

PSYCHOSEMANTICS OF MANAGEMENT STRATEGY NOTIONS BY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND VICE PRINCIPALS

Gintaras Saparnis, Diana Saparniene
Siauliai University, Lithuania

INTRODUCTION

From the methodological point of view the research is based on the teaching of the empirical social research about qualitative and quantitative research and the principle of their coordination that is triangulation (Charles, 1999; Mayring, 1988; Kardelis, 1997; Lamnek, 1993; Merkys, 1999).

The conceptual basis of the research consists of the attempt of the coordination (congruence) of different theoretical traditions (in fact today they are already called classical). Here the following is meant: 1) humanistic psychology, 2) the teaching of social psychology about authoritarian personality and authoritarian social relations, 3) the theory of symbolic interactionism (Rogers, 1969; Maslow, 1971; Adorno, 1969; Oesterreich, 1974; Blumer, 1969).

Moreover, the research of management (including education management) and of organizational behaviour (Juceviciene, 1996; Jucevicius, 1996; Zelvys, 1999; Targamadze, 1996 et al) makes an important area of the theoretical context of the research. Nevertheless, it is necessary to state that in the sense of diagnostic research (*Managementdiagnostik* (Sarges, 1995)) in the country we have not encountered at least as a phenomenon of systematic professional research. The lack of the research of the respective character is an important aspect of the scientific problematicity of our research.

Quite an important role grounding the research theoretically and interpreting the data has been played by such branch of psychology as psychosemantics. One of its most important interests is to investigate what subjective meanings the individuals and social groups tend to give to verbal (lexical) irritants. Speech (words and their combinations) are not, vividly speaking, only an “object *per se*” but reflects both individual psychical and sociocultural reality. From the history of social research it is known that psychosemantic material – the associative reaction of the subjects to verbal irritants – has recommended itself as a reliable empirical referent. Particularly in our research the role of a word-irritant has been played by the stimuli material formed on the basis of the lexical combination “management development”.

The object of the research is the process of management in comprehensive school.

The aim of the research is to reveal the psychosemantics of the opinion of school principals and vice principals on the issues of the development of school management. From the viewpoint of the method it has been attempted to achieve this aim using non-standardized questionnaire of open type and combining the methods of qualitative and quantitative content analysis.

In principle the problem of any scientific research may be defined by a question because a question is a logical form of a scientific problem (Merkys 1995). **Scientific problematicity** of our research is defined by the series of concrete questions, the relevant answer to which is not known by sciences of education or management today. The questions are following:

- a) what is the law of rating of subjective psychosemantic categories reflecting strategy notions of school principals and vice principals?
- b) what is the character of the taxonomy of the psychosemantic categories of aforementioned “topics” empirically resultant from the rating data?
- c) what is the internal structure of empirically detected psychosemantic formations reflecting actual management notions and expectations?

The following **methods of the research** have been used – the analysis of literary sources, qualitative and quantitative content analysis, statistical data processing (correlative analysis, cluster analysis, factor analysis).

THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND THEIR DISCUSSION. In this part of the article the results of the research of school managers’ answers to the question “Dear Manager, you certainly know in which direction school management should be turned. Could you please write your opinion on the issues of school management improvement”¹. 187 questioned school principals² reacted to the question about management improvement with 573

¹ In total 14 closed-type questions related to demographical variables, 6 open-type questions about the school principals’ mistakes made in the communication with school community members (pupils, teachers, vice principals or principals, technical staff employees, pupils’ parents) and education department employees have been presented in the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire the managers were asked to write *their opinion and suggestions how to improve school management*. In the present article it is further limited to these results which have been obtained analyzing the answers of the respondents namely to the latter question (Saparnis, Merkys, 2000; Merkys, Saparnis 20004; Saparnis, Saparniene, 2005).

² 83 school principals and 104 vice principals from Siauliai County of the Republic of Lithuania (Siauliai city, Siauliai, Akmenė, Pakruojis, Kelme, Radviliskis, and Joniskis districts) Taurage town and district, Jurbarkas town, Kaunas city, Klaipėda city, and Panevezys city have been questioned.

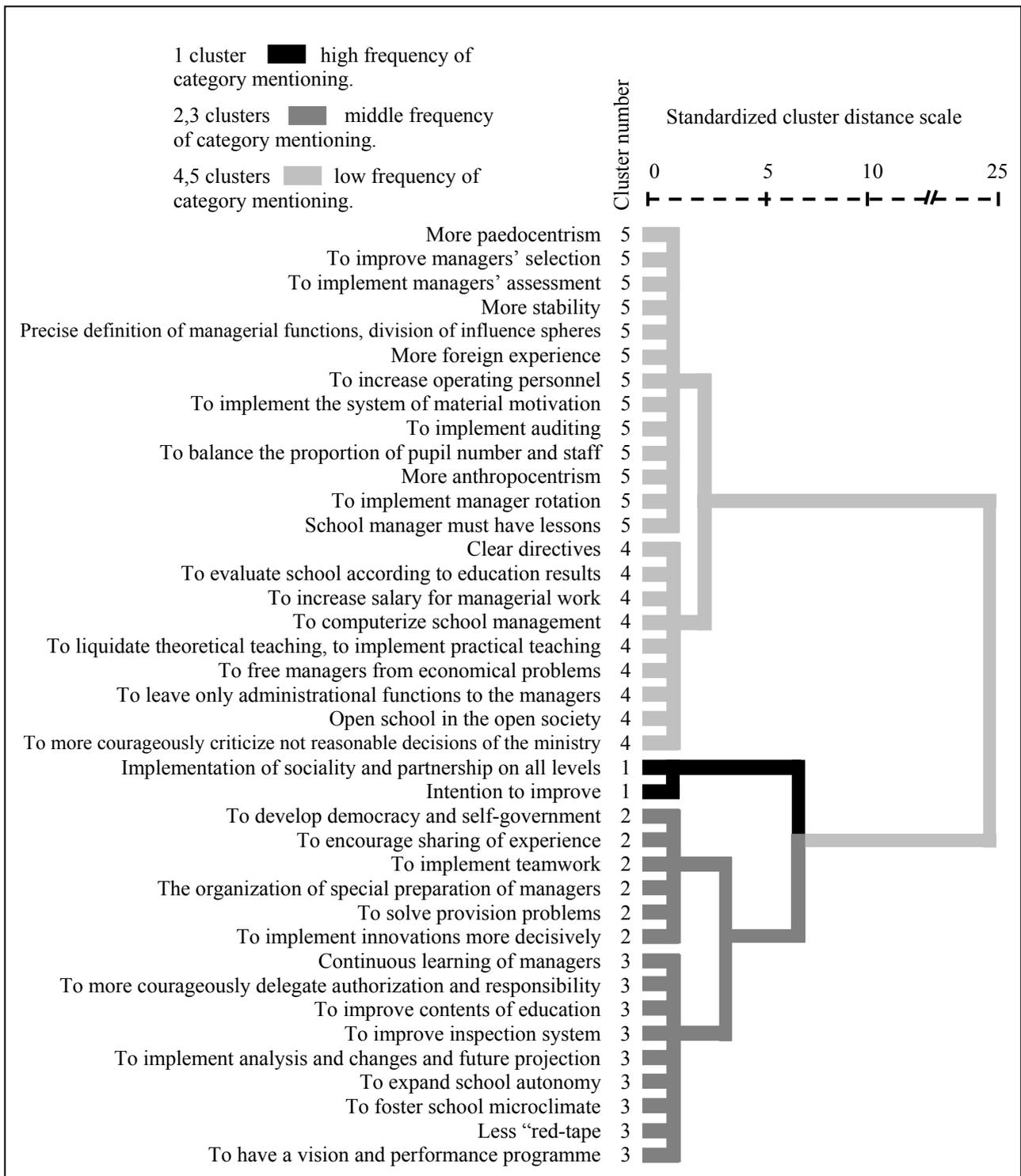
statements (sentences) which have been generalized into 39 categories. Empirically detected rating of frequencies of category mentioning is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Rating of the categories of *managerial notions and expectations* of managers

Category	Noted frequency	Percentage	Group number by a 5 cluster model
Implementation of sociality and partnership on all levels	47	25%	1
Intention to improve	41	22%	1
To implement innovations more decisively	33	18%	2
To solve provision problems	31	17%	2
Special preparation of principals	27	14%	2
To implement teamwork	26	14%	2
To develop democracy and self-government	25	13%	2
To encourage sharing of experience	24	13%	2
To have a vision and performance programme	22	12%	3
To foster school microclimate	21	11%	3
Less "red-tape"	21	11%	3
To expand school autonomy	20	11%	3
To improve inspection system	18	10%	3
To implement analysis and changes, and future projection	18	10%	3
To more courageously delegate authorization and responsibility	16	9%	3
Continuous learning of managers	15	8%	3
To improve contents of education	13	7%	3
To increase salary for managerial work	11	6%	4
To leave only administrative functions to the managers	10	5%	4
Clear directives	10	5%	4
To evaluate school according to education results	10	5%	4
To free managers from economical problems	9	5%	4
To liquidate theoretical teaching, to implement practical teaching	9	5%	4
To computerize school management	9	5%	4
Open school in the open society	8	4%	4
To more courageously criticize not reasonable decisions of the Ministry of	8	4%	4
To increase operating personnel	6	3%	5
To implement the system of material motivation	6	3%	5
To implement managers' assessment	5	3%	5
To improve managers' selection	5	3%	5
More stability	5	3%	5
More paedocentrism	5	3%	5
Precise definition of managerial functions, division of influence spheres	4	2%	5
More foreign experience	4	2%	5
More anthropocentrism	3	2%	5
To implement manager rotation	3	2%	5
School manager must have lessons	2	1%	5
To implement auditing	1	0.5%	5
To balance the proportion of pupil number and staff	1	0.5%	5

Referring to the scheme of statistical data processing set in the present research we have performed cluster analysis of categories and formed their taxonomy. The configuration of a computer made dendrogram and the data of the standardized cluster distance scale (see Picture 1) show that it is the most expedient to refer to the 5 cluster model. That means that the data of category rating statistically reasonably may be classified to five or three homogeneous groups. It is symptomatic that one of the groups is composed of only two categories, surpassing all the rest categories by the achieved frequency of mentioning.



Picture 1. Dendrogram of managerial notions and expectations of school managers

Table 2

Qualitative interpretation of taxonomy's results according to the 5 clusters model

Group number in the dendrogram	The interpretation of the 5 group (cluster) model
Group 1	highest rating
Group 2	high rating
Group 3	middle higher rating
Group 4	middle rating
Group 5	low rating

We suppose that the discovered law of category rating and category taxonomy from the viewpoint of interpretation is eloquent enough and witnesses several concrete tendencies.

1. From the point of view of contents purely management topics are dominating, while psychological topics become peripheral. Pedagogical content is unless directly reflected by the categories “*More anthropocentrism*”, “*More paedocentrism*”, the semantics of which is very close. Managerial direction of category contents we suppose was naturally conditioned by the content of questionnaire item itself. Nevertheless, if the peripheral character of psychological topics is natural, so a rather low percentage (15%) of pedagogical (educational) plane categories is rather unexpected. We would like to make a deeper reflection about this factually stated tendency.

It is universally known that management is not absolutely some object for itself. The object of management is a particular institution, organization, and the aim of management is the ensuring of the quality of organizational functions (social services in the most general sense). Every organization is specific both from the viewpoint of the organizational structure, its aims and performance. This specific distinguishes it from other organizations, e.g., hospital from supermarket or post department. Therefore, management if we supposedly speak not about abstract theoretical textbook but about a real and live management process, is and should be concrete, penetrated by the contents and topics of the performance of a particular institution. If during analogous management study we would interview, e.g., head doctors of hospitals or principals of bank affiliates, it is quite likely that in doctors’ responses apart from other issues medical topics would be reflected, while the bankers’ responses would reflect the topics of finances and banking. If we talk about management as technological theory, this technology should be technologically valid, if we talk about professional psychosemantics of managers, so vividly speaking it should be penetrated by the “ethnography” of a concrete organization. So we were surprised by low percentage of categories of purely educational content.

We divided all 39 categories into three groups: 1) categories not reflecting educational topics at all; 2) categories partially reflecting educational topics; 3) categories directly reflecting educational topics. Typical examples of the first group: “*To have a vision and performance programme*”, “*To implement auditing*”. The second group consists of categories where school topics are mentioned formally, however, is not more deeply oriented towards the reflection of school functions. Typical example is “*To expand school autonomy*”. The expansion of autonomy is a universal procedure of organizational management, important for bank affiliate, hospital and police office. The semantics of this category does not yet reflect the educational topics directly. Directly educational topics are reflected in categories “*To develop contents of education*”, “*To liquidate theoretical teaching, to implement practical teaching*”, “*School manager must have lessons*”.

The contents of the first two groups is oriented towards the realization of universal managerial procedure, therefore, these categories in diagnostic sense reflects the orientation of managers towards formal administration. Meanwhile, the third distinguished group of categories shows the orientation of managers towards the managerial reflection of categories characteristic only to school (as an organization). The contents and rating of our formed categories witness that the categories of the third group (type) are peripheral. It is shown by: a) their extremely low relative extent in a general “mass” of categories, b) very low frequentative rating of mentioning of these categories.

Here we may state a concrete scientific fact. The fact is that in professional psychosemantic structure of school managers (on the issues of development of school management) formal principle of administration overweighs, meanwhile educational pedagogical principle reflecting the mission of school as an organization is relatively peripheral.

We suppose that it is expedient to develop the interpretation of this fact in several alternative directions.

1.1 hypothesis. The orientation of school managers towards the realization of formal administration procedures show their management professionalism, ability to think in categories of management science and practice, to tear themselves away from routine and concreteness, also the preparedness to solve problems not directly but through particular management procedures and mechanisms.

1.2 hypothesis. The model of school management is developing, one of essential features of which is alienation of managers, digression from functions and strategic aims of school as a social organization, manifesting by inclination towards formal administration partially separated from the contents of school performance.

1.3 hypothesis. In the population of school managers two types of strategic thinking and acting exist. Managers belonging to the first type tend to give priority to formal universal management procedures and techniques. In fact they are more interested by the questions: how, by which means, in which ways, by which procedures and by which mechanisms school should be managed? *How to seek* more effective management? Managers belonging to the second type are more oriented towards questions *what is to be achieved* in school management, *what and which* is strategic aim of school management, resulting from specific aims and functions of school as an organization. The first type reflects formal – abstract management approach, and the second type concrete – contentual management approach. Moreover, it is symptomatic that in a sense of frequency the overweighting of the first mentioned type is evident, in other words, of formal – abstract management approach.

To further develop and finally approve, to reject or correct these hypotheses the following research is needed. They would help to reveal managerial attitudes and orientations of the managers, to distinguish and elaborate dominating types of management. Finally, such research would presumably reveal practical presumptions how to make

management more effective. Firstly, this is because every hypothetically mentioned management type has its advantages and disadvantages.

2. It is symptomatic that the survey has also revealed certain collisions of strategic management notions and approaches. It is testified by the categories of essentially similar content but different valency: “*To leave only administrative functions to the managers*” and “*School managers must have lessons*”; “*To free managers from economical problems*”. The suggestion that the managers have at least a few lessons and they are made free from economical problems supposedly refers to the ideal of pedagogically oriented school manager. Such manager tends to directly go into educational problems and education is his main priority. The management approach which we have defined as concrete – contentual seems closer to such type of manager. Meanwhile, the suggestion that only administrative functions are left to school managers witnesses a totally opposite ideal of a school manager and a different management approach. Such manager does not seem to want to directly go into educational pedagogical topics and educational issues, but would rather deal with administration. There is no greater doubt that the mentioned ideal of a manager corresponds to greater extent to our characterized type of formal – abstract management approach.

As it has been already mentioned in the present section, it is problematic to unambiguously evaluate the stated managers’ inclination towards administration (see formulations of hypotheses 1.1 – 1.3). Nevertheless, the inclination towards formal administration potentially expresses risk, in particular a digression of a manager from the most important school mission i.e. education of pupils. It is especially important for organizations the direct impact object of which is a person, e.g. for institutions of education, treatment, or religion. In this sense we could appeal to literary analogy, in particular to V. Mykolaitis-Putinas novel “*Altoriau seselyje*” (*In the Shadows of the Altars*), where two different types of provost emerge: “*pastor*” and “*farmer*”. The analogy with our distinguished types of school manager, i.e., “*pedagogue*” and “*administrator*” here is evident enough.

3. Further, paying attention to the content of categories that reached high rating, again quite eloquent tendency manifests itself. It should be remembered that the survey chronologically coincided with the essential decrease of economical situation in the country. It has also been inevitably reflected in the area of school financing and material provision. In this sense in the anonymous questionnaire on the issues of school management improvement absolutely reasonably it was possible to expect a negative reaction of school managers, and the attitude which would reflect the reduction of management problems to the issues of financing and material provision. The hypothetic presumption that in the critical society of limited resources school managers would relate the visions of management improvement to the issue of financing has not been proved. From 39 categories only two reflect the issues of material provision: “*To solve provision problems*” (rating of mentioning is 17%), “*To increase salary for managerial work*” (6%).

It is evident that in the psychosemantic structure of managers concerning this issue spiritual but not material principle is dominating. The semantics of the categories that reached the highest rating of mentioning reflects the contents of such terms of management science and practice as *democracy, implementation of innovations, qualification development and learning, and partnership*. The allusion of these terms to modern management paradigms raises no doubt. It means that projecting managerial visions school managers think in the categories of concepts of organizational culture, learning organization, and overall quality management. In general it witnesses quite high professional culture of school managers.

Further we have looked for the regularities of category structure that are usually defined using the measures of statistical connection and contingency. For this particular aim we have used factor analysis having eliminated the categories that statistically “destroy” the model of factor analysis.

Table 3

The Results of Factor Analysis

Factor number	Names of categories	Values of factor weights
F1	To more courageously delegate authorization and responsibility	0.67
	To foster school microclimate	0.66
	To develop democracy and self-government	0.60
	To implement teamwork	0.53
	Implementation of sociality and partnership on all levels	0.43
F2	To have a vision and performance programme	0.76
	To implement innovations more decisively	0.69
	To implement analysis and changes and future projection	0.67
F3	To improve inspection system	0.79
	Less “red-tape”	0.68
	To expand school autonomy	0.54
F4	To encourage sharing of experience	0.78
	Continuous learning of managers	0.58
	Special preparation of principals	0.51

F5	Intention to improve	0.66
F6	To improve contents of education	0.77
	To solve provision problems	0.63

Note. Computer extracted factors explain 56,0 % of the dispersion of all variables.

17 primary variables (categories) have been generalized in a 6 factor model (see Table 3). Formally evaluating the found factor model is not especially attractive because factor 5 consists of only one variable. Nevertheless in the remaining factors the variables have grouped very meaningfully from the viewpoint of interpretation, moreover, the attention should be paid to quite high correlation coefficients of variables and a factor ($0.43 \leq r \leq 0.79$). These two circumstances witness the relevance of categories in the sense of construct validity theory.

Quite suggestive is the interpretation of factor F4: this is a factor reflecting the dimension of qualification. F3 factor reflects the dimension of control optimization and autonomy. F2 factor may be defined as a factor of strategy and innovations. The first (F1) factor is (and according to the mathematical model should be) statistically the strongest, it unites five variables and explains 15% of the dispersion. From the viewpoint of interpretation this factor reflects the principles of democracy and partnership in management. In the diagnostic sense it shows that in the studied psychosemantic structure of managerial notions of school managers the mentioned things take significant place.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The semantics of the categories that reached the highest rating of mentioning reflects the content of such terms of management science and practice as *democracy, implementation of innovations, qualification development and learning, and partnership*. The allusion of these terms to modern management paradigms raises no doubt. It means that projecting managerial visions school managers think in the categories of management concepts of organizational culture, learning organization, and overall quality. In general it witnesses quite high professional culture of school managers.

2. The generalized data of the research allows stating a concrete scientific fact: in professional psychosemantic structure of school managers (on the issues of development of school management) formal principle of administration overweighs, meanwhile educational pedagogical principle reflecting the mission of school as an organization is relatively peripheral.

3. The research has also revealed certain collisions of strategic management notions and approaches. It is testified by the categories of essentially similar content but different valency: *“To leave only administrative functions to the managers”* and *“School manager must have lessons”*; *“To free managers from economical problems”*. The suggestion that the managers have at least a few lessons and they are made free from economical problems supposedly refers to the ideal of pedagogically oriented school manager. Such manager tends to directly go into educational problems and education is his main priority. Meanwhile, the suggestion that only administrative functions are left to school managers witnesses a totally opposite ideal of a school manager and a different management approach. Such manager does not seem to directly go into educational pedagogical topics and educational issues, but would rather deal with administration. These opinions of different valency may be explained by our distinguished types of management approach: concrete – contentual and formal – abstract.

4. The hypothetic presumption that in the critical society of limited resources school managers would relate the visions of management improvement to the issue of financing has not been proved. From 39 categories only two reflect the issues of material provision: *“To solve provision problems”* (rating of mentioning is 17%), *“To increase salary for managerial work”* (6%). It is evident that in the psychosemantic structure of managers concerning this issue spiritual but not material principle is dominating.

REFERENCES

- ADORNO, Th. W. (1969). *Der Positivismusstreit in der Deutschen Soziologie*. Darmstadt und Neuwied.
- BLUMER, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- CHARLES, C. M. (1999). *Pedagoginio tyrimo įvadas*. Vilnius: Alma litera.
- JUCEVICIENE, P. (1996). *Organizacijos elgsena*. Kaunas: Technologija.
- JUCEVICIUS, R. (1996). *Strateginis organizacijų vystymas. Monografija*. Kaunas: Technologija.
- KARDELIS, K. (1997). *Moksliniu tyrimu metodologija ir metodai*. Kaunas: Technologija.
- LAMNEK, S. (1993). *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Bd. 1. Methodologie*. Weinheim: Psychologie Verlags Union.
- MAYRING, P. (1988). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*. Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag.
- MASLOW, A. H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York: Viking.
- MERKYS, G. (1995). *Pedagoginio tyrimo metodologijos pradmenys*. Siauliai: SPI leidybos centras.
- MERKYS, G. (1999). *Empirine analitine paradigma ir siuolaikinis socialinis tyrimas. Filosofija sociologija*, Nr. 3.

- MERKYS, G., SAPARNIS, G. (2004). Combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in educational management diagnostics // Education-line: European Conference on Educational Research, University of Crete, 22–25 September 2004. Leeds: University of Leeds, p. 1–10. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00003825.htm>.
- OESTERREICH, D. (1974). Autoritarismus und Autonomie: Untersuchungen über berufliche Werdegänge, soziale Einstellungen, Sozialisationsbedingungen und Persönlichkeitsmerkmale ehemaliger Industriehilfearbeiter, Band II (Hrsg. Max – Plank – Institut für Bildungsforschung). Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag.
- ROGERS, C. (1969). Freedom to learn. Columbus, OH: Merrill. The major statement on education by one of the most articulate of the humanistic psychologists.
- SARGES, W. (Hrsg.) (1995). Management-Diagnostik.- 2., vollständig ueberarbeitete und erweiterte Aufl. Hogrefe - Verlag, Goettingen.
- SAPARNIS, G., MERKYS, G. (2000). Kokybinu ir kiekybinu metodu derinimas mokyklines vadybos diagnostikoje: hipoteze ir pirmieji zingsniai. *Socialiniai mokslai*, 2(23), 43 – 55 p.
- SAPARNIS, G., SAPARNIENE, D. (2005). Psychosemantics of Management Strategy Notions and Expectations by School Teachers // International Scientific Conference: New Dimensions in the Development of Society. Jelgava: Latvia University of Agriculture, p. 88 - 95.
- TARGAMADZE, V. (1996). Svietimo organizacijų elgsena. Kaunas: Technologija.
- ZELVYS, R. (1999). Svietimo vadyba ir kaita. Vilnius: Garnelis.