

## Book review



# CONTROVERSIES OF LEADERSHIP

**Leposava Grubić Nešić (2008), *Knowing How to be a Leader*,  
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Questioning the theory and practice of leadership is important for a number of reasons. Leadership is a complex and ambiguous concept based on a new paradigm of management, which includes the processes of identifying the purpose and the direction of an organization, varied management impacts; of achieving goals. In our practice the leader has not yet got his distinct position; he is generally equalled to the director, the manager or the political leader. Whereas our directors and managers, mainly the leading public officials, protectors of laws and other legal norms, are focused upon their superiors, the leaders are predominantly focused upon their followers-collaborators. Leaders are councillors

rather than executive authorities, they deal with the unknown and the uncertain transforming them into the known and the clear. The new age warns that the times of leading the subordinated are far behind us, that a new type of manager emerges, the one that uses his knowledge, courage, cleverness, visionary and missionary qualities act *ex aequo et bono* (according to what is just, what is good), thus enabling his company to perform above the average.

Dr Leposava Grubić-Nešić, the author of a recently published, intriguing book *Knowing How to be a Leader*, maintains that leadership and leadership aspira-

tions make the basis of a successful organizational innovativeness, crucial for the organization's survival on the market. Therefore the leader has to adapt his /her behaviour to changes, to a new way of (systemic) reasoning, so in this sense his role is the one of a constructor, a manager and a teacher. The leader is a designer of the business processes, of organizational culture, and of the business climate in the organization, Dr Grubić-Nešić claims. He is also a mentor, guiding his collaborators in the direction desired, but also a protector of his followers against external environment.

**Leader – manager.** Therefore the author, although strictly focusing upon the interpretation of the idea of leadership, implies a broader context of this issue – the concept of entrepreneurial leadership, nowadays crucial in revitalizing the staggering economy. If the manager has leadership potentials and personal authority, he will be able to motivate people towards creative changes; he will be ready to take on the risk of such changes himself. The leader must primarily be a manager, says Dr Grubić-Nešić; he must be familiar with all the functions of management, therefore it is “absurd to favor either the manager or the leader“. Although the functions of the leader and the manager are complementary, the author does not forget to mention the attitudes according to which these roles are different, based on the premise that the manager is the “mind“, and the leader is the “soul“ of the organization. Thus, for example, according to the Benis' list of specific qualities of the manager and the leader, the manager is oriented to administration and acting according to orders and procedures, whereas the leader is focused upon people and innovations. The manager copies, maintains and counts on control, while the leader develops and advocates trust. Furthermore, the manager is oriented towards control and short-term goals, while the leader favours creativity and follows long-term paths. The former supports the actual, *status quo* situation, the latter is a creator, “looking beyond the horizon“.

**Professional and organizational skills of the leader.** Leadership requires two types of skills, Dr Grubić-Nešić states, and these are professional skill and organizational skill. Therefore this demanding function requires that the leader command enormous work energy, be highly intelligent, sociable and open-minded, honest, self-confident, with personal integrity and a desire to be a leader. The author also stresses the component of emotional intelligence (EQ) since the leader primarily “activates the emotions of his followers-collaborators and guides them in a certain direction“. The quoted qualities are also mentioned by H. Friedman, who relates them to the characteristics of a charismatic (he says: present)

personality: the leader's traits are basic self-confidence and the ability to project himself upon the others (Friedman's research into the secrets of charismatic management – B. R. Nj.).

**Leadership theories.** In her presentation of modern leadership theories Professor Grubić-Nešić first highlights two dominant orientations, opposing each other in their approach to referent qualities of a leader. According to one, the research into the leader traits should be focused to the personality traits and characteristics by which the leader differs from the rest, whereas the other approach is based on observing the leader's behaviour, the one that makes him a leader. Regardless of these conceptual differences, the majority of authors is of opinion that leaders can be classified (ideally-typically) into the groups of authoritative, transformational and charismatic leaders.

The initial academic dilemma in the study of the leadership phenomenon (traits or behaviour) is resolved by a compromise, a concept of the two-dimensional nature of the leader – oriented towards the *task* and oriented towards the *employees*. It is on this premise, the author says, that the theoreticians Blake and Mouton developed a managerial network of the forms of management behaviour identification, that is, four types of leadership behaviour. The first type includes leaders oriented towards the structure, strategy, environment, implementation, experimenting and adaptation (leader as a “social architect that analyses and designs“). The second type includes the leaders oriented towards human resources, the third type are the politically oriented leaders, while the fourth type includes leaders – visionaries.

The author proceeds to give a review and interpretation of relevant leadership theories. This section of the book is, in the author's opinion, its central part, and calls for closer attention due to its importance and informative quality. According to the *contingency theory*, the leader's success not only depends only on his management style (no successful style has proven universally efficient), but also on the specific conditions or a situation he is faced with. These are, most often, the requirements of the task, the expectations and the behaviours of the persons of the same rank and of the employees, the given organizational policy and culture. A broader interpretation within this theory is offered in Hersey-Blanchard's *situational model of leadership* oriented towards the study of the followers' willingness to take responsibilities, skills, capabilities and experience required to accomplish a task. The *contingency approach to leadership* is operationalized in the Fiedler's model of “three leadership situations“, analysed

through the relationships: leader – member, task structure, power on the basis of position.

The *normative decision-making* theory (Vroom, Yaton) studies the procedure of decision making as a key determinant of leader's efficiency. According to this model, the leadership decision-making styles may be authoritative, consultative and participant, depending on whether the leaders solve the problems autonomously, or make decision using available information; whether they include employees in data gathering, whether they talk to their subordinates on the problems individually or in groups, whether they make decisions jointly. The *transformational leadership* concept (Baas) promotes the idea of energetic leaders of distinctive personal vision, continually interacting with their followers, motivating and activating them towards a higher level of needs. In this work they use specific methods such as idealized situations, inspiring motivations, intellectual stimulations and individualized concerns.

L. Grubić-Nešić continues to explain the House's concept of the *charismatic leader* of great referent powers, self-confident and dominant, firmly confident of the ethicality of his own beliefs. She also explains the hypotheses of the *substitution for leadership* theory, according to which there are situations in which the leaders are redundant if the subordinates have mastered an extremely high level of knowledge and commitment to the task, if jobs are elaborated in detail and are performed in a routine way, or in case the applied technology defines the conduct of an individual to the utmost.

**Leadership and ethicality.** The leadership issue is by no means fully covered by the so far presented considerations. The author further brings up an important issue of the leader's role in promoting the ethical dimension of business activities. The more so because management in a *laissez-faire* atmosphere requires a high level of business ethics. In interpreting this dimension of business activities, professor Grubić-Nešić highlights two principles of ethical conduct. The first is the ethical *determinism*, which clearly distinguishes the ethical from the non-ethical leadership, via the criteria of leaders' motives, the tactics of influence they use and the way in which the leaders' character is formed. The other (disputable) principle of ethical behaviour is based on the doctrine of ethical *relativism*, expressed in the attitude that no leadership form is possible to qualify as non-ethical.

**Women leaders.** Towards the very end appears the issue of what happens when a woman, educated and engaged, masters the "language" and certain "serious" functions such as the leadership is, which are privileged and male by stereotype. In the analysis of the chapter titled *Women Leaders*, professor Grubić-Nešić appears to ask this question herself, situating the issue into the context of the gender principle. She infers the differences in the behaviours of the male and female leaders on the basis of the identification and self-authorisation criteria. Here she states that men leaders, opposite to women, identify themselves with others more easily (similar to them – B. R. Nj.), especially in cases of non-ethical behaviour; they also have a higher perception of self-authorisation, i.e., the feeling that they command more authority compared to others. Such a behaviour is conditioned, among other things, by the differences between the genders, important for the work atmosphere. Therefore, for example, broad, rich and open feelings are characteristic of women (female emotional engagement – B. R. Nj.); women are emotionally while men are creatively intelligent. Women notice details; men see the whole. Women communicate more easily, since they are better anatomically and physiologically prepared for verbal presentation. However, in their estimate of self-authorization, women are somewhat uncomfortable, due to their belief that the status achieved is in itself a significant success, therefore it is immodest to be over-ambitious.

Let us just add that, faithful to her primary academic and personal interest in universal problems of human resources development and maintenance and more humane relations in work and management (book *Human Resources Development*, 2005), L. Grubić-Nešić again insists on the importance of *human capital* and a new role of the leader in identification, development and maintenance of human resources in their organizations.

Intriguing in its choice of subject, systematic and accurate in the methodology of presentation, Dr Leposava Grubić-Nešić's book is a thorough, informative and above all a clever contribution to the study of theory and yet insufficiently mastered leadership practice, as well as still ambiguous issue of management. These qualities will certainly earn it due recognition in academic and professional circles.

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