

Feminine leadership and organisational culture

~Ph.D **Andreea-Simona Saseanu** (*Faculty of Commerce, Bucharest University of Economic Studies*)

E-mail: saseanu@yahoo.com

~ Ph. D. Professor **Sorin-George Toma** (*Faculty of Administration and Business, University of Bucharest, Romania*)

E-mail: tomagsorin62@yahoo.com

~ Ph. D. Professor **Paul Marinescu** (*Faculty of Administration and Business, University of Bucharest, Romania*)

E-mail: paulmarinescu1@gmail.com

Abstract: People in general, leaders especially, are influenced by the organisational culture and the other way around. Organisational culture represents a determining factor regarding the display of leadership, since these two processes create each other, adding value and consistency to one another. Moreover, organisational culture can be created and developed in a fluctuant business environment, in which the external factors influence its progress. The development of society has incessantly been emphasized by the relationship between the sexes, by their individual evolution, but also by the interdependency between them. Although there is increasingly more talk about gender equality, in many countries, the social as well as economical chances and opportunities are not equal for women and men. Gradually, women have been through a series of changes related to education, rights and obligations. However, the number of women leaders has

always been much lower than the number of men leaders. The personality traits of leaders significantly influence the leadership style and the way in which they are perceived by their subordinates, all this having a major impact on the overall performances of the organisation. In this manner, depending on the gender (masculine/feminine), we can state that one could observe certain personality traits that are characteristic to women and others specific to men, leaving their mark on the leadership method and on the leadership style adopted of each of them. Considering the fact that, in the current turbulent economic environment, certain qualities such as flexibility, intuition, development of communication networks and motivating the employees represent values that are considered to be "feminine", one can assert that, in this case, gender is an opportunity. However, if we should take into consideration the impact of culture, of certain mentalities and misconceptions that are still present, regarding the woman's standing in society, economy and politics, we can state that gender is a discriminating factor, because there is still the tendency to consider men as being better leaders.

Keywords: leadership, leader, organisational culture, opportunity, discrimination

JEL Classification: M12, M14

1. Introduction

Organisational culture can be created and enhanced only in a fluctuant business environment, in which external factors make their mark on its development. As a consequence of globalisation, the organisational culture of different multinational companies has suffered, because the values, mindset, religion and education were not the same as the ones in the country where the mother company performed its activity. These barriers can be overcome only with the help of leaders who are very well trained, who possess a highly developed cultural intelligence, who encompass in their vision the training of people in order to attain objectives, regardless of restraints and the development of specific abilities, such as: determination, active listening, and empathy, as well as sensibility for other people's needs, values and potential.

2. The dimensions of organisational culture

Researcher Geert Hofstede (2005, Hofstede G., Cultures and Organizations:

Software of the Mind, 2nd Edition, McGraw-Hill USA) considers that each organisation creates its own cultural system, which encompasses characteristics of the national culture, deeply rooted in the people's mentality. These values have such a strong impact on the organisations, because people identify themselves with them ever since primary school, as they are very stable in time and they can only be changed throughout several generations. Hofstede has defined four cultural dimensions, respectively:

- *short or long distance from power* – it indicates the extent to which the members of a society accept the fact that power is distributed unequally;

- *collectivism versus individualism* – the individualism versus collectivism indicator measures the extent to which individuals are integrated in groups;

- *femininity versus masculinity* – it shows the distribution of roles between men and women; the studies performed have shown that the values of women vary less than the values of men, from one culture to another;

- low level versus high level of avoiding uncertainty – it shows the society's degree of tolerance to insecurity and ambiguity.

Among these four dimensions, the most discussed is the one referring to femininity versus masculinity.

3. Feminine leadership versus masculine leadership

The dilemmas related to the differences between women and men in the field of leadership present, according to the research in the domain, two possible outcomes that are totally different: one supporting the existence of notable differences between genders and one supporting the similarity in the styles of leadership and the fact that gender does not influence leadership. However, the majority of recent studies are in favour of the theory according to which there are considerable distinctions between feminine and masculine leadership.

Therefore, in support of these assertions, one could start from the idea of biological differences, namely that genetically, certain innate characteristics are specific to men (authority, power, analytical thinking), and others typically feminine (maternal instinct, altruism, highly complex communication skills, attention to details, aesthetics), which determine the different leadership styles. The business concept approach by women and men is, in many cases, identical, but the leadership style is different. Consequently, while men have a logical, mathematical reasoning, and are more task-oriented, women combine logical reasoning with feelings and emphasise on building bonds, collaborative and cooperative relationships. The woman leader is capable to listen to their subordinates'

dissatisfaction, to understand them and create a motivating work climate, showing altruism.

In general, women leaders have the tendency to adopt a participative style of leadership, based on a people-oriented approach. Women differ from men as they are much more flexible and lenient, which allows for the creation of a stimulating, motivating environment, and for achieving performances in any field. In comparison to men, women leaders distinguish themselves due to their consideration for people and due to the fact that they encourage free speech. Moreover, women consider that success within the company comes from the ability to manage and develop employees, while men consider that the most important aspect is visibility and awareness of internal policies. Additionally, unlike women, the leadership style adopted by men is authoritative, and targeted at task completion. The difference between men and women does not necessarily stem from the efficiency with which they use authority, but in the process of approaching authority.

The last decades have brought to the forefront a new concept of leadership – transformational leadership, which is highly focussed on motivating the employees, in order for them to surpass professional interests and to get emotionally involved in the organisation. One might say that transformational leadership is better-matched with the women's characteristics, because they distinguish themselves through vision, charisma and inspiration, attributes considered, to a large extent, feminine values. In the current economic context, this style of leadership favours the development of the organisation and the enhancement of efficiency and, for this reason, according to numerous opinions,

the "new values" (sometimes called feminine values) are starting to be considered strictly necessary so as to ensure success. Therefore, there is more talk about the need for gender diversity at the level of management and for the impact produced by gender differences. Considering all this, we can state that, in this situation, gender differences can be seen as an opportunity, because a different vision and approach of problems in the feminine manner can be the key to success in enhancing the competitiveness of an organisation.

However, in our country there is still the tendency to consider successful behaviours in a leadership position as being typically masculine. Consequently, women are still erroneously trying to adopt specifically masculine behaviours in order to succeed as leaders, suppressing, thusly, precisely the feminine attributes that make the difference. In addition, the access of women to leadership positions is more difficult than it is the case of male partners, phenomenon known as "glass ceiling" (women advance professionally within a company up to a certain point, and then they come to a standstill, their accession no longer being possible). "The glass ceiling" represents the subtle discrimination standing in the way of women's accession, preventing them to access senior management positions simply because they are women¹. In this situation, gender could be perceived as a truly discriminating factor in leadership.

The previously mentioned aspects are confirmed by the fact that, in our country, men are predominant in the management of companies. A recent study reveals that management positions are generally occupied by

men (70.9%)². The dominant characteristic of Romanian managers revealed by the study is represented by the focus on results (65.5%) – a typically masculine feature. Regarding the weaknesses, the lack of motivation of subordinates is on top (57.3%) as well as the excessive control (45.5%). We can notice that these results indicate the lack of specifically feminine attributes in the management of companies.

In order to quantify and measure the dimension and evolution of equality of opportunities between women and men, in 2006, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has introduced the gender gap index. This instrument reflects the gaps between women and men on account of 4 pillars (sub-indices) at the basis of the calculation of the global index, for each country: economic participation and opportunities, education, health and survival (women/men ratio at birth, life expectancy), access and political empowerment. The values of this indicator are published on an annual basis for the 135 countries analysed in the Gender Gap Report, available on the official website of the WEF.

Therefore, regarding women's economic participation and opportunities in the economy at the level of geographic areas in 2012 (Fig. 1), the first place is occupied by North America, with a sub-index value of approximately 0.82, followed by Europe and Central Asia, with a value of 0.68. Value 0 signifies inequality between genders, and value 1 represents absolute equality. In 2012, our country was situated approximately in the middle of the ranking, occupying the 67th place of 135, with a gender gap index score of 0.6859.

¹ Connie Sitterly, *Womena manager*, Ed. Codecs, București 2009, p.10

² Studiu realizat de către Result Development, 2009-2011, sursa: Profilul leaders români din companies

The sub-indices “education” and “health and survival” have high values, 0.994 respectively 0.979, which proves the fact that, from the point of view of education and health, women and men are treated as equals, benefiting from the same opportunities and services. Regarding political participation, perspectives change radically: the value of only 0.089 places our country on the 97th place in the ranking compiled on the basis of this sub-index. The low level in this chapter indicates an extremely weak political participation of women, this leading to the decrease in the value of the global index, despite the fact that the sub-indices related to education and health register elevated values. By following the evolution of the gender gap index and its components in Romania throughout the 2006-2012 period (Table no. 1), one can notice that, regarding the global index, its value has not registered significant changes. The attention is drawn by the fluctuations of the “economic participation and opportunities” sub-index and by the low values of the “access and political empowerment” component.

4. Conclusions

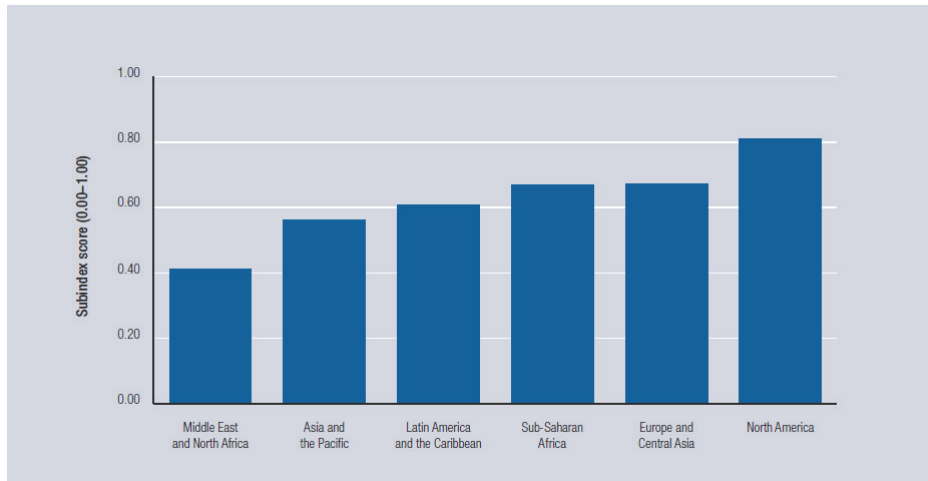
In the modern society, the key to success in any field is the ability to form and keep the best talents. Women represent more than half of the global human resources. The development and use of the feminine leadership characteristics in the economy, in politics and in the society are fundamental elements of prosperity in a world that is increasingly more competitive. Nevertheless, we consider that for a woman-leader to evolve it is necessary for her to have a favourable framework, without discrimination, in which she is allowed to manifest her talents. Therefore, the idea according to which men are better leaders than women cannot be justified. However one could state that the personality traits of leaders significantly influence the leadership style and the way in which they are perceived by subordinates, this having a major impact on the overall performances of the organisation. Therefore, depending on gender, we can make the assertion that certain personality features can be observed as being defining for women and others as being specifically masculine, these features being able to influence every person’s leadership style.

Table no. 1 – Evolution of the global gender gap index and its components in Romania in the 2006-2012 period

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Global index	0.6797	0.6859	0.6763	0.6805	0.6826	0.681	0.6859
Economic participation and opportunities	0.673	0.697	0.7	0.712	0.601	0.694	0.681
Education	0.993	0.993	0.994	0.991	0.989	0.995	0.994
Health and survival	0.979	0.979	0.979	0.979	0.977	0.979	0.979
Access and political empowerment	0.074	0.074	0.032	0.040	0.056	0.056	0.089

Source: The Global Gender Gap Report 2006-2012

Fig. 1 - Economic participation and opportunities sub-index by geographic regions, in 2012



Source: Ricardo Hausman; Laura D. Tyson, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2012*, World Economic Forum, p. 20

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