

Leadership and gender: a dangerous liaison

Leadership and gender: a dangerous liaison?

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to review the extant literature on the ways women lead in organizations with a focus on the fields of business and education. A secondary purpose is to identify implications of the literature for leadership and gender issues in the worlds of business and education.

Design/methodology/approach

A review of the extant literature was conducted to collect data through professional and academic journals of business and education, pertinent web sites, and textbooks. Once these data were collected, they were placed in categories according to common themes and patterns that emerged from the literature on the leadership styles of women in business and education.

Findings

Research findings show that women adopt democratic and participative leadership styles in the corporate world and in education. Transformational leadership is the preferred leadership style used by women. The characteristics of transformational leadership relate to female values developed through socialization processes that include building relationships, communication, consensus building, power as influence, and working together for a common purpose.

Originality/value

This paper provides a theoretical perspective on women's leadership behaviours as an approach to equity in organizations by capitalizing on female contributions to organizations and the importance of those contributions in an increasingly diverse workforce world-wide. Women leadership styles are presented as alternatives to traditional leadership models.

Keywords

North America Leadership Education Gender Culture (sociology)

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