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WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES: A USA PERSPECTIVE

KEYWORDS: leadership; women; gender; female leadership; gender diversity; digital technology; gender difference.

ABSTRACT. The article gives brief review of multiple approaches for achieving diversity, the most current statistics on women representation in senior management positions and who the women among leader nations and smaller countries are. Women have been leaders throughout history; the concept of leadership is not inherently masculine. The author explores a 'disconnect' that seems to exist between how companies approach leadership and what female leaders are actually looking for.

The author also brings up a communication issue. Communication is seen as the most important attribute of good leaders by both sexes, women are more likely to perceive this skill in terms of listening and engaging in two-way dialogue, while men are more likely to focus on broadcasting messages.

The article summarizes findings of recent American studies on women in politics, education and the workplace, which certify that there is a positive correlation between the presence of women in corporate leadership and performance. As we continue to connect globally by sharing studies, ideas and experiences, we can cut the timeline for more women in leadership roles.

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ЖЕНЩИНЫ НА ЛИДЕРСКИХ ПОЗИЦИЯХ: КОНЦЕПЦИЯ США

KEYWORDS: лидерство; женщины; гендер; гендерные различия; цифровые технологии; информационная культура.

АННОТАЦИЯ. В статье приводится краткий обзор нескольких подходов к достижению гендерного равноправия, дается последняя статистика о количестве женщин на значимых должностях и описывается роль женщин в развитых и развивающихся странах. Женщина была лидером на протяжении всей истории; концепция лидерства не является неотъемлемой чертой маскулинности, как это принято полагать. Автор статьи анализирует те нестыковки, которые существуют в представлениях о лидерстве в общем и целях, которые преследуют женщины-лидеры на самом деле.

Кроме этого, в статье рассматриваются вопросы коммуникации. Коммуникативные умения являются важными атрибутами хорошего руководителя, будь то мужчина или женщина. Женщины обладают навыками хорошего слушателя и собеседника, в то время как мужчины умеют транслировать информацию.

В статье обобщены результаты американских исследований последних лет о роли женщин в политике, образовании и бизнесе, которые говорят об успешности большинства женщин, занимающих руководящие позиции. Обмен опытом подобных исследований и идеями о лидерстве приведет к усилению роли женщин в мировом сообществе.

For the last several decades, as nations form and reform alliances within a global perspective, there has developed a shared goal, 'commit to diversity in leadership'. Multiple approaches for achieving diversity are being studied. One can ask, "Are they working?" Are one or more approaches achieving better results? What do the most current statistics tell us and who are the women among leader nations and smaller countries that prove the efforts?

Looking at some of the recent studies citing statistics, four in ten businesses in G7 countries have no women in senior management positions. The proportion of senior business roles held by women in the same G7 countries (Canada, USA, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Japan) in a 2016 report (#IWD216 on Twitter) was 24% (up from only 2% from 2015).

It has been reported that the G7 countries are among the worst performing despite all of the rhetoric and publicity that tout the benefits of di-

verse leadership in organizations world-wide. Russia, not a G7 participant, continues to lead the world with 45% of business roles held by women, followed by the Philippines at 39%, and China at 30%. The two 'worst countries', according to the studies, are Germany at 15% and Japan at 7%.

Among the most influential spokespersons on women in leadership is Sacha Romanovitch, CEO of Grant Thornton UK LLP (Source: Grant Thornton, London: March 8, 2016) Sacha Romanovitch is the CEO of the leading independent accounting and consulting firm Grant Thornton UK. In her own words Sacha is a 'mother, wife, friend, business leader and CEO'. Her Blog is widely read throughout the developed world. In her view, the above report explores a 'disconnect' that seems to exist between how companies approach leadership and what female leaders are actually looking for. It 'considers the motivations and drivers' of female business leaders compared to their male counterparts and makes a number of rec-

ommendations for companies looking to promote more diverse leadership.

Its findings are interesting and different, compared to what is being cited in other studies in the name of 'women' and 'diversity.' For example, it finds that earning a higher salary is a bigger driver for women looking for leadership roles than it is for men (28% compared to 21%). Women also appear to perceive leadership skills differently than men. "While communication is seen as the most important attribute of good leaders by both sexes, women are more likely to perceive this skill in terms of listening and engaging in two-way dialogue, while men are more likely to focus on broadcasting messages" it says.

Communication has for too long been thought of as broadcast; when actually, it's all about creating conversation and building community. This may prove to be a significant gender difference worth consideration. Companies may recognize the need for female leadership but they must do more to transform their leadership cultures to attract women aspiring to senior roles. "In order to create more dynamic businesses that support a vibrant economy, we need people from all backgrounds leading them" says Ms. Romanovitch.

In the United States, Harvard University's Executive Education programs and Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management offer a range of programs that explore best practices, change ideas, and the critical skills female executives need. These programs, many versions of them now offered at smaller institutions and universities, also delve into the inter-workings of corporate boards and the obstacles facing women in the boardroom.

A recent study by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) centers on women in politics, education and the workplace. They point out that the study is not all-encompassing because of the multiplicity of women's experiences, but the findings deserve a closer look and may suggest changes in how we approach globally shared goals.

Following is a summary of some of the findings:

- More women are earning college degrees than men, but are under-represented in higher education as tenured faculty and full professors, and

in higher positions such as deans and presidents.

- Significant improvements have been made towards closing the leadership gap in government positions; however, sex discrimination continues to be a barrier, as are stereotypes and sexual harassment. Family and caregiving responsibilities are more likely to affect women's careers than men's. Research suggests that women are at a disadvantage when it comes to networks, mentorship, and sponsorship.

- Training programs have had mixed results, although leadership training for high school and college students show promise.

- Other strategies that need to be studied in more depth include Implicit Association Tests (IATS) that can help individuals understand how they think; gender quotas adopted by numerous organizations, employment reforms such as gender-neutral job descriptions and flexible parental policies all deserve further attention.

A study on gender diversity (Source: Noland, Moran and Kotchwar for the Peterson Institute for International Economics) released in 2016 says there is a positive correlation between the presence of women in corporate leadership and performance "in a magnitude that is not small". Only about half of the companies studied had any female leaders at all. But the study did suggest that having a woman in an executive position leads to better performance with 'the more women the better'.

Finally, just out from Accenture is an interesting report on digital fluency as the way for women to get ahead. It concludes that if governments and businesses can double the pace at which women become digitally fluent – by which it means access to internet, using social networking, not digital coding - the workplace in **developed** nations could reach gender equality in 25 years, versus 50 years at the current pace. In **developing** countries, the workplace could reach gender equality in 40 years says the report, versus 65 years at the current pace.

Women have been leaders throughout history; the concept of leadership is not inherently masculine. As we continue to connect globally by sharing our studies, ideas and experiences, we can cut the timeline for more women in leadership roles. Our world future will be brighter if we do.

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