



## Leadership Management

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### Educational leadership and gender differences

Wajeeha Aurangzeb

Department of Education, National University of Modern Languages, H-9, Islamabad, Pakistan.

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#### ABSTRACT

Leadership is the ability through which people follow a leader at their own will. Leaders do not exert any influence upon others; instead they give a vision and have a clear picture and prerequisite skills of how to achieve it. Educational leadership is the process of directing the potentialities and energies of teachers, students, parents and all the stakeholders towards the achievement of shared educational goals. It has become evident through researches that leadership is that ability which is genderless. Comparative studies related to gender in school administration has proved that under female leadership the performance level and learning achievement of students was higher. The prime responsibility of educational leaders is to convert teaching institutions into learning institutions. The gender differences in leadership styles are observable but it is not proved that men are better leaders as compared to women. Both of them can excel in effective educational leadership if they show the prerequisite qualities.

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#### Introduction

##### Leadership:

Leadership is the ability through which people follow a leader at their own will. Leaders do not exert any influence upon others; instead they give a vision and have a clear picture and prerequisite skills of how to achieve it. Furthermore, Leadership can be described as the quality of influencing, directing, commanding and motivating people towards the achievement of predetermined goals. Leadership qualities emphasize that true leaders are competent, intelligent, inspiring, honest and forward looking. Effective leadership qualities include persuasiveness, strong communication skills, faith in teamwork, adaptability, coaching and development, decision making and problem solving skills.

##### Educational Leadership:

Educational leadership is the process of directing the potentialities and energies of teachers, students, parents and all the stakeholders towards the achievement of shared educational goals. Educational leadership enhances students' learning outcomes through provision of a suitable learning environment. Educational leaders try to create opportunities for the exploration of knowledge and its sharing among the stakeholders. They know the value of lifelong learning and create vision and strategies to achieve this mission. The significance of educational leadership cannot be denied where the ultimate aim is to upgrade the educational status of students at all levels.

Educational systems are one of the most important source of transmitting cultural values, knowledge and skills to the upcoming generations. They are of the prime manifestations of culture, national identity and socio economic priorities. For all these targets to achieve, educational leadership is considered to be higher order activity which has following prime concerns:

- The underlying ethical principles of the educational process
- The futuristic view of education
- The integrity of human relationships

In this regard educational leadership has a responsibility for all those matters which are concerned with fundamental

educational principles as compared to the responsibility for just implementation of national policies.

##### Gender in Educational Leadership:

###### ➤ Females and Leadership:

Gender disparity is evident in almost all the institutions of the society including educational institutions. If we compare the public sector, generally male have got dominant positions as compared to their female counterparts. Women folk constitute the major bulk of work force whereas men assume the leadership roles. If women attain the principal ship position, sometimes they start facing obstacles in their professional life. Gender disparity has remained the most prevalent form of exclusion in professional life globally and most often in the developing world. Pakistan is also no exception to this state of affairs. This is particularly a reflection of the stereotyping of women's role in our society. Most studies revealed that attitude of politicians towards female educational leadership, long distance travelling, role of being a mother or wife, lack of family support for children upbringing, fear of dealing with corrupt male subordinates and super ordinates, lack of incentives and additional financial support, non conducive social structure keep females away from becoming educational managers or leaders.

Luba Chliwniak (1997) has defined leaders as people who give a vision and embody the ideals for which the organization strives. If this definition is taken into consideration, then leadership is that ability or quality which is genderless. Comparative studies related to gender in school administration has proved that under female leadership the performance level and learning achievement of students was higher (Porat,1991) &( Ryder,1994). Good school administration supports female leadership as compared to male modes of leadership behaviours. Female attributes of intuitiveness, empathy, caring attitude, aesthetic quality, being cooperative and accommodative adds to the support for their educational leadership. Hensel 1991 has described women leaders as capable, competitive and productive as compared to their male counterparts.

### ➤ Gender Gap:

One of the most important reasons of hiring fewer females as educational leaders is the gender gap which prevails for such jobs. Many gender based models support this concept. Some of them are Meritocracy model or Individual perspective model (Estler 1975; Schmuck 1980). These models focus upon personal traits, abilities and aptitudes, self image, motivation and confidence. The studies based upon these models conclude that sometimes women perceive the meaning of power differently and think that it is not finite rather it expands when shared. The social and cultural norms, folkways and mores also give different socialization patterns to the women and men holding different levels of leadership (Schmuck 1980).

The low percentage of representation of highly qualified women in leadership roles has created a vast gap in education as well as many other professional areas. A myth prevails in almost every society that males are better leaders; so women are mostly denied easy access to leadership positions. If women thrive to achieve the desired leadership position, they are faced by many societal barriers and ultimately quit.

### ➤ Men and Women Leadership styles:

Leadership style is considered as a behaviour which a leader exhibits during supervision of subordinates. This term is equivalent to the manner in which the leaders influence their subordinates. (Lunenburg & Ornstein 1996). Men and women have different leadership styles but this does not mean that one style is preferred over the other. Men perceive leadership as leading whereas women perceive leadership as facilitating (Schaefer 1985). Women leaders' focus upon educational instruction, individual differences among students, teaching methodologies whereas male administrators focus on completing tasks and achieving broader objectives. Women leaders mostly take into account instructional leadership areas whereas men leaders try to excel in organizational matters (Conner 1990).

Leadership Styles	
Women:	Men:
Focus upon process, relationships and power sharing	Emphasize on task completion and goal achievement
Emphasize on instructional leadership	Give importance to organizational matters
Focus upon process	Focus upon product
Encourage self interest and active participation of subordinates	Take into account traditional administrative hierarchy

Chliwniak (1997), Estler (1975), Conner (1990), Porat (1991) & Ryder (1994)

### ➤ Leadership effectiveness and Gender Difference:

It has been perceived that leadership is a masculine activity. Almost all the cultures have strongly supported this idea from 1970's till 1990's that leadership is a masculine activity. Judith A. Kolb has mentioned in her research article that if women emerge as leaders in their organization then they must be considered as individual who can motivate and guide others. We should not have a gender biased approach towards them. This research has also indicated that there are fewer differences in leadership behaviours among both genders and more similarities.

Throughout history many stereotypes related to gender roles have permeated in society, creating many hurdles for women. Some words like compassionate, sensitive, emotional, passive, subjective and uncertain have been associated with females whereas intelligent, competent, objective, confident and powerful have been reserved for men. Many stereotypes assume that women have better verbal skills whereas men are better

mathematicians; men are physically stronger whereas women have better endurance.

Researchers have found that some of the above mentioned beliefs are scientifically proven. The comparative study of male and female brains showed that women had more cross brain activity and highly developed verbal areas due to the reason that men tend to be focused on one thing at a time. So some of the stereotypes related to effective leadership of both genders has some truth. But if we start considering that one gender has more qualities and abilities of becoming a good leader as compared to the other then it is a misconception. Both genders possess the prerequisite characters of becoming effective leaders and both can benefit from each other for a more wholesome approach to leadership.

### Discussion:

There is a wide dimension of discussion if we take into consideration gender parity or disparity in educational leadership in developing countries. From developing countries we can consider all the countries outside of Europe and North America with the exception of Australia, Newzealand, Japan, and Israel etc. Developing countries are characterized by high birth and mortality rates, high levels of poverty and vast gap between rich and poor. (Payne & Nassar 2003, Calvert & Calvert 1996). While developing countries share the above mentioned similarities yet they have certain differences in the form of culture, religion, social and economic aspects etc.

There are fewer women in leadership roles today but as the modernization goes on, more gender parity is expected in educational leadership in addition to other fields also.

Understanding the state of women in educational administration within developing countries may re – explore and challenge the epistemology and methodology of existing theories and concept in the study of female leadership, as well as provide policy makers with greater insight into female leadership particular to developing countries. (Crossely 2000)

Following is a comparative analysis of effective leadership qualities among both genders:

Leadership Quality	Female Leaders	Male Leaders
Motivational Skills	Strong quality in women leaders, they try to inspire their team towards goal achievement.	Male leaders are judgmental instead of providing inspiration
Mentorship	Better mentors	Lack mentorship
Communication skills	Strong oral communication	Strong written power
Team spirit	Better understanding of team spirit, stand for their colleagues and subordinates	They often do not stand for their group and expect their group to fend for themselves
Creativity	More creative, try to handle clients and employees both in a better way	Create an environment that the people come up with their own creativity
Debating	Have more power to convey their own viewpoint but have less threshold to listen to others point of view patiently	Have a mature level of debating power as compared to women. Listen to others point of view patiently
Collaboration	More collaborative	Less collaborative
Competition	Less competitive	More competitive

Leadership and effective educational outputs are highly interlinked. There are some pre requisites for effective leadership. The basic requirement of effective leadership is purposeful and firm leadership. The second important factor is

participative approach. Mortimore et al 1988 have emphasized upon participation of subordinates in order to achieve effectiveness in leadership. The third component of effective educational leadership is instructional leadership. This component has this underlying philosophy that the foremost objective of educational institutions is to have a strong teaching learning environment fully loaded with all aspects of instruction. Another component of effective educational leadership is related to proactive approach of staff performance and self performance.

In many parts of the world separate educational institutions for girls are being run. The need of women in leadership roles in such developing countries is very vital as it will ensure wellbeing of adolescent girls and female teachers. Contribution of women in educational leadership will ensure social justice through gender parity and equality in decision making at all levels as women comprise a major part of total population in every country.

### Conclusion

The prime responsibility of educational leaders is to convert teaching institutions into learning institutions. A leader has to discover and construct knowledge for himself/herself and to encourage the subordinates as well as students to assume the responsibility of achieving the vision through a mission. As proved earlier, leadership is not a gender biased capability. Keeping this view point in mind, leaders whether male or female have to appreciate the existence of different traditions and culture prevailing in the society, conduct sound research and have to be committed towards lifelong learning. The leadership environment has to be based on strong relationships embedded in collaborative and focused decision making processes with high expectations for effective results. Key values for developing strong leadership relations are commitment towards the cause, honesty and integrity. These values are not focused for any specific gender in educational leadership. Following themes have to be embodied in all the leadership styles regardless of any gender:

- Teamwork.
- Support and mentorship.
- Consensus through collaboration.
- Proactive solutions to problems.

The gender differences in leadership styles are observable but it is not proved that men are better leaders as compared to women. Both of them can excel in effective educational leadership if they show the prerequisite qualities.

To sum up this discussion, my view point is that men are *hunting leaders* whereas women are *tribal leaders*.

The central idea about hunting leaders is that they are competitive and can easily distinguish between their enemies and friends. Such leaders are strong believers of rankings and hierarchies. This is so because in this whole world it is a male derived system and is reflective of their competitive mind set. The male leaders believe in horizontal or vertical leadership skills as compared to team leadership. For this reason, sometimes male educational leaders are perceived as having less

collaboration and connectedness. The double-edged sword is that when men try to collaborate and emotionally connect, they can seem to be doing "women's work". This myth has to be changed about male leadership.

Women traditionally are caretakers or care givers that is why they are perceived as tribal leaders. They try to be focused on the subordinates as a team and tend to draw a circle around their group. Leadership requires a kind of toughness and women have a different kind of toughness in them as compared to men. Women are not very skillful while working in hierarchies as it is a male derived system, so it is important for women to extend their concept of team to encompass colleagues and superiors, so they can be effectively leading at those levels.

As a general rule, it can be seen that effective leaders regardless of gender have those strengths which complement each other. As leaders, they face challenges which are to be accepted and resolved so both genders, if working together at leadership positions can handle them more effectively as compared to any one of them.

Now a days, more women are getting the opportunity to get leadership positions in the corporate world as well as the field of education. So we can say that future leaders will be holistic, having capabilities of both feminine and masculine strength. The trends in all the countries of the world are shifting towards a newer paradigm in which male dominated societies are accepting the leadership capabilities of females and trying to reach towards a more holistic approach to leadership.

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