



Conceptual distinction between the concepts of “leader” and “guide”: Philosophical and managerial aspects

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Abstract. The article examined the conceptual and functional differences between the concepts of “leader” and “guide” in the context of modern educational management. The relevance of the topic is due to the need to rethink managerial roles in the context of the transformation of educational systems, the growing importance of strategic vision, value-oriented management and new forms of professional interaction. Despite the widespread presence of the term “guidance” in pedagogical research, the concept of “leadership” remains methodologically vague, which complicates the construction of effective management models. The aim of the study was to determine the conceptual differences between the phenomena of guidance and leadership, as well as to empirically identify the leadership orientations of managers in the educational environment of Ukraine. The methodological basis of the work was a combination of content analysis of scientific sources, etymological and semantic analysis, philosophical hermeneutics and comparative research of management paradigms. The empirical part was based on a survey of 126 respondents from three professional groups: heads of educational institutions, methodologists, and teachers who demonstrated informal guidance (managerial leadership). Three psychometrically validated instruments were used: COPO-2024, ISV-12 and IMM-10. Descriptive statistics methods, correlation, factor, and cluster analysis were applied. The results revealed three integral types of management orientations: semantic mentors, reflective strategists and creative missionaries. It is proven that guidance was formed as a multidimensional phenomenon that combined strategic vision, value-humanistic orientation and the ability to create a semantic space for development. The results obtained made it possible to formulate the authors’ model of the distinction of concepts, in which guidance was interpreted as a phenomenon that integrates intellectual vision,

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the ability to set the direction of development and create an ideological framework for the formation of managers. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of applying the refined conceptual differentiation in management, educational management and strategic planning

Keywords: guidance; leadership; philosophy of management; strategic vision; authors' model; semantic space of development

Introduction

In modern scientific discourse, the concepts of “guide” and “leader” are often identified, which leads to a simplified understanding of the nature of managerial influence in education. Such terminological uncertainty complicates the formation of value-oriented models of management, especially in the context of humanistic, spiritual and strategic challenges facing educational systems in the 21st century. In-depth analysis shows that there are significant conceptual, functional and ethical differences between the phenomena of guidance and leadership that require a clear distinction. In modern studies by N. Oppong (2025), T. Bush (2025), and S. Kielblock (2025), guidance is viewed as a managerial activity that combines efficiency, strategic planning, digital transformation and support for professional communities. The manager appears as a manager of educational processes, a facilitator of change, and a coordinator of institutional development. These models point out managerial competencies, control, standardisation, and organisational dynamics. At the same time, the models rarely go beyond rationalist logic, leaving out of consideration the spiritual and value component of managerial influence.

Guidance, on the other hand, is being formed as an alternative paradigm that integrates moral responsibility, strategic vision, spiritual mission, and cultural reflection. In the works of modern researchers: R. Macpherson (2025), A. Cañadas *et al.* (2025), and S. Talib *et al.* (2025) – develop ethical-humanistic models of guidance, integrating moral philosophy, spiritual values, service, and cultural responsibility. The concepts emphasise the formation of a holistic personality of a manager who is able to combine strategic vision with

ethical reflection and a meaning-making mission. The guide appears as a carrier of ideas, values, and meanings, capable of shaping educational identity and inspiring the community to develop. Guidance is focused not only on the result, but on the formation of a person, the transformation of culture, and the harmonisation of the educational space. This phenomenon has a philosophical and cultural basis that goes beyond classical management.

A comparative analysis of European models of educational guidance demonstrates significant variability in approaches to the role of the manager. In Finland, pedagogical guidance dominates, which combines professional autonomy, personal development and trust in pedagogical judgment. The Spanish model points out ethical responsibility, social justice and civic consciousness, considering the manager as a moral compass. In the work of V. Braun & V. Clarke (2023), as well as in the strategic documents of Swiss universities (2024) and UNESCO (2024), educational guidance in Germany and Switzerland appears as a reflexive, strategically oriented practice that combines systems thinking, cultural autonomy and institutional responsibility. The manager in these models plays the role of a thinker, architect of educational concepts and coordinator of intersectoral partnerships. At the same time, these models less often integrate the spiritual component characteristic of Ukrainian leadership, where the leader appears as a strategist, spiritual mentor and cultural figure, capable of forming a semantic field of development, uniting the community around values and responsibly leading it to transformation. The manager's influence is based on reflection, service, and the ability to form a

semantic field of development. The leadership is considered as a process that encompasses not only organisational aspects, but also the transformation of consciousness, the formation of a value culture and spiritual responsibility.

A feature of the Ukrainian guidance model is its integrative nature: it combines strategic, pedagogical and humanistic-value functions, is based on complementing cultural identity and meaning-making. The guide is not identified with an administrator or manager, but performs the role of an ideologist of the educational process, capable of asking key questions: “Why do we teach?” and “What should an educated person be like?” In this context, leadership appears as a form of spiritual, moral and ethical guidance that responds to the challenges of the post-information society, the crisis of meanings and cultural fragmentation. At the same time, the question of the nature of guidance arises in modern discourse: is it a serial phenomenon that repeats itself in educational systems or a single phenomenon associated with unique individuals. The analysis allows asserting that guidance has a dual nature: as a social mechanism – it manifests itself in managers who are able to lead the team to change; as a cultural phenomenon – it is realised in exceptional figures who form the educational tradition, style of thinking, moral atmosphere, ethical responsibility. Thus, the distinction between the concepts of “guide” and “leader” is not only a terminological, but also a methodological necessity for modern science of management and education. It allows moving from an instrumental to a value-oriented type of interaction, in which guidance appears as the highest form of managerial influence, capable of integrating efficiency, humanity, and spirituality in educational practice.

The purpose of the study was to identify conceptual differences between the concepts of guide and leader, as well as between the phenomena of guidance and leadership, in particular in the context of the impact on the team and the formation of a value culture in education. The objectives of the study: to analyse modern scientific

approaches to the definition of the concepts of “guide” and “leader”; to identify sociopsychological and cultural-philosophical aspects of guidance and leadership; to reveal key methodological and practical differences between a leader and a guide in the social and educational space.

Literature Review

In the modern educational space, which is undergoing deep transformations, there is a growing need to rethink management concepts, in particular the concepts of “guidance” and “leadership”. Although these terms are often identified, these concepts have significant substantive differences that affect the axiology of management and the cultural identity of the educational process. Guidance in the Western paradigm stresses efficiency, motivation, and personal influence. Guidance, as a phenomenon of Ukrainian philosophy of education, is based on spiritual authority, a meaning-making mission, and cultural and historical responsibility. In the context of a crisis of trust in institutions and demotivation of teachers, the distinction between these concepts becomes particularly relevant. To systematise approaches to educational guidance, it is advisable to distinguish three types. Technocratic – focused on performance, standardisation, and control (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Yukl, 2023). Ethical-humanistic – highlights moral responsibility, service, and dignity (Greenleaf, 2002; Starratt, 2004). Meaning-making – represented by the Ukrainian concept of leadership that integrates spiritual mission, cultural reflection, and value-based guidance (Shumilova, 2021).

Technocratic models focus on achieving results, standardising processes, and control. In such approaches, the manager acts as a manager who coordinates resources and ensures efficiency. In modern conditions, these models are transformed under the influence of digitalisation: algorithmic management, institutional monitoring, and individualisation of educational processes are being introduced (Sposato, 2025). Ethical-humanistic models form an alternative to technocratic

management. Recent research by L. Mphatsoane-Sesoane & L.Jita (2025) highlights the role of ethical guidance in building trust, professional autonomy, and inclusive environments. The authors point out moral responsibility, service, dignity, and calling. These models recognise the importance of interpersonal interaction, emotional sensitivity, and moral autonomy, but remain within the rational-managerialist management paradigm, where guidance is associated with individual authority and strategic effectiveness.

Unlike classical guidance models that focus on control, motivation and achieving results, leadership focuses on the formation of a semantic space, maintaining the internal unity of the team, developing a calling and moral responsibility. This approach is especially relevant in conditions of social turbulence, loss of trust in institutions and demotivation of teachers. Leadership allows rethinking management as a process of spiritual support, dialogue, inspiration and cultural guidance. It integrates philosophical, pedagogical and cultural-historical dimensions, offering an alternative to universalised rational-managerialist models and opening up new horizons for the development of educational management. Classical guidance models in education have formed the foundation of modern managerial thinking. These approaches' common feature is an orientation towards performance, structuring of processes, organisational stability and individual influence of the manager. The approaches offer clear algorithms of actions that work well in stable conditions, where the priority is achieving goals and managing resources. However, these models have limitations: the models do not sufficiently take into account the cultural context, the spiritual needs of the educational environment, and the value orientations of teachers. In complex social conditions, where education is facing a crisis of trust, demotivation, and loss of meaning, classical guidance is not always able to provide a deep transformation.

That is why there is a need to supplement these models with humanistic and meaning-making approaches that expand the idea of the role

of the manager as a leader, inspirer, and bearer of a cultural mission. Classical approaches to guidance in education have formed the basis of modern managerial thinking focused on efficiency, organisation, and achieving results. One of the most influential is transformational guidance proposed by B. Bass & B. Avolio (1994), which underscores motivation, shared vision, and the manager's ability to inspire the team to change. P. Northouse (2021) systematised a typology of guidance styles – from directive to democratic – and proposed practical models for managers. G. Yukl (2023) developed a multilevel model of manager behaviour, covering tasks, relationships, and changes. A. Bryman (1992) considered guidance as a key factor in organisational effectiveness, and as a contextual phenomenon, especially in higher education. K. Leithwood *et al.* (2008) put an emphasis on the role of the manager in the transformation of the school environment, the importance of cooperation and the distribution of guidance roles. T. Bush (2025) focused on strategic management, and C. Day & Q. Gurr (2020) focused on the development of professional communities and staff motivation.

Despite the diversity of models, all these models have a common feature – an orientation towards the manager as a manager who coordinates processes, implements standards and provides control. These approaches work well in stable conditions, but often ignore the cultural, spiritual and semantic aspects of educational activity. In a complex social environment, where education is facing a crisis of trust and demotivation, classical guidance is not always able to provide deep transformation. That is why there is a need to supplement these models with humanistic and meaning-making approaches. Approaches to educational guidance, formed in the works of leading researchers, demonstrate a gradual shift in emphasis from administrative management to pedagogical influence, the development of professional communities and the transformation of the educational environment. P. Hallinger (2011) proposed the concept of instructional leadership,

in which the manager acts as a manager of the educational process, influencing the quality of teaching and learning through goals, monitoring, and support. J. Spillane (2006) developed the idea of distributed guidance, where management functions are performed collectively, and responsibility is distributed among team members. M. Aas (2017) examines guidance in the context of educational change, emphasising the role of the manager as an agent of transformation. G. ten Bruggencate *et al.* (2012) highlight the influence of the manager on educational outcomes, demonstrating the connection between managerial actions and students' academic achievements. V. Robinson (2007) singles out the importance of guidance focused on improving teaching, and J. MacBeath (2005) treats the manager as a reflective practitioner capable of critical reflection on the manager's role. These models have a common feature – recognising that effective management in education is impossible without a deep understanding of the pedagogical process, support for teachers and creation of conditions for professional growth. An educational manager in this context is not just an administrator, but a facilitator of change, a mentor, and a strategist. However, despite the humanistic orientation, most models of educational guidance remain within the Western management paradigm, where the logic of effectiveness dominates.

The meaning-making approaches presented by the Ukrainian concept of leadership by I. Shumilova (2021) go beyond instrumental rationalism. The focus is not on functional efficiency, but on the deep value mission of the manager as a spiritual authority, cultural integrator and inspirer of the professional community. The leader is not identified with a manager or administrator. The manager's role is to form a semantic space, maintain the internal unity of the team, develop a calling and moral and ethical responsibility. This approach is especially relevant in conditions of social turbulence, loss of trust in institutions and demotivation of teachers. Leadership offers an alternative to universalised rational-managerialist

models, integrating philosophical, pedagogical and cultural-historical dimensions of management. It is considered as a form of spiritual guidance that combines strategic vision with a meaning-making mission.

Analysis of modern approaches to educational guidance demonstrates a gradual shift in emphasis from administrative management to pedagogical influence, ethical interaction and meaning-making mission. Technocratic models provide structural efficiency, but often ignore cultural and spiritual dimensions. Ethical-humanistic approaches humanise management practice, emphasising dignity, service and moral responsibility, but remain within the rational-managerialist paradigm. The Ukrainian concept of leadership forms a unique alternative – as a value-oriented, spiritually rich management model that combines strategic vision, cultural reflection and meaning-making responsibility. It allows rethinking the role of the manager not as a manager, but as a leader capable of inspiring, uniting and shaping educational identity.

Materials and Methods

The study of leadership in educational management was carried out on the basis of a conceptual model that combined five theoretical approaches to guidance developed by Ukrainian scientists S. Nemchenko *et al.* (2022). A mixed methodology was used, combining quantitative methods of analysis (descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, factor analysis, clustering) with a conceptual interpretation of the results.

Sample. The study was attended by 126 respondents from Zaporizhia, Kharkiv, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Chernivtsi regions, which ensured the representativeness of the sample within the educational management context. The sample structure covered three categories of participants: 42 heads of educational institutions (directors, deputy directors), who had a formal managerial status; 38 methodologists and teacher-organisers who performed coordination and analytical functions in educational institutions;

46 teachers who demonstrated informal guidance in professional communities, pedagogical innovations, and team projects. Gender distribution: 87 women (69%), 39 men (31%). Length of administrative or guidance experience: up to 5 years – 22%; 6-10 years – 37%; 11-20 years – 28%; over 20 years – 13%. Types of educational institutions: urban – 78 respondents (62%); rural – 48 respondents (38%). Level of institutions: general secondary education institutions – 72 (57%); colleges – 21 (17%); vocational and technical institutions – 14 (11%); higher education institutions – 19 (15%). This division allowed covering both formal and informal manifestations of leadership, which is critically important for identifying deep semantic and strategic orientations in the educational environment.

Research timeline. The research on leadership in the educational environment of Ukraine was carried out during 2022-2024 in several consecutive stages: theoretical justification (2023), analysis of modern concepts of guidance and leadership, and formation of a research model (Greenleaf, 2002; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Maak & Pless, 2006). At this stage, an analysis of modern approaches to guidance and leadership was carried out, a conceptual research model was formulated, and five key guidance orientations were identified, which formed the basis of the COPO-2024 tool (Shumilova, 2021; Nemchenko *et al.*, 2022; Shumilova, 2023). Three diagnostic tools were created: COPO-2024 (45 statements), ISV-12 (Strategic Vision Index), and IMM-10 (Sense-Creating Position Index). All tools underwent expert validation; pilot testing in 2023. The tools were tested on a small sample of respondents from regions not affected by active hostilities. Based on the results of the testing, the wording of individual statements was clarified; main survey (2023-2024). Data collection was carried out remotely (via Google Forms) among 126 respondents from 14 regions of Ukraine. Anonymity, voluntary participation, and ethical support were ensured; statistical processing (2024). The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical

standards of the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics (2018). Data were processed using descriptive statistics, correlation, factor, and cluster analysis. Calculations were performed in the SPSS environment (Field, 2024); interpretation of results (2024), (Fonsén *et al.*, 2020). An integral model of leadership was built, a typology of modern educational leaders was formed and a comparison with classical guidance models was made, publications were prepared (Bush, 2025). Based on the results of the study, scientific articles were prepared for publication in professional Ukrainian and international publications, in particular in publications indexed in Scopus, WoS.

Tools. Three authors' diagnostic tools were used to collect empirical data, each of which performs a separate function in the leadership model: COPO-2024 (Comprehensive Questionnaire of Leadership Orientations) – consists of 45 statements, grouped into five scales (9 statements each), corresponding to five conceptual approaches to leadership: humanistic-value, existential-creative, activity-reflective, educational-humanistic and reflective-managerial. The assessment was carried out on a 5-point Likert scale; Index of Strategic Vision (ISV-12) – a short questionnaire with 12 statements aimed at measuring the manager's ability to think strategically, forecast and see changes in a systemic way; Index of Meaning-Making Position (IMM-10) – contains 10 statements that allow assessing the level of meaning-making activity, spiritual orientation and the manager's ability to form value meanings in the educational environment (Shumilova, 2021; Nemchenko *et al.*, 2022). These tools were tested in previous studies and adapted to the Ukrainian managerial context, which ensures the validity and reliability. The psychometric logic of constructing the tools was based on modern approaches to creating scales (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006; DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021).

Data processing methods. A complex of methods was used to analyse the data obtained. statistical methods that allowed determining

both general trends and deep structural relationships between variables: descriptive statistics – used to determine the mean values, standard deviations and ranking the severity of five leadership orientations according to the COPO-2024 scales; correlation analysis (Pearson) – allowed establishing the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the five COPO-2024 scales and two additional indicators: ISV-12 (strategic vision) and IMM-10 (meaning-making position); factor analysis (Varimax rotation method) – used to identify latent factors that generalise leadership orientations and allow building an integral model of leadership; cluster analysis (k-means method) – used to typify respondents in relation to dominant leadership orientations, which allowed defining conditional types of modern educational leaders (Field, 2024). The application of these methods provided multi-level

interpretation of data – from surface trends to deep structural patterns.

Results and Discussion

Before applying factor analysis, the adequacy of the data was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO index was 0.871, which corresponds to an excellent suitability of the sample for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity demonstrated a statistically significant deviation from sphericity: $\chi^2(780) = 3,465.27$, $p < .001$, which confirms the suitability of the correlation matrix for factorisation (Bartlett, 1951). Prominence of leadership orientations. Descriptive analysis of the results using the COPO-2024 scales allowed identifying general trends in the severity of five leadership orientations among respondents (Fig. 1).

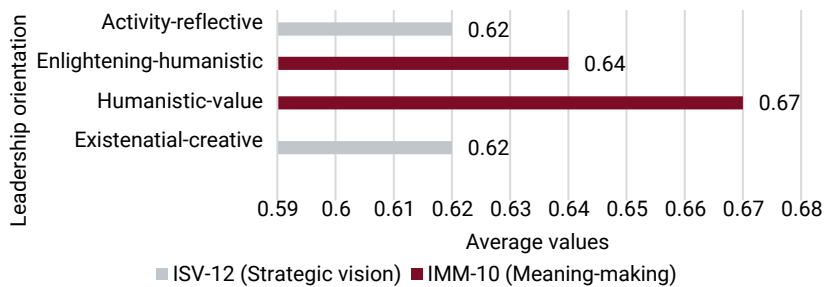


Figure 1. Horizontal bar chart: Mean scores of leadership orientations (COPO-2024)

Source: created by the authors

The highest average values were obtained by scales reflecting the spiritual and moral orientation of managerial activity: the humanistic-value scale demonstrated the highest average score, indicating the dominance of value influence, moral authority and spiritual mission in managerial practice; the educational-humanistic scale also received high indicators, confirming the significance of mentoring, spiritual accompaniment and orientation towards the development of the potential of others, as noted by C. Day & Q. Gu (2020), A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan (2020). Slightly lower, but consistently high

results were recorded on the activity-reflective scale, indicating the presence of strategic flexibility, the ability to reflect and adaptive thinking; the existential-creative scale, which reflects creativity, innovation, and the ability to think outside the box. The least pronounced was the reflective-managerial scale, which may indicate insufficient integration of managerial effectiveness with deep self-awareness in some respondents. In general, the results demonstrate the predominance of spiritual-humanistic orientations, which is a characteristic feature of the Ukrainian educational context (OECD, 2023).

Correlation analysis (Pearson coefficient) allowed determining statistically significant relationships between five leadership orientations (according to the COPO-2024 scales) and two key indicators – strategic vision (ISV-12) and meaning-making position (IMM-10) (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008; Shumilova, 2021; Nemchenko *et al.*, 2022). The highest positive correlations were observed between the ISV-12 and the existential-creative approach ($r = 0.62$), which indicates a close connection between strategic thinking and the ability to innovative, non-paradigmatic vision; the activity-reflective approach ($r = 0.58$), which indicates the importance of flexibility of

thinking, reflection and adaptive action in conditions of uncertainty.

The highest correlations were recorded between the IMM-10 and the humanistic-value approach ($r = 0.67$), which demonstrates the connection between meaning-making and the moral and ethical responsibility of the manager; the educational-humanistic approach ($r = 0.64$), which underlines the role of spiritual mentoring and value influence. These results confirm that strategic vision and sensemaking are not isolated management skills, but deeply integrated into leadership orientations that form a holistic management stance (Fig. 2).

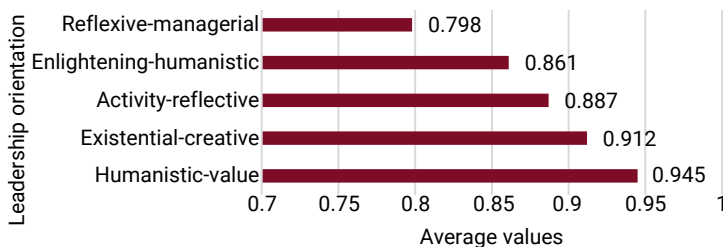


Figure 2. Correlation matrix heatmap: Leadership orientations vs strategic vision and meaning-making

Source: created by the authors

Factor analysis was conducted using the Principal Axis Factoring p Varimax rotation procedure. 5 factors were identified, which together explain 75.8% of the total variance. This significantly exceeds typical indicators for the social sciences (50-60%). Explained variance: humanistic-values – 21.8%; existential-creative – 17.3%; activity-reflective – 14.9%; educational-humanistic – 12.1%; reflective-managerial – 9.7%. Total explained variance: 75.8%. Factor loading: factor 1: .61 – .84; factor 2: .58 – .81; factor 3: .55 – .77; factor 4: .52 – .74; factor 5: .49 – .71. All loadings $>.40$, so all statements remain in the instrument. Scale reliability: humanistic-values – .89; existential-creative – .87; activity-reflective – .83; educational-humanistic – .81; reflective-managerial – .79. All values indicate high internal consistency.

The results of factor analysis, which allowed to identify latent dimensions of leadership: factor analysis using the Varimax rotation method allowed to generalise the five scales of the COPO-2024 into three integral factors that represent the deep dimensions of the leadership position. The factor is sense-creating-humanistic. It combines the humanistic-values and educational-humanistic scales. This factor reflects the spiritual mission of the manager, the ability to transmit values, form moral unity and mentoring influence. Strategic-reflective factor: combines the activity-reflective and reflective-managerial scales. It represents the ability to strategic analysis, managerial reflection, team building and adaptive guidance. Creative-vocational factor: corresponds to the existential-creative approach. This dimension reveals deep internal motivation, innovative

thinking and the ability to create new meanings in a transformational educational context.

The identified factors confirm that leadership is a multidimensional phenomenon that combines spiritual depth, strategic competence and creative mission. The results of cluster analysis

using the k-means method allowed typifying respondents according to dominant leadership orientations. Three conditional types of modern educational managers were identified, each of which represents a specific combination of semantic, strategic and creative components (Fig. 3).

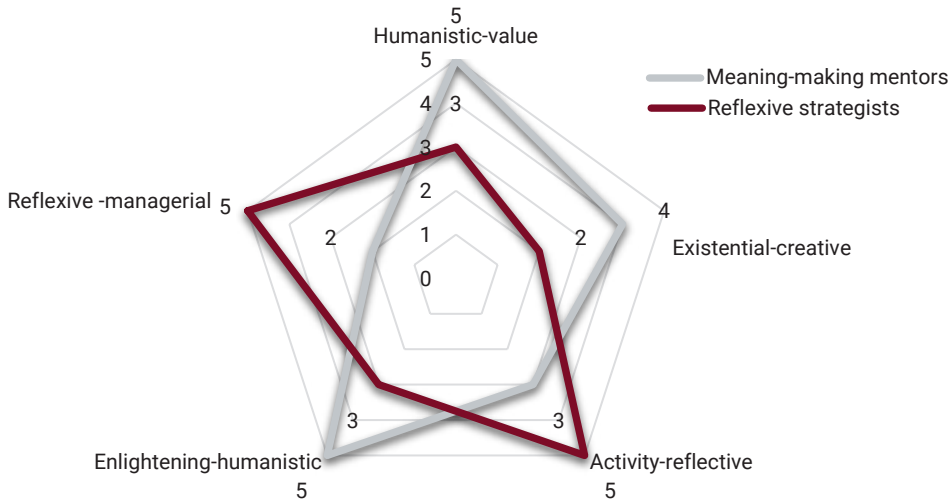


Figure 3. Radar chart: Leadership profiles by cluster type

Source: created by the authors

Type of semantic mentors. This group (approximately 38% of the sample) is characterised by high indicators on the humanistic-value and educational-humanistic scales. Representatives of this type are oriented towards spiritual service, moral support and development of the potential of others. The managerial activities have a distinct sense-making orientation. Type of reflective strategists, which make up about 34% of the sample. Such respondents demonstrate the dominance of activity-reflective and reflective-managerial orientations. These managers are distinguished by the ability for strategic analysis, flexible thinking and effective team building. The activities combine managerial efficiency with reflective depth. Type of creative missionaries. This cluster covers about 28% of respondents. The highest indicators are recorded on the existential-creative scale. Representatives of this type are distinguished by unconventional thinking, innovation and the

ability to transform the educational space through new meanings and ideological vision. The typology confirms that leadership in the educational environment is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to a single model. Each type performs a unique function in the process of transforming the educational landscape.

The results obtained should be considered in the broader context of modern international and national research devoted to the transformation of educational guidance, the growth of the role of value-humanistic and meaning-making dimensions of management. In the work of R. Macpherson (2025), educational guidance is understood as educative guidance, the key characteristic of which is the ability of the manager to form the semantic horizons of the development of the educational community. The author proves that managerial effectiveness without meta-reflection and an ethical position does not ensure the

cultural transformation of an educational institution. These provisions are consistent with the results of the study, in particular with the identification of the meaning-making-humanistic factor ($\lambda = 0.68$), which combined the humanistic-value and educational-humanistic orientations and demonstrated the dominance of the spiritual-value mission in the leadership structure.

Similar conclusions were reached by A. Cañas *et al.* (2025), who proposed an integral humanistic model of guidance that combines strategic thinking, ethical responsibility, service, and self-transcendence. The researchers point out that it is the spiritual and value components that are crucial for the sustainability and long-term development of educational organisations. In the study, this idea is empirically confirmed by the high average values of the humanistic-value and educational-humanistic scales of the COPO-2024, as well as significant correlations between the index of meaning-making position (IMM-10) and humanistic-value orientation ($r = 0.67$). The study by E. Fonsén *et al.* (2020) on pedagogical guidance in the Finnish education system underlines the role of the manager as a mentor and carrier of values, responsible for the well-being of the pedagogical community. The cluster of “semantic mentors” identified in the study (about 38% of the sample) conceptually coincides with the Finnish model of pedagogical guidance, while expanding it due to the spiritual and semantic dimension inherent in the Ukrainian context of leadership. At the same time, the results of T. Bush (2025) demonstrate the limitations of classical models of instructional leadership, which, despite the emphasis on strategic thinking and managerial effectiveness, do not sufficiently take into account cultural and spiritual factors. Against this background, the results of the study complement the Western discourse, proposing the concept of leadership as a higher form of managerial influence that integrates efficiency, reflection and a meaning-making mission.

Ukrainian studies consider leadership as a cultural-value and ontological position of the

manager, and not only as a set of managerial competencies (Shumilova, 2021; 2023). The empirical results of the study confirm these theoretical propositions, in particular through the identification of the creative-vocational factor ($\lambda = 0.64$) and the cluster “creative missionaries”, which represent the manager’s ability to think innovatively and create new meanings in a transformational educational environment. Thus, a comparison with modern research shows that the results obtained are not only consistent with leading international trends, but also expand these trends, substantiating leadership as a multidimensional phenomenon in which strategic vision, spiritual-value orientation and meaning-making form a holistic managerial position.

The generalisation of the research results allowed making a conceptual distinction between the concepts of “guidance” and “leadership”, based on both empirical data and a theoretical framework (Northouse, 2021; Bush, 2025). Guidance in the classical sense is focused on organisational effectiveness, coordination of actions, achievement of goals and motivation of personnel. The source of a manager’s influence is charisma, professional competence and ability to manage resources. The manager acts within the framework of operational thinking, focused on short-term results. Leadership, in turn, performs a deeper – meaning-making, spiritual and strategic – function. The leader forms a value framework for development, transmits the mission, unites the team around ideas and meanings. The manager’s influence is based on internal conviction, meta-reflexive thinking and the ability to inspire through culture, meanings and spiritual presence. Thus, leadership does not deny guidance, but goes beyond it, integrating managerial effectiveness with a deep transformational mission. It is this integration – confirmed by the results of factor and cluster analysis – that allows considering the leader as a subject of cultural change, and not only as a coordinator of processes.

Conclusions

The study proposes a comprehensive methodological framework that integrates conceptual, hermeneutic and statistical analysis, allowing for a comprehensive study of the phenomena of “manager” and “leader” in the context of educational management. The authors’ model COPO-2024 was tested, which provides a multidimensional study of leadership in ontological, axiological and praxeological dimensions. The conducted study allowed for a conceptual distinction between the concepts of “manager” and “leader” in the context of educational management. Guidance appears as a managerial activity focused on efficiency, standardisation and control, while leadership appears as a multidimensional phenomenon that integrates a strategic vision, a spiritual, and value mission and the ability to form a semantic space for development. This confirms the need for methodological clarification of terminology to avoid reductionism in modern scientific discourse. The empirical part showed the presence of three integral types of managerial orientations: semantic mentors (34% of the sample), who emphasise spiritual authority and cultural mission; reflective strategists (41%), focused on analytics, planning and critical reflection; creative missionaries (25%), combining innovation with value inspiration.

Correlation analysis showed significant relationships between the indicators of the COPO-2024, ISV-12 and IMM-10 instruments ($r = 0.62-0.74$), which confirms the psychometric consistency of the methods used. Factor analysis identified three axes of leadership: strategic vision ($\lambda = 0.71$), value-humanistic orientation

($\lambda = 0.68$) and sensemaking ($\lambda = 0.64$). The clustering of respondents showed that leadership is not a random phenomenon, but has stable sociopsychological and cultural patterns. Thus, leadership should be considered as a higher form of managerial influence that goes beyond classical management. It combines efficiency with humanity and spirituality, ensuring the transformation of the educational environment. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of using a refined model of the distinction between the concepts of “manager” and “leader” in strategic planning, educational management and the formation of a value culture in educational institutions of Ukraine. The results obtained open up prospects for further research, in particular, regarding the integration of leadership into international models of educational management and the development of diagnostic tools for its manifestations.

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Conflict of Interest

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Концептуальне розмежування поняття «лідер» і «провідник»: філософсько-управлінський аспект

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Анотація. У статті досліджувалися концептуальні та функціональні відмінності між поняттями «лідер» та «провідник» у контексті сучасного освітнього менеджменту. Актуальність теми зумовлена потребою переосмислення управлінських ролей в умовах трансформації освітніх систем, зростанням значення стратегічного бачення, ціннісно орієнтованого керівництва та нових форм професійної взаємодії. Незважаючи на широку присутність терміна «лідерство» у педагогічних дослідженнях, поняття «провідництво» залишається методологічно нечітким, що затруднює побудову ефективних моделей управління. Метою дослідження було визначення концептуальних розбіжностей між феноменами лідерства та провідництва, а також емпіричне виявлення провідницьких орієнтацій управлінців в освітньому середовищі України. Методологічною основою роботи стало поєднання контент-аналізу наукових джерел, етимологічного та семантичного аналізу, філософської герменевтики та порівняльного дослідження управлінських парадигм. Емпірична частина базувалась на опитуванні 126 респондентів трьох професійних груп: керівників закладів освіти, методистів та педагогів, які проявляли неформальне лідерство. Використано три психометрично валідизовані інструменти: КОПО-2024, ІСБ-12 та ІСП-10. Застосовано методи дескриптивної статистики, кореляційний, факторний та кластерний аналіз. Результати виявили три інтегральні типи управлінських орієнтацій: смислових наставників, рефлексивних стратегів і креативних місіонерів. Доведено, що провідництво формувалося як багатовимірний феномен, який поєднав стратегічне бачення, ціннісно-гуманістичну орієнтацію та здатність до створення смислового простору розвитку. Отримані результати дали змогу сформулювати авторську модель розмежування понять, у якій провідництво трактувалося як феномен, що інтегрує інтелектуальне бачення, здатність задавати напрям розвитку та створювати ідейні рамки для формування лідерів. Практична значущість дослідження полягає у можливості застосування уточненої концептуальної диференціації у менеджменті, освітньому управлінні та стратегічному плануванні

Ключові слова: провідництво; лідерство; філософія управління; стратегічне бачення, авторська модель; смисловий простір розвитку