LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP STYLES IN MANAGING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

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Abstract: The increasing competition on the global educational market requires analyzing the interaction and interdependence between the leadership style of the academic management bodies, applied at the higher education institutions and the global rating positions of the universities. The research of leadership and leadership styles in managing Bulgarian higher education institutions brings forward some negative trends, which prevent the possibility for the Bulgarian educational institutions to achieve sustainable global competitiveness. The comparative analysis between the leadership styles of management applied in the Turkish and Bulgarian universities shows not only the existence of relation between leaders’ behaviour and the market position of the Turkish and Bulgarian educational models in a global aspect, but also a need of urgent measures in the field of Bulgarian higher education, which global rating index is considerably behind the global positions of the Turkish educational products.

Keywords: Leadership, Leadership Style, Leadership Potential, Higher Education Institutions.

ITHEA Keywords: J.1 Administrative Data Processing: Business, Education

Introduction

Under the conditions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, higher education is facing the systematic challenge to meet the dynamically changing requirements of business to labour resources, as well as those of smart management and smart economy. The combination in the new conditions of structural (over-indebtedness and ageing societies) and system (introduction of platform-based economy of sharing, low marginal costs) factors calls for reconsidering the currently existing management models in the field of higher education.

Under the conditions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, strategic goal setting at the higher education institutions should comply with the synergic response to challenges related to upgrading the potential and capacity of the students to cope with the realities of a highly digitalized and competitive global environment. It is in this particular transitional period that the role of the formal leaders (the academic management body) is of strategic importance for the survival and development in the future of a higher education institution. That requires in-depth studying of management’s leadership style at the higher
education institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria and correlating the obtained results to management’s leadership behaviour in similar universities in another Balkan country – the Republic of Turkey.

**Nature of the Problem**

The deep and systematic economic and technological changes, prompted by the already started Fourth Industrial Revolution, outline only for the next ten years fundamental restructuring of many sectors of our socio-economic living. The fundamental changes in the global reality foreseen at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2016 are related to the ever more evident inequality and poverty as a result of the possibility that around 50% of jobs may be replaced by 2025 with smart systems. On the background of that forecast, the reality stands out quite dramatically – only in the next 5 years there will be 7 million jobs closed due the lack of key competences of the labour resources under the new conditions. Therefore, the intensifying innovativeness, technological development and digitalization of economy in a global aspect inevitably leads to the disappearance of some professions and the emergence of new ones, as well as to the need of new knowledge, skills and competences of the human resources, to transdisciplinary education, internationalization of research and multiprofile portfolios of the specialists trained at the educational institutions.

On the background of the outlining deep, fundamental and long-term impacts of the already started Fourth Industrial Revolution, there is an ever more urgent public necessity of generating new educational paradigms and models.

Over the next 10-15 years, the higher education and its educational institutions will undergo substantial changes and restructuring, and will fundamentally change their philosophy and principles. They will be radically affected by the new technologies, the economy of sharing and the possibilities to use artificial intelligence, however, they should establish themselves in the new realities as major providers of intellectual capital. That depends, though, on the current management of the universities, since the long-term strategy under the conditions of a strong global competition between the educational institutions requires not only financial security, strategic goal setting and synergy, but also strong motivation, depending most of all on the organizational culture and values, existing at the higher education institutions. In this line of thought, we inevitably come to the role of the formal leaders (the academic management bodies) in defining the main challenges of the future, planning the long-term strategy and motivating the academic staff for achieving top and synergic results in line with the development strategy of the higher education institution.
This is exactly what requires the urgent research of the leadership style of management at the higher education institutions and relating the formal leaders’ management style to the results, namely, to the position of each of the universities on the global and national educational market.

**Methodology of studying the leadership style of management at the higher education institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey**

The research of the leadership style of management of the formal leaders at the higher education institutions was carried out at five Bulgarian (the sample covers 10% of the existing higher education institutions in Bulgaria and it could be considered representative) and five Turkish (a sample with a size equal to 8.45% of all the higher education institutions in the Republic of Turkey) universities in the period June 2013 – June 2017, with the participation of 150 Bulgarian students as interviewers and processors of data. In the course of the research, there were 700 students interviewed, as well as 98 lecturers and 52 employees on administrative positions at the studied higher education institutions.

The purpose of the research was to define as accurate as possible the management’s leadership style of the academic management bodies according to six strategic variable factors [Temelkova, 2017] – in respect to their focus on the human factor, on the result, on the organizational culture, on the dynamics of the external environment, on the challenges of the internal environment, and on the identification of the leader with the organization.

The questionnaire form included 42 questions, measuring the level of orientation of the leaders from 1 to 7 for each of the six factors forming the ultimate leadership style of management [Temelkova, 2018], applied by the academic management bodies of the higher education institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey. As a result of applying this methodology, based on the Smart Leadership Model [Temelkova, 2017], there is a six-digit code generated, varying from 1.1.1.1.1.1. to 7.7.7.7.7.7., and providing information about the leadership behaviour of the formal leaders in the studied educational institutions.

The results from the research show the strengths of the leadership style of the academic management bodies, their leadership potential and the weaknesses demonstrated by them in respect to the their leadership behaviour model. At the same time, the results from the study enable relating them to the current positions of the higher education institutions on the national and global educational markets, as well as forecasting their potential place in the future in the global competition between the various education destinations.
Results from studying the leadership style of management at the higher education institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey

According to the world ranking of www.webometrics.info, based on measuring the combination of integral indicators, the best position in 2018 among the Bulgarian higher education institutions in the global competition has Sofia University, which is on 926 place, while the next Bulgarian representative in the international ranking is Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski”, which is on 2834 place among the universities in the world. Among the fifty-five Bulgarian higher education institutions, the University of Telecommunications and Post is on 52 position, and occupies 22404 place in the global race on the international educational market.

The comparative analysis between the global rating position of Bulgarian higher education and Turkish higher education is not in favour of the Bulgarian educational model, in spite of our country’s EU membership and the attempts of the Bulgarian universities to apply the European educational model. The differences result not only from the visible influence of the universities in the Internet environment in general, but also from the quality and quantity of the web-based content related to them, from the publications of their academic staff in international journals with a high impact-factor, as well as from the degree of citing of such publications.


The small margin between the positions of the ten best positioned Turkish universities in the world ranking shows that they offer relatively similar in terms of quality educational and research product, having leadership potential to achieve even better results in the global contest on the educational market in the world. The difference between the first and the second Bulgarian university in the world ranking of www.webometrics.info is some 2000 positions, which could be interpreted as a substantial difference in the quality of the offered educational and research products.

These objective differences can be undoubtedly related not only to the national policies in the field of education, which inevitably determine to a large extent the place of the national educational model among the other education destinations in a global aspect, but also to the management’s leadership style applied by the academic management bodies in the two Balkan countries. An additional impact on the quality of the offered academic product, as well as on the management’s leadership style, also has
the number of higher education institutions, which in Bulgaria are 55 with a population of a little more than 7 million people, while in Turkey with a population of 79.5 million people – the universities are 169.

Figure 1. Summarized results from studying the leadership style of management at the higher education institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey

The research of the leadership style of the academic management bodies in the five Bulgarian higher education institutions shows that the most commonly applied leadership style is of the type 5.4.3.5.6.3., while in the studied five Turkish universities the academic management bodies apply a leadership style close to the type 4.6.5.6.5.4. The measured results are undoubtedly influenced by the legislation in the field of higher education in both countries; the number of the higher education institutions in them; the traditions in education in general; the overall demographic, cultural-and-value and ethnic framework; the financial resources; the consistency of the policies in the field of higher education applied by the governments; the criteria and standards for habilitating and stimulating the academic staff. These factors, together with the leadership style applied by the academic management body, affect the quality of the academic product of an educational institution, and, hence – its rating, the demand for its educational and research products, its leadership potential or leadership in a global aspect.

Relating an educational institution’s leadership potential in a global aspect to the leadership style of the academic management bodies indicates that of critical importance for the better convertibility of a university’s academic product is the focus of the leader on the synergic results, as well as on the values and the organizational culture. The orientation of the leaders toward the impacts of the external
environment, toward the processes in an internal organizational aspect, and toward the identification with the higher education institution is more evident in the Republic of Turkey than the results demonstrated by the Bulgarian academic management bodies along those factors. Therefore, it could be claimed that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the leadership style applied by the academic management bodies and the potential for achieving top results and leadership in the educational institutions themselves on the global educational market. This, however, presents a major challenge not only to the higher education institutions’ management, but also to the science studying leadership – researching and generating a process card showing the cause-and-effect correlation and interdependence between the leadership style applied by the academic management bodies and the leadership potential of a higher education institution in the global environment.

Conclusion

As a result of the conducted studies of the leadership style applied by the management at the higher education institutions of Bulgaria and Turkey, and on the basis of relating the obtained data from the research to the global positions of Bulgarian and Turkish higher education, the following conclusions could be generated:

✓ the research work carried out at the Bulgarian universities is at a low level, which directly affects their rating in the world ranking;

✓ the Bulgarian higher education is not involved in a sufficiently high degree with the needs of the business and the practical field, which engagement with certain educational products is considered to be a competitive advantage by the international ranking systems;

✓ the academic community in Bulgaria is not sufficiently motivated by the academic management bodies so that the higher education institutions should develop not only in terms of education, but also in research work;

✓ the Bulgarian higher education institutions fail to establish an image on the basis of the successful professional realization of their graduates and alumni.

Bibliography


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Major Fields of Scientific Research: management, leadership, controlling