

GENDER ISSUES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN LATVIA¹

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Nowadays many scientists discuss feminist institutionalism in order to answer crucial questions about power inequalities, mechanisms of continuity, and the gendered limits of change (Krook, 2010), which has encouraged the author of the paper to study the relevance of feminism theory in public administration. Far from being a monolithic entity, feminism has a variety of traditions and focuses. This diversity is reflected in various approaches of feminism towards studying and criticizing the representation of women in public life. This first wave of feminism believed that when women had access to public institutions such as education and the work place, then gender inequity would be erased. The period of “modernity” was therefore characterized by women’s access to areas of public life that was traditionally reserved only for men.

The aim of the article is to find the link between feminism and gender theory and management theory of the society in order to form a feminist perspective in the field of public administration and discover if public institutions are also gendered. The article provides an insight into and evaluation of problematic issues of gender equality in public administration and respective situation in Latvia. Although the author has carried out multiple researches in the field, yet the purpose of this article is to draw attention to theoretical aspects of gender equality issues based on feminism theories and an explanation of problems related to gender equality.

Keywords: feminism, gender equality, leading position, public administration, woman.

JEL codes: J160, H830.

Introduction

In the 20th century such fields of science as sociology, economics, demography, anthropology and culturalogy found a new direction with social equality issues (evaluation of inequality problems) of men and women at the centre of attention. In the field of sociology the said direction was called “gender sociology” (Titarenko, 2003), which comprises theories related both to radical feminism constructions and less radical social conceptions, at a macro and micro level. There is an opinion that a working woman has bigger power in a family, which is regarded in the family power theory – spouse with more resources has power in a family. A man with a prestigious job (higher post) dictates his terms in the family life (Bern, 2002). Evidence with regard to power-play in a family when a spouse with higher post or bigger earnings has a major role is not absolute, yet it is possible that a financially independent spouse has bigger power over the financially dependable spouse.

It is crucial to distinguish the understanding of notions “equality” and “gender equality”. Gender equality means granting of equal rights and opportunities to both genders, not emphasizing that men and women are identical beings (Community..., 2003).

Gender is a part of the organization fabric of social economy based on perceived differences in accordance with one’s sex and on identity and power derived

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from unequal values attributed to that perception of difference. The focus of gender is not on women per se but on power relations between men and women, their access to resources and decision-making power. This shows the various ways in which gender identities are constituted differently according to social and historical context. A study of gender relations and organization in the context of globalization is also political since feminist modes of inquiry rest on transformative agendas for social development and change (Metcalf..., 2010).

The situation of gender equality issues in Latvia in some aspects is far more better than in other European countries, yet couple of years would be needed to make these issues topical for a wider society, especially under these conditions when social fields (survival) are priority. However, the problem of social integration will have to acknowledge the variety of other social, political and cultural identities, including those of gender (Novikova..., 2008).

The notion of governance is one of those which nowadays means a progressive and thinking person, also it is used to link with another notion – “good governance”, which is a new governance process or provisions changed in the existing law, or a completely fresh method in society governance (Rhodes, 2007).

The formal stand of Latvia with regard to governance has been included in “Guidelines for Development of the State Administration Policy 2008–2013” which have been approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 3 June 2008. The guidelines mention four main principles: political management (government) representing interests of the society, competent public administration employees, and appropriate institutional system of public administration and appropriate decision-making procedures of public administration (Guidelines..., 2008).

The European Union determined to facilitate gender equality already in the Treaty of 1957 (Treaty..., 1957). EU institutions attempt to achieve gender equality at all fields of decision-making.

The Council in its decision of 22 October 1999 stressed the importance of promoting equality at all decision-making levels. In May 2000, the Commission delivered the Framework on Gender Equality and announced that the target of at least 40% for women’s participation in committees and expert groups should be met. In order to provide assistance in achieving this goal, the Commission requested the Member States to select their candidates from both genders in these institutions (Communication..., 2010).

It should also be mentioned that all Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) States have signed up to the United Nations Convention of the Elimination of the Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Baltic States Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia have, on the whole, been most successful in complying with UN reporting mechanisms (Metcalf..., 2005).

The aim of the article is to find the link between feminism and gender theory and management theory of the society in order to form a feminist perspective in the field of public administration and discover if institutions of public administration are also gendered. To reach the aim the author is providing two main tasks of both theory and case study where the efficiency of public administration has been discussed.

Methodology of investigation

The article provides an insight into issues of gender equality in public administration, with the following theoretical and methodological basis of the article: researches of foreign and Latvian scientists on gender equality issues; publications on state institutions containing the aspect of gender problem; materials from scientific conferences and seminars; internet resources; theoretical analysis of literature on public management and feminism.

The article is based also on the results gathered in quantitative and qualitative researches by the author with regard to: women in public leadership positions (leaders of local governments (2005/2006) (including also interviews with experts in Finland and women–ministers/women in other high positions and experts (2009/2010) who have also shared their experience on gender equality.

Gender Equality Theories in Public Administration

In the last decades feminism has become an academic field of studies, which is not related to one field in particular. It is more likely a theoretical method how to explain the world. Today, feminists study such questions: what it means to be a woman or a man in various cultures, or economic and social systems of the society? Feminism as a political movement first emerged in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. This period was similar to the enlightenment, which grew from such political movements as liberalism, conservatism and socialism. That was regarded as the first feminism-wave depending on the existing political ideas. Liberal feminism emerged as the first one, then came Marxist, socialistic, radical and other types of feminism.

Liberal feminism theory supports the idea that the roles of male and female gender cannot be interpreted from biological point of view, they have formed through socialization process (Moore, 1994). This type of feminism is reprimanded for its superficial approach to global female problems by focussing, for example, only on family or mass media. Theory of Marxist feminism relates female problems to capitalism (Moore, 1994). Women are regarded as reproductive agents who produce and take care of the future labour generation in capitalism by introducing ductility. This movement of feminism is reprimanded for its simplified feminist interpretation in capitalism. Theory of radical feminism (also social feminism) mentions that the reason of women oppression is men, their enforced power and self-enrichment at the expense of women, also fight against the violence towards women (rape etc.) attributed by men to show their power in the society (Moore, 1994). According to this theory, the situation in society cannot be changed because men have created the system we live in and are in its leadership.

Theory of dual system offers a more profound analysis on women's role in society and problems thereto. It provides a combination of radical and Marxist feminism elements by emphasizing that women have a place in capitalism, yet women are oppressed also by men. The role of a housewife and mother restricts woman's opportunities in professional life. A situation where a man is viewed a servant of capitalism by oppressing a woman, without any chances to treat a woman differently, may be

considered a drawback of the dual system theory. Black feminism (also called multiracial feminism) supports African-American and Asian women, to which ethnocentric role is also being attributed (Moore, 1994). Yet, the overall idea of feminism remains unchanged – the emphasis is put on gender equality, not on the superiority of women.

The term “public administration” has many definitions, which have also been considered by the professor V. Bariss (Bariss, 2009):

- use of management, politics and legal history in order to implement the mandates of government legislation and its fulfilment, which ensure the provision of functions of regulations and services to the society or a part of it (Rosenbloom, 2008);

- encompass all the things coming after the pre-election promises and the victory euphoria in the pre-election night (Starling, 2007);

- means processes, organizations and individuals (operating as officials) implementing requirements of regulatory instruments assigned and supervised by legislators and legal system (Gordon, 2007).

Political, social and economic process take place along with processes in public administration, and quite often as a result of mutual interaction the flow of ideas and activity methods between the public and private sector and states takes place. Efficiency as a term is used both analysing public administration according to certain criteria and evaluating moral categories. In the sense of improvement of public administration efficiency, the afore-mentioned term should be understood in a wider meaning than only economic efficiency and should be viewed in the context of functions to be carried out by public administration. As a factor facilitating efficiency is considered the use of potential of all professionals (without discriminating gender, nationality etc.). When regarding to the afore-mentioned, the term “Gender as management capital” is applied (Raadschelders, 2010).

According to the Classic public administration theory N. Morton and S. Lindquist (Morton, 1997) have discussed ways in which Mary Parker Follett, a classic writer in public administration theory, may be considered a precursor of feminist theories of public administration.

According to the Gender equality C. Stivers’ (Stivers 1993; *The shape...*, 2002) seminal work on feminist theory in public administration focused on the history and present distribution of women in public service roles, "glass ceiling" issues, and issues pertaining to gender and leadership style both in general and in relation to administrative reform.

M. Guy (Guy, 1993) came to supporting empirical conclusions in her examination of two decades of public service affirmative action. She found the number of women in decision-making positions to be disproportionately low compared to their percentage of the public work force.

Gender representation linked to policy output Research by L. Keiser, R. Wilkins, V. Meier, & K. Holland (Keiser, 2002) using data from an educational context, provide evidence that passive representation in the public workforce leads to active representation in policy results, implying that as gender equality becomes more prevalent in public service, one may expect different policy outcomes. This confirmed earlier work by J. Blackmore (Blackmore, 1995), which found that in an Aus-

tralian educational setting, women were a force for equity and reform as they moved into senior positions in the late 1980s, overcoming a previously ‘masculinist’ bureaucratic culture which had been technicist in orientation. Research empirically linking gender representation to policy output also supported the longstanding call by feminist policy scholars such as M. Hawkesworth (Hawkesworth, 1994), who had defined the purpose of feminist scholarship to be to reshape dominant paradigms to give greater priority to women's needs and concerns, as well as to research methodologies that are neither gender-biased nor gender-blind.

Focus on social commitment Public opinion polling shows women to be more supportive of social policies, more favourable to gun control, more supportive of health care initiatives, etc. In this context, some feminist authors such as Grogan (Grogan..., 2000) have argued that women can and may play a critical role in transforming public-sector leadership roles in the direction of greater social commitment.

Focus on the social B. Misztal (Misztal, 2005) argues that sociologists and others have a misplaced emphasis on “society” that than “the social” when analysing organizations, processes, and interactions. In any phenomenon involving interactions there is an optimal balance between formality and informality. An enhanced quality of social and personal life requires this balance, harmonizing the three styles of interaction, which are civility, sociability, and intimacy.

Misztal draws on three theoretical veins: R. Putnam's development of the concept of social capital; R. Sennett's treatment of the shifting relationship between the public and the private; and the work of Touraine, Urry, Bauman and Castells, who call for a new agenda for a ‘sociology beyond the social’, emphasizing limitations of equating “the social” with “society” (Garson, 2006).

Under the auspices of the quantitative study carried out by the author (carried out in 2006–2010 on women in leadership of local municipalities and on women in the top jobs of ministries) respondents were asked if they have encountered with discrimination (which is closely related to the said in feminism theories), and the most common answer was that gender discrimination in Latvia does not exist. However, further questions in questionnaires and interviews revealed that almost every respondent has come into contact with “especially” negative attitude because of the gender.

When respondents were asked if there is a diverse opinion in the society about a woman manager/in politics and a male manager/in politics (whether the prejudices exist), respondents indicated that there exist higher expectations from women than men and also if there is nothing to reproach about then indication on gender serves the task. Women note that prejudices exist and they have different levels. In a collective of employees prejudices may be overcome by proving that a woman is professionally suitable to take the post, but it is harder to change such views in external relations.

Conclusions

1. Women comprise a large segment of the available managerial talent across the globe, yet their representation at top level managerial positions in business and public administration, is rather obscure. Especially, under the crisis, it is of crucial importance to apply all the resource available in the society, including human resources, in order to be more efficient at work and achieve good results. Therefore it is utterly important to evaluate and provide equal opportunities in public administration for both genders because gender discrimination causes also economic consequences in effect.

2. Main women problems in public administration and politics (from author's researches): women managers are aware of the factors hindering their career growth, yet they are not active in reducing these factors (refers to socialising agents, stereotypic up-bringing etc.); although the women in top jobs in interviews emphasized that they have not come across gender inequality directly, yet in the following questions they mentioned specific examples when they were discriminated, which means that discrimination has not been identified etc. In general, opinions given under the auspices of the study do not have sharp variations, yet it should be noted that respondents occupy positions of different managerial levels and the studies have been carried out within an interval of five years. The main trend observed is that opinions are similar; responses are not converse but complementary.

3. In order to solve gender equality issues more efficiently, gender studies should receive more attention not only at EU level (on paper), but also national and regional level. Examples of good governance are important (to raise the self-esteem of women, to encourage them etc.), as well as to provide a wider reflection on the positive gender equality experience.

4. It is necessary to break free of perceptual sets and stereotypic thinking by raising the society's awareness and to reduce the cultivation of role division in the mass media etc.

5. One of the differences among men and women in leading positions is the so-called "old boy network", which is not so popular among women, therefore it is necessary to activate cooperation and solidarity, information exchange and communication between women.

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LYČIŲ ASPEKTAI LATVIJOS VIEŠOJO ADMINISTRAVIMO SEKTORIUJE

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Santrauka

Visame pasaulyje moterys sudaro didelę segmento dalį valdyme, tačiau jų atstovavimas aukščiausio lygio vadovaujančiose verslo ir viešojo administravimo pareigose gana menkas. Todėl yra labai svarbu įvertinti ir suteikti lygias galimybes viešojo administravimo sektoriuje abiejų lyčių atstovams. Straipsnio tikslas – rasti ryšį tarp feminizmo, lyčių teorijos ir valdymo teorijos visuomenės kontekste, siekiant suformuoti feministines perspektyvas viešojo administravimo srityje. Straipsnyje įvertinti lyčių lygybės viešajame administravime probleminiai klausimai ir atitinkama situacija Latvijoje. Tikslui pasiekti naudoti kokybiniai ir kiekybiniai tyrimo metodai.

Rezultatai rodo, kad Latvijos viešojo administravimo sektoriuje moterys užima daug pareigų, tačiau aukščiausias pareigas užima visgi vyrai.

Raktiniai žodžiai: feminizmas, lyčių lygybė, pirmaujanti pozicija, viešasis administravimas, moteris.

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