School Directors and Differences in Leadership Style Depending on Gender

Nebojsa Pavlovic

Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism, Vrnjacka Banja, University Kragujevac, Serbia 36210, Vrnjacka Banja
E-mail: hitvb@kg.ac.rs

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ABSTRACT There is a certain paradox regarding gender in educational institutions. Although there are many more females among teachers, this trend has not developed regarding school directors. One of the reasons is the common opinion that the post of school director is more appropriate for men as women use different styles of management that are not favorable for this kind of position. The aim of this quantitative research is to determine the existence of differences in leadership styles in schools according to gender. The sample included 105 randomly chosen directors from high schools and primary schools in Serbia. For purposes of research, the Blake-Mouton Managerial Grid model was used for the evaluation of leadership behavior. The research results showed that there is no difference between management style regarding gender. The results imply a need for maintaining a balanced participation of women and men during the selection process of a school director.

INTRODUCTION

Since gender is related to the biological and physical features of men and women, it is also related to the social and cultural differences between genders (Oxford Dictionary 2015). Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with the biological sex of the person (APA 2006). Data have shown that gender defines the role of an individual in education more than age, experience and competencies (Whitaker and Lane 1990). Drucker claimed that management styles consist of characteristic ways of making decisions and relating to subordinates (Drucker 2004).

The following questions were used in this research: To what extent are the differences among men and women present during the selection of a particular management style? Not much research has been carried out in Serbia relating to this area of study. Bearing in mind the importance of education and the number of teachers, this subject should be more interesting to researchers.

In order to fulfill the aim of this research, it was crucial to discover whether there are any differences in management style according to gender. The importance of this research goes beyond the borders of Serbia due to the influence of cultural factors on the differences between genders. Although research claims that differences between genders are the same almost everywhere in the world (Coleman 2004; Yorulmazlar 2015), we cannot forget the fact that culture can have a very strong influence on the formation of management styles (Schein 2010).

The Blake-Mouton grid instrument was used for this research. This instrument is one of the first attempts to define appropriate behavior in management (Blake and McCanse 1991). Blake and Mouton’s approach to organizational development focuses on human behavioral processes rather than on the technological and structural aspects of organizations. The grid does not answer the question as to which style is the best. It is a starting point for a critical analysis of style and the improvement of leadership skills (Northouse 2008). Why did we use the Blake-Mouton grid? It is known that the theoretical basis of the Grid sometimes leads to certain doubts while, critics have warned that there is a lack of essential research evidence needed for the efficiency of this model (Robbins and Coutler 2005). Simply put, there is no real evidence which can be used as proof that this model is not accurate. Over two million studies were conducted using this program. It can be concluded that the Grid contains all the known leadership styles (Nort-
Orientation for people includes elements of democratic, transformational, team, and authentic styles. Orientation for tasks includes elements of authoritative and transactional styles. Therefore, this model has made a great contribution in terms of practical help and is not just a theoretical approach (British Library 2014).

Research on genders and management in educational institutions should start with an investigation into the number of women in formal leadership positions (Shakeshaft 2006). The appropriate question is the following: “Is there certain ‘Glass Ceiling’ for women that prevent them reaching leadership positions?” The first task of researchers is to find out the right number of women that are employed in leadership positions in educational institutions.

Statistical data on a number of teachers and school principals in educational institutions around the world can be obtained from the Teaching and Learning International Survey – Talis (2014), which is a part of the OECD analytics. Earlier, it was difficult for researchers to find these data in one place. Therefore, the number of women employed in leadership positions in schools was only an assumption (Shakeshaft 2006). The number of female teachers is much larger than the number of male teachers in almost all the observed countries. According to the data from 2014, the number of female teachers in the USA is 69 percent, an averagely of 68 percent in Europe (78% in Italy), and 63 percent in Serbia. It is interesting that this percentage is very similar in other parts of the world. Among the countries that include nearly the same number of male and female teachers, there are 50 percent female teachers in Turkey, and Japan is an interesting case with 52 percent male teachers. Regarding the number of women in the positions of school principals, the relationship with the number of teachers is not maintained. The USA has 46 percent, Europe 49 percent, and Serbia 55 percent women as directors/principals of certain educational institutions (Talis 2014).

Research on women who manage educational institutions is very interesting for this study. Special attention is aimed partly at the differentiation of the attitudes and behavior of male and female leaders (Fitzgerald 2015; Fenell 1999; Skrla and Young 2003).

The research results imply that although the number of women in leadership positions is increasing, leadership is still identified with men (Coleman 2004). A large number of researchers have noticed that theories are based on studies of male characteristics (Blackmore 1999; Fitzgerald 2002; Shakeshaft 2006). Atonakis and House (2004) said: “If they act like a leader, using typical men characteristics, they are perceived as being hard because they act against the typically female personality profile. If they act like a woman, they are perceived as being inefficient since typically male personality traits are perceived as more effective leadership characteristics.” Women perceive the leadership role differently from men, and they are aware of the fact they have to justify their role as principles (Coleman 2004). Some authors have claimed that women are forced to work more efficiently and twice as much as men in order to survive (Allen et al. 1995).

Eagly and Johannsen-Smidt (2007) used a meta-analysis of a lot of studies in order to find differences in leadership styles between men that are present through stereotypes. However, these differences are very small. Van Engen and Willemesen (2004) claimed that differences in the selection of a leadership style do exist, and that women have a more democratic and participative style than men. Women can better adapt to organizational culture (Foels et al. 2000). As opposed to men, women have a highly expressive, androgenic style known as transformational leadership (Eagly et al. 2003). Women are underestimated in relation to men in cases when they show a male style of leadership, which is recognized as ordering and autocratic (Eagly et al. 1992). Same authors have claimed that women are more efficient in the application of transactional leadership as they are more capable of motivating people. Oplatka (2004) claimed that there are differences in management depending on the style, but that these originate from different social patterns. While Coleman (2004) claimed that problems related to gender are the same in every country, Vecchio (2002) claimed that authors who stated that differences exist exaggerate without any clear insight as to the causes of these differences. He suggested that an investigation of culture as an important factor for the development of gender differences. Culture is also recognized by other authors (Pavlovic 2013) as important for the formation of the school principal’s style. If the school principal does not adopt the leadership style suggested by the school’s culture, he/
GENDER AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

It seems that there is no typically female management style. Women use male styles by adapting them to their own characters (Eagly and Carli 2007). These researchers claim that women are mostly transformational leaders, while men are often governed by a more laissez-faire style than women, according to which women are more efficient than men at using different management styles.

Dobbins and Platz (1986) concluded that gender does not make a difference in terms of the use of management style. However, they appealed for a cessation of studies on gender differences in managerial leadership. Fitzgerald (2003) argued in her explanations of the problems of researching management styles. She claimed that men should be more actively involved in the research on differences between genders. So far, most of the authors on these topics have been women. According to her opinion, this is the way towards a great improvement in the quality of research in this area.

METHODOLOGY

The main aim of this research is to determine whether there is a difference in management styles between men and women. The specific aims are related to the determination of differences between men and women regarding the following: a) Style of orientation for people and b) style of orientation for tasks.

Work on this research started by posing the following question: To what extent have the differences between men and women evolved in the selection of the style of the school principal? The specific problems are: a) How much of a difference is there between the genders regarding the orientation of the school principal towards people? And b) how much of a difference is there between the genders regarding the orientation of the school principal towards tasks.

The research issues evolving from these problems are: 1) Is there any difference between the genders regarding the orientation of the school principal towards people? And 2) is there any difference between the genders regarding the orientation of the school principal towards tasks?

For research purposes the Blake’s instrument was used. The so-called managerial network was used for research on the behavior of school principals (Blake and Mouton 1985). The instrument included 18 questions with a Likert scale (five claims). Nine of these 18 questions were related to the orientation towards people (y-axis) while the other nine questions were related to the orientation towards tasks (x-axis). The main reason for using the Blake and Mouton’s Managerial Grid Model lies in conceptual nature of this model. Researchers who have carried out investigations using this approach confirmed that leadership style is primarily a combination of two main types of behavior: Oriented towards tasks and oriented towards relationships. The key to effective leadership usually lies in the way a leader balances these two types of behaviors (Northouse 2008). However, the model does not completely solve the problem of the best leadership, but it presents an excellent starting point for thinking about the improvement of common leadership skills. According to van Eersel (2014), there is a tendency for managers to exaggerate (80% of them) regarding self-evaluation. During an evaluation using the Grid, this number decreased to 20 percent. The limitations of Blake and Mouton’s Managerial Grid Model ignore the importance of internal and external factors (Northouse 2008).

The accuracy of the instrument was investigated using Cronbach’s Alpha, which had a value of 0.86, which shows great reliability and internal agreement of scale for this sample.

For the purposes of research, 105 randomly selected principals from high schools and primary schools in Serbia were surveyed. There were 48 women and 57 men. The school principals in Serbia were selected from a group of teachers that said how important it was to belong to a school culture. The teachers decided on the selection of the school principal during a special meeting. Before the main research was conducted there was a pilot study (testing the instruments and the sampling and methods of research, testing and training of the interviewers). The pilot study included 35 directors of secondary and primary schools.

A parameter t-test of the independent samples was used for the data processing and a comparison of the mean values of styles measured in two different groups. Descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean value and standard deviation) were used to determine the occurrence of the main variables for the research.
All the statistical analyses were developed by using the statistics software SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows).

RESULTS

The answers to the following research questions were required: 1) Is there a difference between the genders in terms of the style of the school principal oriented towards people? 2) Is there a difference between the genders in terms of the style of the school principal oriented towards tasks?

A t-test of the independent samples was used for analysis where the results of the investigation of the two orientations of the leadership styles between men and women were investigated.

There was no significant difference between the results for men (M=7.231, SD=1.147) and women (M=7.100, SD=0.640) regarding the orientation towards people. The results were t(105) p=0.7 (on both sides). The difference between the mean values of the marks according to group (average difference=0.048; 95% CI: -0.57 to 0.66) was very small (eta=0.005), Tables 1 and 2.

Regarding the orientation towards tasks, there was no significant difference between the results for men (M=7.210, SD=1.18223) and women (M=7.162, SD=0.517). The results were t (105), p= 0.9 (on both sides). The difference between the mean values of the marks according to group (average difference=0.048; 95% CI: -0.57 to 0.66) was very small (eta=0.005), Tables 1 and 2.

Descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean value and standard deviation) were used for the determination of the number of main research variables. All the guidelines of the style of the school principal and his/her orientations were relatively high. On a scale of 1 to 5, all were above 3. The respondents gave the highest grades to answers related to teams (M=4.571 and M=4.428) and will for the completion of the task (M=4.457). It should be kept in mind that there is no big difference between the highest grade (M=4.571 for team encouraging) and the lowest grade, M=3.4857 which is related to the school principal not wanting to hurt the employees with his/her criticism (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 2: Independent samples test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>equality of variances</th>
<th>equality of means</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>sig</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig2-tailed</th>
<th>mean difference</th>
<th>std error</th>
<th>difference 95% confidence interval of the difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to People</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>3.304</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>33.000</td>
<td>0.686</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to People</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>0.2925</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.308</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to Task</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>7.387</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>33.000</td>
<td>0.881</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to Task</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>25.537</td>
<td>0.874</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>-0.697</td>
<td>0.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to Task</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>25.537</td>
<td>0.874</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>-0.697</td>
<td>0.666</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main aim of this research is to try to determine the existence of differences in management style depending on gender in educational institutions. The common results of the styles of school principals showed trends that could be helpful for the determination of differences between genders of school principals in educational institutions.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for respondents on managerial network instrument. Orientation of the people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation of the people</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.457</td>
<td>.50540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I encourage my team to participate when it comes decision making time and I try to implement their ideas and suggestions</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.5714</td>
<td>.77784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I enjoy coaching people on new tasks and procedures</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.5714</td>
<td>.97877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I encourage my employees to be creative about their job</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.2857</td>
<td>1.0452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I enjoy reading articles, books, and journals about training, leadership, and psychology; and then putting what I have read into action</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.4857</td>
<td>1.0108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. When correcting mistakes, I do not worry about jeopardizing relationships</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.4857</td>
<td>1.0395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I enjoy explaining the intricacies and details of a complex task or project to my employees</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.5429</td>
<td>1.0666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Nothing is more important than building a great team</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.4286</td>
<td>.77784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I honour other people’s boundaries</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>7.1714</td>
<td>.93952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I encourage my employees to be creative about their job</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>7.1886</td>
<td>.92665</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise) 105

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for respondents on managerial network instrument. Orientation to task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation to task</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.457</td>
<td>.50540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nothing is more important than accomplishing a goal or task</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.5143</td>
<td>1.2688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I closely monitor the schedule to ensure a task or project will be completed in time</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.1143</td>
<td>.79600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The more challenging a task is, the more I enjoy it</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.1143</td>
<td>.79600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When seeing a complex task through to completion, I ensure that every detail is accounted for</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.4571</td>
<td>.74134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I find it easy to carry out several complicated tasks at the same time</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.0571</td>
<td>.80231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I manage my time very efficiently</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.0000</td>
<td>.76696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Breaking large projects into small manageable tasks is second nature to me</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.0286</td>
<td>.85700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I enjoy analysing problems</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.8857</td>
<td>.90005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I enjoy reading articles, books, and trade journals about my profession; and then implementing the new procedures I have learned</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.9143</td>
<td>.85300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Orientation of the people 105 4.00 8.00 7.1714 .93952 |
Orientation to task 105 4.00 8.80 7.1886 .92665 |
Valid N (listwise) 105
The obtained results gave negative responses for both research questions: 1) There is no difference between the genders regarding the style of school principals oriented towards people; 2) also, it was determined that there are no differences between the genders regarding the style of school principals oriented towards tasks. Previous studies agree with our results. Similar results were obtained by Eagly and Johannsen-Semidt (2007), and Coleman (2004). However, there are certain differences in the data used for the investigations. The data obtained from the Teaching and Learning International Survey – Talis (2015) explained that some researchers do not have precise data on the number of teachers and school principals in certain countries. Shakeshaft (2006) explained that only 34.5 percent of school principals in the USA are female. Our data claimed that 46 percent of them are female. The same can be said for Europe. This author claimed that nearly 35 percent school principals in Europe are female, while the real data showed this number to be 49 percent. For this kind of research, it is very important to provide precise data for mostly precise analyses (van Engen and Willemensen 2004).

The results showed that all school principals, regardless of gender and place of work, have the management style specific for team managers (Fig. 1). It is important to mention that both styles – orientation towards people and orientation towards tasks are balanced in every school principal. They use both management styles equally (and often simultaneously) depending on the situations and needs. It explained that school principals have an equal concern for tasks and human relationships by promoting team work and participation: They encourage involvement, act in a determined manner, clarify issues, specify priorities, are opened to criticism and advice, and enjoy their work (Fitzgerald 2015; Northouse 2008; Shakeshaft 2006).

School principals, regardless of gender do not significantly differ in terms of the answers to all of the 18 questions in the survey. This is not surprising as the organizational cultures of schools are particularly strong and effective for school principals (Pavlovic 2013).

Analysing management style and gender lead us to a discussion on the importance of cultural and social specifics of the region where the research was carried out. Cultural and social opportunities in Serbia were somehow more favorable for women who wanted to work in education institutions (Vujic 2008). The traditional head of the family usually kept his sons at home in

Fig. 1. Managerial network
order to continue the tradition of agricultural work, while the daughters were sent to town for education (Cvijic 2007). In Serbia, it is commonplace that men study “male” natural sciences and women study “female” social sciences, including pedagogical faculties. Therefore, the occupation of teacher was mostly given to women. Serbian culture has the attitude that women, as mothers, are closer to children, which was one of the reasons for their selection as teachers. This can be seen in the number of female students at pedagogical faculties. Nowadays, 8 percent of students at pedagogical faculties in Serbia are male (Republican Bureau of Statistics 2015). Since in many other countries the relationship between men and women regarding teachers and the school principal is very difficult (data from Talis 2015), Serbia has a more favorable ratio of men to women for teachers (63% women) and school principals (55% women). This relationship would be much favorable for women if experts in natural sciences were not employed (these are usually men who did not study at a pedagogical faculty) at specialized schools (Republican Bureau of Statistics 2015).

CONCLUSION

The leadership style in educational institutions does not depend on gender. The differences between genders regarding management style are more accidental than significant. The management styles of men and women working as school principals are equally oriented towards people and tasks. The knowledge that school principals of either gender are focused on team management is explained by the fact that schools in Serbia promote a high level of participation and team work. Hence, the main need of teachers to be involved in work of the school is satisfied. This will surely increase their commitment to their work. The existence of a balance in the number of women and men in the position of school principal is one of the first steps towards having gender equality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of the gender issue leads us to believe that this analysis will encourage research on the influence of other styles and orientations in order to change the politics of management in educational institutions. Future studies should use qualitative rather than quantitative research. We support this proposal with the explanation that the use of qualitative studies will show 100 percent of the cases of differences between men and women in leading positions, while quantitative studies will show only 14 percent of the cases with these differences.

It seems that the researchers were more focused on differences in order to find a way to minimize them. It is important to review problems related to gender in the light of cultural factors that can be very important for differences between genders. This is the way to obtain more precise data that could make a difference in terms of results. Differences between the genders do exist. They should not be used as a basis for discrimination, but rather for the creation of advantages. Future research will provide better working conditions for school principals of either gender.

It is also important to investigate the most important influences on the differences between the genders. The level of women’s commitment as mothers is of crucial importance for an investigation. Would a woman give up being a mother in order to head an educational institution?

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