

Women and Educational Management: Perceptions of teachers in primary education

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Abstract: Despite the legal equality of the sexes, the mass exodus of women in the workplace, the large numerical presence in education and the high rates of women who seek their expertise through university studies, the area of educational administration continues to be inaccessible for women, even at the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy, such as managerial positions of municipal schools. By conducting quantitative research on men and women teachers working in primary schools of the prefecture of Imathia sought the root causes of the phenomenon by recording the views collected during the period March - April 2013, using a questionnaire. With this view, we investigated the way men and women in our sample, perceive and approach the effective leadership, trying to focus on similarities or differences between them, which are related to the model of effective leader as it emerges from bibliography and as it is required by the contemporary social, political, cultural and economic conditions. The study showed no difference between female and male management style and projected the value of androgynous characteristics that an effective leader must have.

Keywords: educational administration, women's underrepresentation, causes.

INTRODUCTION

Only in the past decade or so have studies of leadership included women or looked at gender differences in leadership styles and characteristics [1-2]. According to Shakeshaft [1], although literature documents no differences in leadership style between the genders, the research does not extend itself beyond the world of Caucasian males. Shakeshaft wrote that characteristics of women in leadership were absent in the literature.

Since the numbers of women in educational administration have remained very small compared to the numbers of men in educational administration, the research on gender equity has focused on women. There have been some gains at the central office level and in the elementary principalship, but the majority of educational leaders in schools and districts are still White men. Many of the studies investigating this problem over the past two decades have contributed knowledge of women's experiences as principals and superintendents to the existing literature on educational administration, which was largely written about and by men. In particular, scholars have targeted the barriers to women in school administration, career paths of women administrators, and women's leadership styles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women constitute a minority in the field of educational administration. This exclusion has many negative implications. On the one hand, the active female teachers are excluded from decision-makers remain under the power of men and unable to serve as a model and assist future colleagues in claim management positions, thus preserving the status quo. On the other hand, the results are negative for the students of the schools as they do not become familiar with the image of women in positions of power. It is also important for girls since there are not trained to claim positions of power in the future working environment.

Moreover, the exclusion of women deprives the school of a different management style. Surveys [3-4], have shown that the majority of women in administrative roles adopt a democratic, participatory and collaborative way in decision making, while they respect the personality of subordinates, when they try to solve conflicts. Moreover, Goleman [5] argues that emotional intelligence of women is characterized by social responsibility and communication skills, which contribute to the effective operation of the school. In modern international economic conditions, the efficient operation of the school is necessary. Therefore, equal

exploitation of women and men in educational administration in the context of an efficient strategic planning, serves this goal. Moreover, according to [6], in the context of the educational system, from teaching to leadership, the men's characteristics are as important as women's.

In the field of education, the study of literature related to gender issues, it is shown that while women choose education as a profession, they tend to avoid or evade the hierarchical development, hence the paradox that education is run by men while in the same time women are marginalized and forced into silence [7]. The Constitution, of course, in the context of gender equality, deprives that women can claim positions of power. The administration continues to be 'masculine' while teaching is 'female' [8]. This phenomenon contributes to the maintenance and reproduction of stereotypical power relations between the sexes.

At this point an important contradiction arises. Education, according to the pedagogical ideals, is the space that cultivates critical thinking, broaden their horizons and frees the individual from discrimination and stereotypical attitudes associated with sex reversal promoting various forms of inequality. But it is also generally accepted that our education system seems contradictory to that of the role. Through the different gender expectations and behaviors of teachers and through the unequal distribution in positions of power and administration, reproduce and maintain gendered stereotypes, divisions and hierarchies [9].

Shakeshaft [1] detailed six hierarchical stages, questions, approaches, and outcomes regarding research on women in education. The stages were (a) absence of women documented, (b) search for women who have been or are administrators, (c) women as disadvantaged or subordinate, (d) women studied on their own terms, (e) women as challenge to theory, (f) transformation of theory. "

Shakeshaft [1] addressed the fact that the inclusion of women in leadership studies might challenge and redefine behaviors of those in leadership positions. Shakeshaft [1] referred to the need for women administrators to be able to tell their own stories, because their problems and life experiences are different than those of men. Shakeshaft [10] explained that there are the worlds of Caucasian males and the world of women and minority groups—worlds that Caucasian men seldom realize exist. Shakeshaft [10] stated: "Thus for women to be able to negotiate the world of white males is to be expected. They wouldn't have been selected for school administrators if they didn't comprehend and master the culture. In addition, however, they have knowledge of a female culture and

socialization that they bring to the job. It is this world that researchers have failed to investigate when they have studied male and female differences, and their absence of knowledge of the female world has led them to assume that differences don't exist".

According to Shakeshaft [10], the female world must be examined if we are to understand gender-based differences in leadership in organizations. Other authors [11] wrote of the over-valuing of the masculine, especially in the context of leadership. According to Heller [12] "Considering the plight of men and women as leaders involves two separate and often confused issues, behaviors and values". She contended that although there may be a shift toward a more positive valuing of stereotypically feminine leadership styles, this does not necessarily mean an endorsement of women in leadership positions. Haslett and Geis [13] reasoned that organizational reality differs for women and men. They argued that men's communication and leadership styles are highly valued in organizations, and that male communication and leadership style are the standard against which all leaders are measured. Landino & Owen [14] studied rhetorical themes of emergent female leaders in three leaderless groups as part of an upper-division small-group communication course in a private university. During the first week of the first semester, students were requested to form groups of their choosing that were about equal in number of males and females. No other criterion was used. Of the 21 students, three groups were formed. Each group was charged with solution of a campus life problem, meeting in and out of class weekly during the 12-week semester. They found: (a) females emerged as leaders when they maintained a subtle, yet hardworking ethic; (b) females outworked others by accepting more responsibility and tasks than men; (c) females consciously strived to emerge as organizers and were reluctant to be called leaders; and (d) females led by hard work with considerable attention given to creating themes of cohesion, egalitarian practices, and togetherness.

Papalewis [15] examined gender characteristics of communication on student evaluation measures of instruction. Their 1989 study offered evidence that male/female differences are observed by students and that such differentiating characteristics are related to student evaluation of instruction. According to Papalewis and Brown [16], the interdependence of research and practice in the schooling process has generally failed in the past to integrate female experiences, values, and styles of communicating by not recognizing gender characteristics in evaluation measures. Papalewis [15] noted that the literature on women in educational administration has tended to focus on either the barriers that potential female

educational leaders face or on "the inadequacies of women when measured against male-based norms of effective leader behavior".

Barriers to Women in Educational Leadership

The largest body of research related to women has examined barriers to women in entering the leadership hierarchy or in moving up that hierarchy. The question that was asked over two decades ago in the Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity through education continues to be appropriate. Why the "higher you go, the fewer you see" syndrome for women in school administration [17]. The majority of the studies on barriers are self-report surveys or interviews in which women identify the barriers they experienced either obtaining an administrative position or keeping it. Although much has been written on the career paths of males, there is no distinct literature on barriers to white heterosexual males; where barriers are examined as part of male career advancement, race and sexual identity have been the focus. In 1985, the barriers to women were described as either internally imposed or externally imposed. Since that time, the interaction of the two has been examined. The most recent research synthesized for this chapter indicates that more barriers previously identified as internal have been overcome than have barriers previously identified as external.

By 1985, a number of studies documented overt sex discrimination by school boards, departments of educational administration, and educational administrators, which prevented women from becoming school administrators. Shakeshaft [17] indicated that people tend to hire those like themselves; thus, "White males hire White males" [18-19]. Marshall [20] pointed out that affirmative action policies were often misused. In almost a quarter of a century since Marshall's assertion and despite the enormous gains made by the civil rights and women's rights movements, women and people of color still face unfair obstacles in education in general. While sex discrimination occurs in hiring and in treatment once on the job, there is some evidence that discrimination in the principalship and in staff positions is decreasing. For instance, Goldberg [21], in an experimental study of 598 superintendents who rated applicants for a position as an "assistant to" based upon identical resumes that differed only by female or male name of applicant, found no differences in the ratings by sex of applicant.

In USA, nationwide data on teacher salaries disaggregated by gender indicated that, with comparable backgrounds, years of experience, and school type, female teachers earned 95% of what their male counterparts were paid, not counting extra pay for after school or advising activities. In real terms, however, male elementary teacher salaries were 9.85%

higher than female elementary salaries and 12.97% more than female secondary teacher salaries [22].

There are very little data on gender differences in administrative salaries. Goldberg [21], in a survey of 588 administrative assistants in central office positions in New York, found that women reported earning half the salaries of men in similar positions. A 2004 study of 127 superintendents on Long Island found that time in the superintendency was related to gender differences in earnings. There were no meaningful sex differences in salary for superintendents in the first 3 years of the superintendency. However, males with 4 or more years in the superintendency earned more than females with similar experience. These differences were both statistically and practically significant [24].

In Greece, according to Andreou [24], the exercise of management education is purely a male phenomenon. Most women do not even submit applications for claiming administrative positions. This is translated by many as a lack of professional ambition [25] and forced suspension of their ambitions due to increased family obligations stemming from the traditional division of roles in the family. Furthermore, Brinia [6] has revealed other interesting aspects of the topic such as: the love of women for children which acts as a disincentive for them to assert administrative positions and preference to the social aspects of their work. Furthermore, there are external factors such as absence from the teaching process for some and the difficulty of re-entry and family commitments that make women less eligible. Moreover, the centralized and complicated Greek educational system often raises the difficulty in the path of women for their professional development [8].

METHODOLOGY

Research questions

This research aims examine the under-representation of women in educational administration through the perceptions of teachers, men and women who serve in the county's elementary schools worldwide. Drawing on this general goal, resulting in the following research questions:

1. Are there gender differences in the administration of schools in primary education?
2. The obstacles that block the path of women in the administration of schools stem from the women themselves?

Data collection tools

In this small-scale survey, the questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The sample was teachers serving in primary schools in the district of Imathia. This study was applied to a sample of 160 teachers.

The choice of the questionnaire was made in order to record as many views as possible within a short time. The questionnaire was delivered by hand to save time and reduce the cost while the response was greater.

The initial processing of the data was made with Microsoft Office Excel 2007. Afterwards, there was a statistical analysis. The analysis of the data collected for the purposes of this study was made using the statistical package SPSS 21.0.

Findings and Conclusion

Opinions on the administration

Participants were asked to express their views on matters related to the administration by selecting

specific positions which are either stereotypical perceptions or results of the literature review and research. From these results, it appears that 54.3% of the respondents believe that women have the same professional opportunities as men for career development. They stress, however, that women in such positions need to work harder than their male peers to prove their effectiveness. They think there is no difference in male and female management style and reject the stereotype that attaches administrative abilities in men. However, they believe that it is easier for men to be imposed upon the stakeholders. Moreover, teachers do not seem to realize the missing presence of women in educational administration.

Table 1: Opinion of participants regarding the men and women in administration

Opinion	Percentage
Women teach and men are in charge	16,9%
Women in administration are more oriented to the person while men focus more on results	16,3%
Administration is for men	1,6%
Men are better in administration than women	18,1%
Women are trapped in their traditional roles	21,4%
There are not differences in management style between men and women	42,5%
Female teachers have the same opportunities for professional development as men	54,3%
A female principal must try harder to prove herself than a male peer	48,1%
Women principals are better than men in interpersonal relations and conflict management	23,8%
It is easier for men to be imposed upon the stakeholders	40,6%

Despite the legal equality of the sexes, the exodus of women in the workplace, the large numerical presence in education and high rates of women who seek their expertise through university studies, the area of educational administration still remains inaccessible to women, even at lower levels of the administrative hierarchy, such as managerial positions in primary schools.

In general, the participants in our sample appear not to adopt stereotypes and reject the stereotype "administration = man", stating the appropriateness of management for both sexes. They believe there are no differences in management style of men and women, while effective leadership can be applied by both sexes. At the same time, many believe and hope that women are able to bring a new, more creative attitude in school management. More generally, there is a confusion on the perception of participants about the existence or not, of gendered style of administration. However, a careful reading of the responses seems to construct a stereotypical image and states that men in managerial positions are more easily imposed. The sweet and

sensitive women, synonymous with the stereotypical image of the mother, have learned to care and to obey, fearing a rejection for their cruelty. There is of course a different dimension. The women in our sample tend to use the power that comes from a managerial position to strengthen their relationships with their subordinates and students, not as a means of strict enforcement.

Although the majority of participants believe that women have the same opportunities for professional development as men, citing in terms of legal equality, at the same time they admit that a large percentage of the female principals should try more of their male counterparts to establish their effectiveness.

The participants do not seem to realize the lack of women in educational administration which requires the development of actions by the state to raise awareness about the gender, so that education will not be deprived of a precious human resource: women.

DISCUSSION

In the context of the current socio-economic conditions, educational organizations, in order to increase their effectiveness, have a vital need to use all of the skilled workforce. The exclusion of women from the administration, has an important impact in educational organizations and the state in general. The extra money spent on sabbatical leave and training programs for the purpose of obtaining additional skills do not pay off, as in the case of women, these skills are not exploited.

The Ministry should focus on is the change that can occur with the input and equal participation of women in educational administration. With this aim, we believe that the state should develop all the supporting structures for women - mothers to find time to deal with administration without the stress and pressure that neglect their parental role and contribution to the family.

The participants believe that women have the same opportunities for professional development, with men. However, they are unable to go to a second reading of this equality and realize that in a context which is set by men, with deeply enhanced stereotypical views, this equality is not actually there. To reverse this situation, the Ministry must organize and implement training programs to raise awareness on gender issues.

We would like to note that the role of women was and is impaired more than men's. As long as we do not recognize the causes, we continue to see genders as running in a race to a common destination, but from a different starting point.

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