

WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Gülay EKREN
Sinop University,
Vocational School of Ayancık
Sinop, TURKEY

ABSTRACT

Leaders are making differences; they are leaders because of having different characteristics than others. In the literature, definite leadership styles were described which were arising from these different structures of leaders. Studies on women's leadership styles began in the mid-1970s. In the 1990s researches focused on leadership style which was most suitable for women or men.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether any leadership style has convenient for women in distance education and how women assess themselves as a distance education leader and to assist in improving the leadership capabilities of distance education leaders by identifying women's perceptions of leadership characteristics of distance education leaders. By choosing one of the most focused leadership styles in the literature, an appropriate leadership style has asked to participants (132 women staff of distance education institutions in Turkey) for defining themselves, then the demographic and personal attributes (age, appellation, duty, management status, distance education experience) of these women were compared with their own leadership styles defined by them.

Then thirty-seven leadership attributes identified by Leadership Attributes Inventory (LAI) have been asked to participants to describe the characteristics of distance education leaders. This study is also drawn an attention to the lack of women managers in especially senior managements of distance education institutions.

Keywords: Women, distance education, leadership, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a concept that is often perceived as masculine so regardless of capacity or performance women is not seen as a leader. Therefore, effective leadership is attributed to men associated with communication and decision-making styles more than women associated with communal and inclusive styles. Gender discrimination also affects the acceptance or the perception of women as managers or leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2003; DCWA, 2010; Folta, Seguin, Ackerman & Nelson, 2012).

There are several studies focusing on leadership and management of women (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009; Lord and Preston, 2009; White & Ozkanlı, 2011; Folta et al., 2012; Li, Bao & Jiang, 2013). Because, improving the participation of women in leadership roles is seen essential for freedom, rights and opportunities of women all around the world (Odhiambo, 2011).

For becoming a leader, women need to have right knowledge, skills and attitudes and the ability to work hard, being aware of what is happening around such as the culture and climate of department and organization working in, taking advantages of strengths as an empathic, conservative and communicative, adopting some masculine attributes when leading projects and managing people (Kaur, 2013) and as stated by Panigrahi (2013),

the perception of women are dependent on male, passive, emotional, certain of themselves, sensitive and weak leaders is not valid.

According to Gourley (2013), significant attributes of leaders are integrity, orientation to service, optimism, decisiveness, courage, resilience, self-reflection, discipline and a sense of humour. Gourley have some advices for women who want to be a leader as follows:

- act not like a man; woman bring balance to the workplace,
- have more skills than acknowledged; many skills need for good leadership can be found in good parenting,
- women should get on with male colleagues; being one woman in academic and professional networks requires to be at ease in such setting,
- learn to listen more and talk less; listening and reading the body language of people are important skills for difficult situations,
- reflect and learn; people can learn a lot from their mistakes,
- be not risk averse; recognise risk, engender "risk management",
- be a team player; commitment to a common purpose is an important component of leadership,
- 8) be brave; be well prepared what to say, get feedback on drafts and test ideas with trusted people,
- encourage other women; giving someone courage, inspiring courage,
- be accepting of delays born of family responsibilities, children are more important than any work could possibly be,
- care for people; caring about the concerns of people working with is part of being human,
- build networks and relationships; women must persevere cultural prejudices when trying to network with men and social media can help them as one of the new forms of networking,
- respect others; women have greater capacity for compromise when the answers are not clear.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether any leadership style has convenient for women or how they felt themselves as a distance education leader and to assist in improving the leadership capabilities of distance education leaders by identifying woman's perceptions of leadership characteristics of distance education leaders. Also it is drawn an attention to the lack of women managers in senior managements of distance education institutions.

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES

Researches on gender differences in leadership styles are seen important. But gender discriminatory leadership style is often translated as "facilitator and collaborator" versus "command and control" and whichever leadership style are they perform, women behaviours are seen as embroiled by colleagues and superiors. On the other hand, women are seen as requirement for a variety of leadership styles because they have embraced the flexibility instead of stereotype in any case but the diversity in leadership styles is considered to be acceptable when there are enough women leaders (Bronznick & Goldenhar, 2008).

As stated by Gourley (2013), women need to be encouraged by others to see themselves at the head of things because of they have more skills than they know and have softer skills and special capabilities (Shahtalebi, Yarmohammadian & Ajami, 2011) and attributes of leadership. On the other hand, according to White, Carvalho and Riordan (2011), "soft" management skills are not valued in dominant managerial cultures so

courageous and resilient women should apply for a senior management positions. Gallant (2014) investigated this issue and found out that the definition of a leader and leadership have associated with soft skills and women leaders are well communicators, relation-oriented and nurturing social structures but men leaders are revealed gendered thinking and attributed with hard skills.

Apart from these, Ugurlu & Hovardaoglu (2011) remarked that women mostly choose democratic leadership style against autocratic leadership style compared with men. Moreover, women tend to adopt the leadership style of task (organization structure, division of labor, school achievement, appreciate and practice the rules etc.) oriented compared with considerate leadership style (Dris, 2012: 25). It has been seen as an important issue whether women and men differ in leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Vinkenburg, Engen, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt (2011) examined whether are there any gender stereotypes about leadership styles such as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire styles and are there any obstacles in assigning leadership positions in organisations. They stated that leadership style is thought to be important for promotion and also gender stereotypes about leadership styles are accurate. Women display more transformational and laissez-faire behaviours than men according to the participants who have noteworthy management experience.

Especially in business and educational sectors, women were more likely to have a transformational leadership style (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003; Folta et al., 2012). Maseko & Proches (2013) conducted a quantitative study about leadership styles of fifteen women project managers and have found that they perceive themselves to have qualities of transformational, democratic and people-oriented leadership styles.

Different from those, Blount (2012) stated that male-dominant leadership styles such as situational leadership or transformational leadership were offered to lead people who have not any vision. So these understandings do not work in today's organizations. According to Blount (2012), it is time to create new, dynamic leadership styles supported by flexible systems.

THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Women are not strategically positioned on pathways to leadership, so male dominance of leadership positions is visible globally (Morley, 2014).

Most academics are discontented with going university management and view academic careers as less desired, women academics are underrepresented in senior and leadership roles so universities are fundamentally seen as gendered and missed opportunities to contribute for shaping more democratic, inclusive future universities (Blackmore, 2014; Aiston, 2014).

According to Fisher (2005), women are in tendency to generalize, synthesize and take more integrated point of viewpoint of any issue, called "web thinking" but men tend to focus their attention on one thing and analyze information in a straight line, called "step thinking".

As stated by Fisher, web thinking provides women some leadership attributes such as holding several things concurrently in mind, enabling to exercise more in tuition, updating to think long-term planning and mental flexibility, imagination, executive social skills, verbal skills etc. As defined by McDermott (2014), some requirements for women for sitting leadership positions as follows:

- **aspiring the positions, getting the right education, training, experiences and put strategies in place,**
- **establishing credibility and innovative business ideas,**
- **building a support team or strategic networking,**
- **being comfortable in demonstrating leadership competency of self-promotion,**
- **making a transition from “good girl” to great woman.**

In distance education there are also barriers about women leadership. Abiodun (2008) has focused on identifying strategies of marginalization that women are confronted in distance education, especially in attendance to educational efforts such as gender inequalities in the management of distance education programmes, under-representation of women in higher education, wage discrepancies, lack of protection of working women during pregnancy and after birth, lack of respect for human rights of women. As stated by Department for Communities of Western Australia [DCWA] (2010), the factors affecting women under-representation in leadership roles are business drivers, cultural contradictions including leadership perceptions and pathways to leadership, work/life interactions, workplace dynamics, key relationships and networks.

As mentioned by Bradley (2013), the barriers to women’s advance to leadership positions are as follows:

- **the nature of workplace such as the need to attain further qualifications, the culture of workplace, the perception of female authority by other workers, building the establishment of carrier in late 20s or 30s,**
- **women themselves such as taking the responsibility for managing burdens of home and family, the disruption for maternity or childcare, less likely to take risks than men, not applying for positions until having all required skills and experience.**

Barriers preventing advancement of women into senior management positions can be summarized as gender stereotyping, lack of qualifications, fear of not succeeding, family responsibilities, lack of networking skills and lack of time (Maseko & Proches, 2013; Panigrahi, 2013).

On the other hand, as stated by White and Ozkanlı (2010), there are no barriers to promotion for women in their universities and women can create their own barriers.

Moreover, Bradley (2013) believed that there are no structural barriers to prevent woman as an educational leader in so rapidly progressing areas such as distance education.

It is seen important for women seeking to advance and women can deal with senior positions in distance education with persistence, resilience and a commitment to self-development.

METHODOLOGY

This research is quantitative and consists of two parts.

In the first part there are questions about demographic attributes and leadership styles (democratic, transactional, situational, transformational, visionary, laissez-faire, and autocratic) of participants.

In the second part there is a scale called "Leadership Attributes Inventory (LAI)" (adapted from Moss, Lambrecht, Jensrud & Finch, 1994) used to describe the characteristics of distance education leaders.

Leadership attributes defined by this scale consists of 37 items. Leadership characteristics (attributes) of distance education leaders have been asked to participants using 6-point Likert type scale with responses options of 1=very undescriptive, 2= undescriptive, 3= somewhat undescriptive, 4=somewhat descriptive, 5= descriptive, 6=very descriptive). The reliability coefficient of the whole scale was 0,975 (Cronbach Alfa value).

And, SPSS Statistics 21.0 software was used to do all statistical analysis in this research.

Participants

The participants were 132 women who were working for distance education institutions in Turkey and had work experience at least one year in distance education.

Basic demographic and personal characteristics (age, appellation, duty, management status, distance education experience) of 132 women are shown in Table: 1.

In this study, it is aimed to access all women who are working for distance education in higher education in Turkey, 187 responses were received and among these 132 women were given valid responses to scale of LAI to identify effective leadership attributes of distance education leaders.

Table: 1
Demographic Characteristics and Personal Attributes of Participants
 (N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent)

	Category	f	%		Category	f	%
Age	Under 25	4	3,0	Appellation	Prof. Dr.	17	12,9
	25-30	23	17,4		Assoc. Prof. Dr.	17	12,9
	31-35	23	17,4		Assist. Prof. Dr.	37	28,0
	36-40	26	19,7		Lecturer/Expert /Instructor	40	30,3
	41-45	27	20,5		Research Assistant	12	9,1
	46-50	18	13,6		Administrator	2	1,5
	51-55	8	6,1		Official	8	6,1
	56-60	2	1,5		Others	6	4,5
	Over 60	1	0,8		Missing value	6	

Question	Category	f	%	Question	Category	f	%
What is your own leadership style?	Autocratic	19	10,2	Do/Did you have any management status? (in Distance Education or Traditional Education)	No	39	29,5
	Democratic	68	36,4		Rector	1	0,8
	Laissez-faire	2	1,1		Vice Rector	0	0,0
	Situational	14	7,5		Dean	2	1,5
	Visionary	50	26,7		Vice Dean	6	4,5
	Transformational	21	11,2		Manager	8	6,1
	Transactional	12	6,4		Vice Manager	9	6,8
	Others	1	0,5		Department Head	27	20,5
	Missing value	2			Vice Dept. Head	20	15,2
					Coordinator	45	34,1
			Vice Coordinator	14	10,6		
			Others	9	6,8		
			Missing value	12			

Table: 1 (Cont.)
Demographic Characteristics and Personal Attributes of Participants
 (N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent)

Question	Category	f	%	Question	Category	f	%	
How long have you been in distance education? (Professional Experiences)	1 years	24	18,2	What is your duty in your distance education institution?	Instructor	72	54,5	
	2 years	19	14,4		Coordinator	27	20,5	
	3 years	19	14,4		Content Development Specialist	3	2,3	
	4 years	15	11,4		Support Staff	12	9,1	
	5 years	18	13,6		Evaluation Specialist	4	3,0	
	6 years	7	5,3		Manager	2	1,5	
	7 years	2	1,5		Top Manager	1	0,8	
	8 years	1	0,8		Instructional Designer	3	2,3	
	9 years	2	1,5		Editor	2	1,5	
	10 years	5	3,8		Specialist	2	1,5	
	11-15 years	6	4,5		Board Member	1	0,8	
	16-20 years	7	5,3		Office Manager	1	0,8	
	21-25 years	1	0,8		Others	2	1,5	
	26-30 years	4	3,0					
	Over 30 years	2	1,5					

Professional Experiences of Participants in Distance Education

Professional experiences of participants in distance education are shown in Table: 1. There can be seen a significant effect with 5-6 years period for professional experiences of participants.

The number of open and distance education institutions have been considerable increasing since 2009 in Turkey, professional experiences of participants in distance education have been accordingly increasing (See Table: 1., Table: 2.).

In 2009, by providing flexible learning, distance education classes had been constituted to 30 universities (HEC, 2010) and 16 of them were engaged in distance education (See Table: 2).

Table: 2 have been created with the data provided from the official websites of these universities and distance education regulations of universities published by official newspapers of Turkey.

In this table open education was also evaluated in the context of distance education. Especially Anadolu University, which founded in 1982, is recognized with open education system, not only in Turkey but also all around the world as a mega university.

Table: 2
Universities which are engaging in distance education in Turkey

Start Date of Distance Education	N	Name of Universities providing distance education
1982	1	Anadolu
1996	1	İstanbul Teknik
1997	1	Sakarya
2002	4	Ahmet Yesevi, Ankara, Mersin, Bogazici
2003	1	Çukurova
2008	4	Beykent, Gazi, Süleyman Demirel, Trakya
2009	16	Afyon Kocatepe, Atatürk, Balıkesir, Cumhuriyet, İnönü, İstanbul, İstanbul Aydın, Karadeniz Teknik, Kırıkkale, Marmara, Maltepe, Okan, Ondokuz Mayıs, Plato Vocational High School, Uşak, Zirve
2010	7	Bartın, Karabük, Yıldız Teknik, Dicle, Dokuz Eylül, Kocaeli, Akdeniz
2011	5	Başkent, Beykoz Lojistik Meslek Yüksekokulu, Bitlis Eren, Fatih, İstanbul Arel
2012	7	Amasya, Celal Bayar, Ege, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart, Mevlana, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman, Yıldırım Beyazıt
2013	7	Gediz, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam, Nevşehir, Namık Kemal, Bülent Ecevit, Atılım, Yıldız Teknik

RESULTS

The Relationship between Demographic and Personal Attributes and Leadership Styles of Women

The research explored if there are any relationships between women's demographic or personal attributes and leadership styles that are defined themselves.

The relationship between participants' professional experience and leadership style was significant ($\chi^2=176.645$, $df=126$, $p=0.002$) at the level of significance 0.05.

In the sample, 11 (8,3% of all participants) women with one year professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders, 7 (5,3% of all participants) women with two years professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders, 8 (6,1% of all participants) women with two years professional experience were defined themselves as visionary leaders, 7 (5,3% of all participants) women with three years professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders and 5 (3,8% of all participants) women with three years professional experience were defined themselves as visionary leaders, 4 (3% of all participants) women with four years professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders and 8 (6,1% of all participants) women with four years professional experience were defined themselves as visionary leaders, 8 (6,1% of all participants) women with five years professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders and 4 (3% of all participants) women with five years professional experience were defined themselves as visionary leaders (See Table: 3).

Table: 3
Relationships between professional experience and leadership style
 (N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent,)

		Leadership styles of women defined by themselves							
Professional Experience of women		Democratic	Transactional	Situational	Transformational	Visionary	Laissez-faire	Autocratic	Total
	1	f	11	3	3	2	2	0	3
	%	45,8%	12,5%	12,5%	8,3%	8,3%	0,0%	12,5%	
2	f	7	0	0	3	8	0	1	19
	%	36,8%	0,0%	0,0%	15,8%	42,1%	0,0%	5,3%	
3	f	7	1	2	1	5	0	3	19
	%	36,8%	5,3%	10,5%	5,3%	26,3%	0,0%	15,8%	
4	f	4	0	0	2	8	0	1	15
	%	26,7%	0,0%	0,0%	13,3%	53,3%	0,0%	6,7%	
5	f	8	3	1	1	4	0	1	18
	%	44,4%	16,7%	5,6%	5,6%	22,2%	0,0%	5,6%	
6-10	f	6	1	1	1	6	0	1	16
	%	37,5%	6,3%	6,3%	6,3%	37,5%	0,0%	6,3%	
11-20	f	5	0	3	0	4	0	1	13
	%	38,5%	0,0%	23,1%	0,0%	30,8%	0,0%	7,7%	
Above 20	f	2	0	0	2	1	2	1	8
	%	25,0%	0,0%	0,0%	25,0%	12,5%	25,0%	12,5%	
	f	50	8	10	13	38	1	12	132
Total	%	37,9%	6,1%	7,6%	9,8%	28,8%	0,8%	9,1%	

The relationship between leadership style (defined by participants) and participants' age ($\chi^2=50.95$, $df=48$, $p=3.58$) or appellation ($\chi^2=35.25$, $df=42$, $p=7.60$) or count of management status ($\chi^2=31.04$, $df=30$, $p=0.413$) was not significant at the level of significance 0.05. The relationship between participants' duty in distance education institution and leadership style was significant ($\chi^2=109.107$, $df=72$, $p=0.003$) at the level of significance 0.05.

In the sample, 24 (18,2% of all participants) women instructor were defined themselves as democratic and the other 24 were visionary leaders, 12 (9,1% of all participants) women coordinators were defined themselves as democratic and 7 (5,3% of all participants) women coordinators were defined themselves as visionary leaders and 6 (4,5% of all participants) women support staff were defined themselves as democratic leaders (See Table: 4).

Table: 4
Relationships between duty in distance education and leadership style
(N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent)

Duty in distance education	Leadership styles of women defined by themselves								Total
	Democratic	Transactional	Situational	Transformational	Visionary	Laissez-faire	Autocratic		
Instructor	f	24	5	6	8	24	0	5	72
	%	33,3%	6,9%	8,3%	11,1%	33,3%	0,0%	6,9%	
Coordinator	f	12	3	2	0	7	0	3	27
	%	44,4%	11,1%	7,4%	0,0%	25,9%	0,0%	11,1%	
Content Development Specialist	f	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
	%	33,3%	0,0%	33,3%	0,0%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%	
Evaluation Specialist	f	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
	%	50,0%	0,0%	25,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	25,0%	
Instructional Designer	f	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
	%	66,7%	0,0%	0,0%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Manager	f	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Top manager	f	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Editor	f	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Specialist	f	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
	%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	
Support staff	f	6	0	0	2	2	0	2	12
	%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	16,7%	16,7%	0,0%	16,7%	
Board member	f	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Office manager	f	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Others	f	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
	%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	
Total	f	50	8	10	13	38	1	12	132
	%	37,9%	6,1%	7,6%	9,8%	28,8%	0,8%	9,1%	

The relationship between leadership style and participants who have management status in traditional or distance education was significant ($\chi^2=22.433$, $df=6$, $p=0.001$) at the level of significance 0.05.

In the sample, 35 women (26,5% of all participants) who have management status in traditional or distance education were defined themselves as visionary leaders and the other 28 (21,2% of all participants) of them defined themselves as democratic leaders, and also 10 (7,6% of all participants) of them were defined themselves as transformational leaders. On the other hand, 22 (16,7% of all participants) women who

have not any management status in traditional or distance education were defined themselves as democratic leaders (See Table: 5).

Table: 5
Relationship between having any management status and leadership style
 (N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent)

Have you been any management position before or now?		Leadership styles of women defined by themselves							Total
		Democratic	Transactional	Situational	Transformational	Visionary	Laissez-faire	Autocratic	
Yes	f	28	4	5	10	35	0	11	93
	%	30,1%	4,3%	5,4%	10,8%	37,6%	0,0%	11,8%	
No	f	22	4	5	3	3	1	1	39
	%	56,4%	10,3%	12,8%	7,7%	7,7%	2,6%	2,6%	
Total	f	50	8	10	13	38	1	12	132
	%	37,9%	6,1%	7,6%	9,8%	28,8%	,8%	9,1%	

Womens' Perceptions of Leadership Characteristics of Distance Education Leaders

The research also explored the leadership characteristics of effective distance education leaders. Women have described five leadership characteristics of effective distance education leaders as follows:

- **Communication (listening, oral, writing) – listens carefully to people, organizes and clearly presents knowledge in an understandable format in distance education environments (Mean=5.49).**
- **Intelligent with practical judgment – a quick learner, knows when and how to apply knowledge (Mean=5.35).**
- **Ethical-acts in a consistent manner with principles of fairness that can stand the test of close public scrutiny (Mean=5.33).**
- **Problem solving - identifies, analyzes and resolves uncertainties and difficulties in distance education environments (Mean=5.30).**
- **Adaptable, open to change - accepts, supports suggestions and constructive criticism from colleagues and is willing to reconsider plans (Mean=5.30).**

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Organizations can not survive without leadership and every member is a leader whether it is within her classroom or when she shares educational and personal expertise while functioning as a professional (Hoag & Schrunk, 2011: 45) also in distance education institutions. As defined by Simonson (2004), the distance learning leader must have a clear understanding and acceptance of the organization's worthwhile, shared vision and goals when leading the organization and its people who have faith in them and have competence in knowing, designing, managing, leading and visioning distance education.

Women marginalization in distance education is seen as an important issue in international and at regional conferences and platforms (Abiodun, 2008). Therefore more studies are needed to understand women's impact in management (White, Carvalho & Riordan, 2011) and to understand the status and experiences of women in management or leadership (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009).

As stated by Gallant (2014), mid-career women academics aspire to leadership which is leading horizontal promotions because of workplace relationships institutionally inherited or lack of interactions, almost half of the women left their positions before the planned date (Acker, 2014).

This study consists of 132 women who are working in distance education positions such as instructors, coordinators, content development specialists, evaluation specialists, instructional designers, managers, top managers, editors, experts, support staff etc. and 70,5% of these women have at least one management status in distance learning or traditional learning and they are mostly instructors or coordinators and also faculty members in distance education institutions. However, they are rarely in senior or top management positions.

In this study, according to women staff in distance education institutions in Turkey, communication is seen as the most important characteristics of effective distance education leaders. This is consistent with a research that communication skills are one of the key characteristics of good leaders (Folta et al., 2012).

Besides, in view of a study conducted by Blount (2012), women administrators in distance higher education agreed that leadership qualities and attributes of distance education administrators are respectively; experience and knowledge, building relationships, communication skills, management/organization skills and technology. Together with communication, the other characteristics of distance education leaders that seen important by this study are intelligent with practical judgment, ethical, problem solving, adaptable and open to change.

As also can be seen in this study, women who are working for distance education institutions in Turkey are defining themselves mostly as democratic or visionary leaders. The presence of women in distance education is seen significant not only in the success of women as functionaries in the field but also in the recognition of women's experience in distance education. Theories of distance education generated by men cannot speak for the experience of women.

Keeping in mind that women are central figures for a growing female learner population (Janaki, 2006). Thus, gender is not simply a demographical variable; it is a never-ending production via socio-cultural and organizational practices (Morley, 2014: 124). They are breaking through the so called glass-ceiling and introducing new ways of approaching the opportunities and challenges of 21th century higher education such as open-schooling and non-formal education (Latchem, Kanwar & Ferreira, 2013: 157). Women who are marginalized in management, senior management or leadership status of organizations must generate survival strategies for seizing a place so women leaders may be effective within distance education institutions.

BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESSES of The AUTHOR



Gülay EKREN got her bachelor's degree in 2003 from Ege University, Faculty of Education, Computer and Instructional Technologies Department. She taught five years after graduating. Then she got her master's degree in 2014 from Gazi University, Institute of Informatics, Management Information Systems. Her master thesis is about leadership in distance education management. She is now a lecturer in Sinop University and Head of Computer Technologies Department of Vocational School of Ayancık. Her interests are distance education management, leadership in distance education, data mining, glass ceiling.

Gülay EKREN

Sinop University, Vocational School of Ayancık, Sinop, TURKEY

Phone: 0 368 613 3436 Extension: 6915

Email: gekren@sinop.edu.tr

REFERENCES

- Acker, S. (2014). A foot in the revolving door? Women academics in lower-middle management. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33(1), 73-85.
- Aiston, S. J. (2014). Leading the academy or being led? Hong Kong women academics. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33(1), 59-72.
- Abiodun, F. O. (2008). Distance Learning and Women Marginalization: The Gender Oriented Perspective (G.O.P.), the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open and Distance Learning, University of London, UK.
- Blackmore, J. (2014). 'Wasting talent'? Gender and the problematics of academic disenchantment and disengagement with leadership. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33(1), 86-99.
- Bradley, D. (2013). Grasping the Opportunities: Women Leaders in Higher Education. *Women and Leadership*, 59.
- Bronznick, S. & Goldenhar, D. (2008). 21st Century Women's Leadership. Research Center for Leadership in Action, NYU Wagner.
- Department for Communities, Women Interests, Government of Western Australia (2010). *Women in Leadership Strategies for Change*. Maureen Bickley Centre for Women in Leadership, Curtin University of Technology, W. Australia.
- Dris, R. (2012). Analytical Ability to Become Women Teachers Leaders in School. *International Women Online Journal of Distance Education*, 1(3), 24-26.
- Eagly, A. H. & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *The leadership quarterly*, 14(6), 807-834.
- Eagly, A. H., Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C. & Van Engen, M. L. (2003). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: a meta-analysis comparing women and men. *Psychological bulletin*, 129(4), 569.
- Fisher, H. E. (2005). The natural leadership talents of women. In Coughlin, L., Wingard, E. & Hollihan, K. (Eds), *Enlightened Power*, 133-149.

Folta, S. C., Seguin, R. A., Ackerman, J. & Nelson, M. E. (2012). A qualitative study of leadership characteristics among women who catalyze positive community change. *BMC public health*, 12 (1), 383.

Gallant, A. (2014). Symbolic Interactions and the Development of Women Leaders in Higher Education. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 21 (3), 203-216.

Gourley, B. (2013). Helping Other Women to Become Leaders in Open and Distance Higher Education. *Women and Leadership*, 47.

Higher Education Council (HEC) of Turkey (2010). Protocols. Retrieved June 19, 2014. <https://bologna.yok.gov.tr>

Hoag, C. L. & Schrunk, O. (2011). H3: The Evidence of Leadership. *International Journal for Professional Educators*, 44.

Kaur, A. (2013). Becoming a Leader in Instructional Design in an Open University. *Women and Leadership*, 33.

Latchem, C., Kanwar, A., & Ferreira, F. (2013). Conclusion: Women Are Making a Difference. *Women and Leadership*, 157.

Li, C., Bao, L. & Jiang, Q. (2013). Leadership styles of entrepreneurial women in eastern China: Characteristics and differences. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 41 (3), 421-431.

Lord, L. A. & Preston, A. (2009). Understanding leadership experiences: the need for story sharing and feminist literature as a survival manual for leadership. *Gender and Education*, 21(6), 769-777.

Maseko, B. M., & Proches, C. N. G. (2013). Leadership Styles Deployed by Women Project Managers. *Gender & Behaviour*, 11 (2), 5663-5672.

McDermott, L. (2014). Women, Seize Your Leadership Role, *T+D*, 68 (3), 28-33.

Morley, L. (2014). Lost leaders: Women in the global academy. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33 (1), 114-128.

Moss, J., Lambrecht, J. J., Jensrud, Q., & Finch, C. R. (1994). *Leadership attributes inventory manual*. Macomb, IL: National Center for Research in Vocational Education Materials Distribution Service Western Illinois University.

Nkomo, S. M. & Ngambi, H. (2009). African women in leadership: Current knowledge and a framework for future studies. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1), 49-68.

Odhiambo, G. (2011). Women and higher education leadership in Kenya: a critical analysis. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 33 (6), 667-678.

Panigrahi, M. R. (2013). Perception of Secondary School Stakeholders Towards Women Representation in Educational Leadership in Harari Region Of Ethiopia. *International Women Online Journal of Distance Education*, 2 (1), 03.

Shahtalebi, S., Yarmohammadian, M. H. & Ajami, S. (2011). Women's success factors from leadership in higher education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 3644-3647.

Simonson, M. (2004). Definition of a Distance Learning Leader. Retrieved June 19, 2014. http://schoolofed.nova.edu/dll/definition_dll.htm

Ugurlu, O. & Hovardaoglu, S. (2011). Liderlik Davranışının Değerlendirilmesinde Liderin Cinsiyeti, Değerlendiren Kişinin Cinsiyeti ve Liderlik Stili Arasındaki İlişki [Leader's sex in the evaluation of the leadership behavior, sex of evaluator and its relationship between leadership style]. *Turk Psikoloji Dergisi*, 26 (68).

Vinkenburg, C. J., van Engen, M. L., Eagly, A. H. & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C. (2011). An exploration of stereotypical beliefs about leadership styles: is transformational leadership a route to women's promotion?. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22 (1), 10-21.

White, K., Carvalho, T. & Riordan, S. (2011). Gender, power and managerialism in universities. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 33 (2), 179-188.

White, K. & Ozkanlı, O. (2010). A comparative study of perceptions of gender and leadership in Australian and Turkish universities. *Journal of higher education policy and management*, 33 (1), 3-16.