. The answer choice “I am ready to work in various work groups in the trade union”, which approves of the members’ commitment and activity, has received only the seventh place in both respondents’ groups. The passivity of the members as followers is approved by the fact that the response to the question “I am ready to execute various responsibilities in the trade union” ranked only as the sixth in the members’ group. It should be marked that in the officers’ group the answer “I am ready to participate at the trade union meetings” ranked only as the sixth, which also indicates the passive behaviour of the officers.

Conclusions

The survey results revealed that a statistically significant correlation exists between leadership and strategic management indicators:

- The summary of Pearson chi square test results in the members’ group reveals that out of eighteen potential correlations, there are sixteen significant ($p < 0.05$) correlations between leadership and goal attainment indicators; out of eighteen potential correlations, there are fifteen significant correlations between leadership and strategic planning indicators; out of fifteen potential correlations, there are fourteen significant correlations between leadership and the indicators for defining the strategic direction.
- The indicators of leadership and the strategic direction demonstrate that a statistically significant correlation exists between the frequency of consultations with the trade union chairperson and the existence of the mission and the vision, as well as the way in which

the information is obtained about both. There is a correlation between the members’ opportunities to impact the content of the decisions made in the enterprise and the industry trade union and the existence of the mission and the vision, as well as the way in which information about these issues is obtained. In addition, there is a correlation between the frequency of consultations with the trade union chairperson and the members’ desire to participate in developing the mission and the vision, and also between the opportunities of the members to impact the decisions made in the industry trade union and the desire to participate in developing the mission and the vision. The indicators of leadership and strategic planning reveal that there is a correlation between the opportunity of the members to impact the content of the decisions made in the industry trade union and the existence of goals, the way in which information about the trade union goals is obtained, the desire to participate in defining goals, the enterprise management attitude to the trade union and the existence of the strategy. There is also a correlation between the opportunity to affect the content of the decisions made by the industry and the enterprise trade unions and the mentioned indicators of strategic planning. The indicators of leadership and goal attainment show that there are more correlations between the frequency of consultations with the trade union chairperson and the goal attainment, which approves a significant importance of communication in attaining the goals.

- At the same time these correlations revealed that problems in implementing the strategy exist in Latvian trade unions, regarding leadership and communication, information exchange. The disclosed discovered problems mark the direction for developing the strategic management of Latvian trade unions.
- Respondents of the officers’ group are better informed about the existence of goals. The results indicate low member participation rates in defining the trade union goals. The majority of the respondents of both groups can be evaluated as potentially active and their potential level of involvement should be assessed as high. It can be assumed that members have motivation to participate in defining the goals but they have done it little so far, which indicates that effective member involvement methods have not been applied. The results reveal ineffective two-way communication between the chairpersons and the members, which simultaneously also proves a low level of participation.
- At the enterprise trade union level, the opinion of the enterprise trade union officers is the dominant one, which shows a lack of democratic leadership in these organizations. In total, the member participation level regarding decision making in the enterprise trade union can be evaluated as medium or low. In the officers’ group the opinion about minimal opportunities to impact the decision made by the industry/professional trade union prevails, which also reveals the insufficient involvement of these officers into the activities of the industry/professional trade union.
- A slightly more than one third of the members

demonstrate a low participation level regarding the opportunities for the impact on the decisions made by the industry/professional trade unions. Whereas, one third of the officers' group, if compared to the members' group, demonstrates a higher level of participation. The participation level is affected by the fact that members are invited to express their opinion mainly about organizing public activities and the content of the collective agreement, thus the member participation in defining the trade union goals is not high. Hence, the leadership problem is highlighted: the chairpersons of the industry/professional trade unions are not able or do not want to investigate the members' opinion about important issues of trade union operation.

- The results indicate inefficient two-way communication between the trade union members and the chairpersons of enterprise trade unions, the member passivity, as well as a partial officers' indifference to providing effective communication with trade union members. The most topical issues at enterprise trade union meetings are issues related to the content of the collective agreement, the situation in the enterprise and the organization of public activities. Despite the fact that the issues about the content of the collective agreement have been frequently discussed, as the answers to the existence of the collective agreement revealed, 24.8% of the respondents – members do not know whether the collective agreement with the enterprise has been signed, which demonstrates ineffective two-way communication between the trade union chairpersons and members, as well as revealing members as passive followers. The fact that the dominating way of obtaining information in the members' group is informal communication with the trade union chairpersons, but in the officers' group it is electronically obtained information from the industry/professional trade union, shows that there is a leadership and communication problem.
- The authors conclude that at the enterprise and industry/professional trade union level the leadership style is weak, which indicates the characteristics of laissez-faire style. Assessing the chairpersons of the industry/professional trade unions, the respondents of the officers' group see more explicit characteristics of the transformational leadership than the respondents of the members' group. The authors assume that leadership and communication problems determine the fact that the union commitment of the members' group can be evaluated as medium or low, but the commitment of the officers' group can be evaluated as medium or high.
- The findings of the research reveal the decision making centralization trends and indicate that Latvian trade union members are not sufficiently involved in decision making. According to the authors, it can be explained by the fact that as provided by the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the execution of this activity requires active member participation.
- The authors conclude that the obtained results outline the leadership problem: industry/professional trade union management cannot or does not want to investigate members' opinion about essential issues

of the trade union operation. The literature analysis within the framework of the research aim showed that leadership and communication aspects in relation with strategic management have been little researched. The findings of the empirical research demonstrated that strategy implementation – leadership and communication problems exist in the trade unions of Latvia. Such findings put forward the need to improve the practice of the strategic management of trade unions in Latvia.

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