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CORRELATION BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND INCLINATION TOWARDS ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

Abstract

The aim of the paper was to conduct a preliminary verification of theoretical postulates on correlation between the administrative leadership style and learning processes in local administrative organizations. The basic research hypothesis is that administrative leadership style is positively correlated with inclination to organizational learning in local administrative organizations, notwithstanding other organizational and contextual variables, such as internal organizational structure, number of employees, ruling political party and its continuity. In order to construct an empirical study, a cross-sectional study among three Croatian city governments has been applied. The main variables have been measured on the basis of civil servants' perception of administrative leadership style and inclination to organizational learning in each organization. The results of correlation analysis between administrative leadership style, on one hand, and, each level of learning in organization and each process of learning across the levels, on the other, are presented in the paper. On the basis of the results obtained and consequent discussion, some general conclusions and recommendations for administrative organizations are provided.

Keywords: administrative leadership style, organizational learning, local administrative organizations, Croatia

1.   INTRODUCTION

Although the literature in the fields of leadership styles and organizational learning is burgeoning, there is still relatively small number of studies on the role of leadership style in facilitating organizational learning and the correlation between those two variables (Sadler, 2001: 415). Lack of significant scholar's interest and empirical studies in the field also concerns public sector organizations as well as some specific parts of public administration (Kurland et al., 2010: 8). Although some theoretical postulates developed in private sector might be acquired and applied for public sector organizations, one has to bear in mind the differences between two sectors during the construction of the theoretical model and the implementation of empirical research. When analysing leadership and leadership styles in administrative organizations, two types of the leadership in political-administrative system should be taken into consideration: political leadership executed by political officials, and administrative leadership pertaining to senior civil servants who manage specific organizations or internal organizational units.

In general, leadership style is indicated as a variable that can positively or negatively affect learning processes in organizations. Some empirical studies conducted in relation to private sector organizations confirm these postulates. Having in mind specific position of administrative organizations in wider political-administrative system as well as the impact that political officials can have on behaviour and influence of senior civil servants, the aim of this study is to find out whether the leadership style of administrative leaders is positively correlated with inclination towards organizational learning in administrative organizations. In spite of the specificities of public sector organizations in general and especially administrative organizations, it is expected that more participatory/transformational leadership style is also positively correlated with the inclination of an administrative organization towards organizational learning.

After the presentation of the main theoretical postulates on the levels and processes of organizational learning (Chapter 2) and leadership styles, the theoretical framework on the correlation between the administrative leadership style and the inclination towards organizational learning in administrative organizations will be developed in the paper (Chapter 3). The theoretical postulates will be verified by means of the survey conducted among the local civil servants within the cross-sectional study among three Croatian towns (Chapter 4). On the basis of the results obtained and consequent discussion, some general conclusions and recommendations for administrative organizations and administrative leaders will be provided (Chapter 5).

2.   LEVELS AND PROCESSES OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

Initial studies on organizations as learning entities emerged in 1960s and 1970s with seminal works of Cyert and March and Aryris and Schön.[1] Most of the studies regarding organizational learning are dedicated to private sector organizations, although the interest in the field of learning processes in public administration has been growing, especially since 1980s, parallel with the trend of acquiring private sector principles and methods by administrative organizations (Barette et al., 2012; Barrados and Mayne, 2003; Common, 2004; Dekker and Hansén, 2004; Rashman et al., 2009; Yussof, 2005). In the public administration, organizational learning might induce and facilitate the improvement of policy-making capacity and public policy implementation (Common, 2004).[2] However, much more difficulties in the implementation of organizational learning are linked with administrative organizations in comparison to private sector organizations. Some of the factors that might undermine the development of organizational learning in administrative organizations are the multiplicity of actors with a stake in public policy in democratic systems, organizational fragmentation, the artificial separation of policy and service delivery caused by the managerial reforms undertaken in public administration, difficulties linked with the quantification of policy outcomes, etc. (Stata, 1996: 318; Common, 2004: 38).

In spite of significant differences between administrative organizations and private sector organizations, some basic theoretical postulates on organizational learning can be applied to organizations in general, notwithstanding their specific characteristics and the context in which they act. Furthermore, principles determined thereby can be used as the basis for the development of the broader theoretical models and their empirical verification in the specific context, such the one in which administrative organizations act is.

In the literature of organizational learning a part of the study on organizational learning is dedicated to specific levels of learning processes in organizations. Three levels are in the focus of scholars' interest: individual, group and organizational one (e.g. Bontis et al., 2002; Crossan et al., 1999).[3]

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[1] In the book *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm (1963)* Cyert and March developed the behavioral perspective to learning based on the stimulus-response (S-R) concept. Argyris and Schön in the books *Organizational learning: a theory of action perspective (1978)*, *Organizational Learning II: theory, method, and practice (1996)* and other works, constructed their approach to organizational learning around the concept of theories of action, defensive routines and three types of organizational learning.
[2] This confirms the potential of administrative organizations to develop double-loop learning which is sometimes denied due to their specific position in political-administrative system (Džinić, 2014: 177-178).
[3] Cantley and Sahal (1980, after Shrivastava, 1983) broaden indicated model by adding industry and societal levels of learning in socio-technical systems, i.e. organizations. The industry level corresponds to certain functional system in public administration (such as the system of public health or education). According to Shrivastava (1983, p. 17), learning occurring at industry level is especially

The generation of new insights and interpretation resulting in the development of cognitive maps, i.e. individual competences and knowledge that represent the basis for organizational learning, occurs at the level of individual (Bontis et al., 2002). Individual level learning is defined as *"individual competence, capability, and motivation to undertake the required tasks"* (Bontis et al., 2002). It is the subject of human resources management, i.e. organizational units and management in charge therefore.

Unlike Western societies focused on individual as *"the acting agent of the organization"* (Argyris, 1964), Japanese scholars are more interested in the group level of learning. In Nonaka's theory of organizational knowledge creation (1994), critical role in articulation and spreading of knowledge is attributed to *"communities of interaction"* among individuals in organization. Two categories of group learning can be identified according to entities included in learning groups: learning arising from formal and informal working groups, on one hand, and learning related to leadership, on the other (Nemeth, 1997). Crossan and Hulland (1996, after Nemeth, 1997: 50) indicate leadership with the term *"dominant coalition",* among other, in order to emphasize the strong influence that leaders might have on organizational learning.

Organizational level learning refers to the process of encoding individual and group learning into organizational "stocks", often indicated as routines (Levitt and March, 1988), systems, structures, procedures and strategy (Bontis et al., 2002), organizational memory (Huber, 1991), learning systems (Shrivastava, 1983), organizational culture, common maps of the organizational theory in use (Argyris and Schön, 1978, 1996), etc.[4]

According to the model of organizational learning developed by Crossan, Lane and White (1999) which relates to three learning levels (individual, group and organizational), organizational learning occurs in two directions: from individual to organizational level and *vice versa*, from organizational to individual one. Learning processes at individual and group levels are required for the development of learning process at organizational level, but the knowledge institutionalized at organizational level determines future learning processes at different levels in organization.[5] In order to develop organizational learning, two processes must take place among all three learning levels. The first one (*feed-*

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important in strategic decision making "*where knowledge of industry opportunities and threats and societal expectations invariably shape strategic decisions.*"

[4] However, some concepts of organizational learning, such as cultural one, do not consider specific levels of learning in organizations at all since they understand organizational learning as the process imputable exclusively to organization and detached from the individual learning of organizational members (Cook and Yanow, 1993).

[5] It seems this model is the middle way between the approaches that emphasize the role of an individual as the autonomous actor and the source of change in organization and approaches that point out the impact of the higher levels on individual learning processes. It is the kind of reconciliation between "the two sociologies": one that views individual action as the derivative of the social system (such as structural-functionalism) and the other that views the social system as the derivative of individual action (such as the interpretative sociologies) (Huysman, 1999).

forward) refers to exploration. It is the transference of learning from individuals and groups through to the learning that becomes embedded or institutionalized in the form of systems, structures, strategies, and procedures (Hedberg, 1981, Shrivastava, 1983, after Crossan et al., 1999). The latter (*feed-back*) relates to exploitation and to the way in which institutionalized learning affects individuals and groups.

Therefore, although organizational learning refers to certain processes taking place at individual and group level in organization, potential for learning development at lower levels is not sufficient for the development of organizational learning. It is also important to determine if the factors inducing or impeding transference of the learning to the organizational level (feed-forward process) exist. On the other hand, the learning 'stocks' at organizational level impact the learning processes at lower levels (feed-back process) and then indirectly its own transformation, resulting in a kind of learning circuit in organization.

Accordingly, organizational learning can be defined as the change of individual and common cognition (and possibly behaviour) that becomes embedded in the institutions of an organization by which it is influenced (Džinić, 2014).

In the following part of the paper, the role of the administrative leadership style in the development of thus defined organizational learning in local administrative organizations will be examined.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE AS THE BUILDING BLOCK OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

Leadership is usually defined as the ability of an individual, using minimum coercion, to influence and motivate others to perform at a high level of commitment (Bass, 1985, 1999), so it can be effective or ineffective, depending on the level of leader's success to influence and motivate the individuals who are to be led.

There are different classifications of leadership styles that can be found in the literature.

Burns (1978) distinguished between transactional and transformational leadership styles where the former referred to exchanging tangible rewards for the work and loyalty of followers and the latter considered active engagement of the leader with followers, focus on intrinsic needs such as self-realization and belonging. It is assumed and empirically confirmed that transformational

leadership facilitates organizational learning (García-Morales et al., 2012; Lloréns Montes et al., 2005) and that transformational leaders pursue life-long learning since they view their own as well as other people's mistakes as learning opportunities (Tichy and Devanna, 1986, after Sadler, 2001: 419). Further, Bass (2000: 37) predicts that transformational leaders will be the future educational leaders of learning organizations.

Another popular classification of leadership models is one developed by Likert in 1961 (Vrdoljak Raguž, 2007: 59). Likert (1961) identified four main styles of leadership based on the differences in the degree to which people are involved in decision-making: exploitive-authoritative, benevolent, consultative and participative. Since exploitive-authoritative style is based on threats, fear and top-down communication, benevolent style on rewards aimed to encourage appropriate performance, and consultative style on centrally made decisions, it seems that participative leadership style is the most appropriate for the development of organizational learning. In order to implement organizational learning free external and internal communication is required (Džinić, 2014). Therefore, it can be assumed that any leadership style based on restricted communication processes decreases the chances for the learning process to occur in an organization.

In public administration, the "authority to lead" is granted to political functionaries and top management, i.e. senior civil servants. Accordingly, there is a difference between the political and administrative leadership. The latter is related to civil services and appointed leaders rather than political leaders that lead, manage, and guide government and non-profit agencies (Van Wart, 2013: 521).[6] Nevertheless, both political and administrative functions are carried out in the area influenced by legal regulations, rules and control in the extent much higher than one in the private sector organizations. In addition, senior civil servants' discretion can be limited by the instructions of the political functionaries.

In spite of the limitations public leaders are faced with, administrative leadership style is often indicated as an important factor that influences learning processes in administrative organizations, whether the focus is on the specific levels of organization as learning system or processes carried out at and across those levels.

Yussof (2005) emphasizes the importance of leadership style for individual learning in administrative organizations through providing commitment for long-term learning in the form of resources, on one hand, and

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[6] A review of public leadership literature based on a common division of public leadership on political leadership, community leadership and administrative leadership showed that in the public administration journals there were 61 articles with an administrative focus, 33 with a political systems focus, and 5 other within the period from 1992 to 2011. In the same period the leadership journals had a very different profile with a dozen focused primarily on administration, 38 on political, and 21 on other (Van Wart, 2013: 528).

promotion of an organizational culture that enables the employees to understand and believe in their organization's vision, mission and core values, on the other.

Brodtrick (1995) also considers leadership style as one of the key elements in order for learning to succeed and flourish, especially through leader's ability and drive to ensure that communication in organization flows freely. In this respect, leaders can foster learning processes by controlling the flow of information while the knowledge-creation process requires specific form of leadership style, so called "distributed leadership" (Nonaka et al., 2002).

Ring and Perry (1985) also indirectly indicate the effective leadership style as the key factor in facilitating learning processes in the public sector when they emphasize the importance of the ability to encourage people to express their ideas, to listen carefully to what they say and to integrate many differing ideas as the critical skills for leaders in the public sector.

Vince (2000: 39) emphasizes the need for the movement away from the idea of "the public manager" based on the individualistic approach to a more relational notion: "management in public". The latter is led by the assumptions that there is no authority without democracy; the role of the managers is to transform the system within which roles are embedded and that the management is an organizing process rather than an individual skill (Vince, 2000: 40-41).

The aim of this study is to determine whether there is a correlation between the administrative leadership style in local administrative organizations and inclination to organizational learning processes, notwithstanding other organizational and contextual variables, such as internal organizational structure, number of employees, ruling political party and its continuity. It seems the latter three variables might impact the features of the administrative leadership style and organizational learning if we have in mind the importance of the organizational structure and number of employees for the communication processes in organization and the relationship between the political and administrative leaders in local self-government. However, it is assumed that differences concerning potentially intervening organizational and contextual variables do not interfere with the relation between two main variables of the study.

Accordingly, the following hypothesis was set:

There is a positive correlation between the administrative leadership style and inclination towards organizational learning processes in local administrative organizations.

In this study, local administrative organizations refer to the system of organizations in the city government, excluding representative body (city council) and city mayor as political local bodies. Therefore, the heads of the administrative organizations within the city government with the status of senior civil servants are considered as administrative leaders for the purpose of this study.

4.   METHODOLOGY[7]

4.1.   Sample

In order to conduct the empirical research aimed to verify the hypothesis on correlation between the administrative leadership style and the inclination towards organizational learning in administrative organizations, administrative organizations in three Croatian city governments were selected. Since the aim of the study is to verify whether the correlation between two main variables in the hypothesis exists notwithstanding certain organizational and contextual variables that might impact their relationship, selected city administrations differ from each other in internal organizational structure, number of employees, ruling political parties and their continuity.[8]

In the empirical research, total population sampling was applied. However, only 126 out of 266 civil servants employed in the selected city administrations (47%) responded and were administered through the survey. Detailed demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in the Table 1.

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[7] The study is based on the primary research conducted within the preparation of the doctoral thesis *"The impact of quality improvement instruments on organizational learning in administrative organizations"*. The city administrations of Vinkovci, Samobor and Sisak were chosen as the research units for the verification of the postulates on causal relationship between the implementation of specific quality improvement instruments and development of organizational learning in administrative organizations. In doing so, the differences concerning the (non)implementation of quality improvement instruments of different complexity and some contextual variables among the selected organizations were taken into consideration.

[8] The internal organization of the City Government of Vinkovci regulated by the Decision on the organization of administrative units of the City of Vinkovci (Official Gazette no. 9/13) comprises 11 administrative organizations responsible for the affairs of the mayor, normative and general affairs, city assets, social affairs, culture and tourism, utility services, physical planning, construction and protection of environment, economy, budget and finances, legal representation and internal audit. Although 91 employees in the city government are provided by decisions on internal units, eight functions are not occupied yet. In the City of Vinkovci, Croatian Democratic Union (CDU; HDZ in Croatian) is prevailing political party in the city council for more than ten years. The actual city mayor who is also member of the CDC holds the fifth mandate. Internal organization of the City of Samobor comprises nine administrative organizations responsible for economy, social affairs, finances, utility services, city development, physical planning and construction, internal political and technical support and internal audit (Decision on the organization and scope of activities of administrative bodies of the City of Samobor, Official Gazette no. 6/13). The systematization of functions regulated by the Decision on the internal order of administrative bodies in the City of Samobor (Official Gazette no. 8/13, 9/13, 10/13) provides 81 employees in total, but at the moment there are only 61 (75,31%) positions occupied. Ruling political party in the city council has been changing on every local election, but the continuity is evident on the executive level of government. The second term of office of the actual city mayor (Croatian Peasant Party; HSS in Croatian) confirms that continuity. The city government of Sisak comprises just six administrative organizations in charge for administrative, legal and general affairs, budget and finances, economy and utility services, education, culture, sport, war veterans and civil society, physical planning and protection of the environment and internal audit (Decision on the organization and scope of activities of administrative bodies of the City of Sisak, Official Gazette of the Sisačko-moslavačka County, no. 7/13, 8/13, 12/13). According to the Plan of recruiting in administrative bodies of the City of Sisak in 2013 (Official Gazette of the Sisačko-moslavačka County no. 5/13), 122 (85,31%) out of 143 provided positions were occupied in the city government in March 2013. During the last 12-13 years the ruling parties and coalitions have been changing in the city council. The political continuity has been one of the main features of the executive branch of local government until local elections in 2013 when the candidate of Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP) won the elections and stirred up the routine of the city government in Sisak.

Table 1

Number and demographic characteristics of the examinees (in total and for each city administration)

Demographic characteristics		Total number of the examinees		Number of the examinees in the City of Vinkovci		Number of the examinees in the City of Samobor		Number of the examinees in the City of Sisak	
		Frequency	Structure	Frequency	Structure	Frequency	Structure	Frequency	Structure
		126	100%	31	100%	31	100%	64	100%
Gender	M	52	41,26%	11	35,48%	15	48,39%	26	40,62%
	F	74	58,73%	20	64,52%	16	51,61%	38	59,38%
Age	20-30	20	15,87%	4	12,90%	5	16,13%	11	17,19%
	31-40	40	31,75%	5	16,13%	12	38,71%	23	35,93%
	41-50	27	21,42%	7	22,58%	9	29,03%	11	17,19%
	51-60	38	30,17%	15	48,39%	4	12,90%	19	29,69%
	>60	1	0,79%			1	3,23%		
Length of service (in years)	<10	29	23,02%	8	25,81%	8	25,81%	13	20,31%
	10-20	43	34,13%	3	9,68%	14	45,16%	26	40,63%
	21-30	32	25,40%	8	25,81%	6	19,35%	18	28,13%
	31-40	21	16,67%	12	38,70%	2	6,45%	7	10,93%
	>40	1	0,78%			1	3,23%		
Length of service in administrative organization (in years)	<10	65	51,59%	14	45,16%	18	58,06%	33	51,56%
	10-20	45	35,71%	11	35,48%	10	32,26%	24	37,50%
	21-30	12	9,52%	2	6,46%	3	9,68%	7	10,94%
	31-40	4	3,18%	4	12,90%				
Number of administrative organizations		26		11		9		6	

4.2.   Research instruments and procedure

Research on the correlation between administrative leadership style and inclination to organizational learning in the selected city governments was conducted in November and December 2013. The data were obtained by virtue of the survey on personnel's perception regarding certain characteristics of administrative leadership style in the internal units of the city government and inclination to learning processes at and across individual, group and organizational level in selected research units.

The research instrument consisted of three parts: 1) Learning Assessment Map, 2) Leadership style questionnaire, and 3) Questions related to demographic characteristics of participants.

The questionnaire was formed on the basis of the Learning Assessment Map developed at the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario and other similar indicators (Fischer and Röben, 2002; Garvin et al., 2008; Moynihan and Landuyt, 2009; Preskill and Torres, 1999) adjusted to the specificities of this study. The Learning Assessment Map is the instrument demonstrating strong reliability and validity in terms of measuring perceptions of learning patterns on individual, group and organizational levels and flows of information across the levels (Nemeth, 1997). The Learning Assessment Map collects also information about leadership as an isolated category, which was acquired and adjusted to this study for the measurement of the administrative leadership style. The advantage of this part of research instrument is the fact that subordinate civil servants evaluate the leadership style of their superiors. There were five questions on demographic characteristics of participants and they were related to gender, age, length of service in general and in selected administrative organization, and the position in the organization (managerial or non-managerial). On the basis of the information regarding the latter, the answers of the administrative leader could be extracted from the rest of the data.

In order to measure the perception of the participants on the administrative leadership styles and the elements of organizational learning, the Likert measurement scale with five response categories was applied. In doing so, lower scores indicated authoritarian/transactional administrative leadership style while higher scores indicated more participative/transformational administrative leadership style.

For the purpose of the obtained results analysis, the basic concept of organizational learning was operationalized into five categories relating to each level of organizational learning (individual, group, organizational) and information flow (feed-forward and feed-back processes) across the levels (Table 2). In addition, a category comprising items referring to the features of administrative leadership style is determined. The aim was to examine what kind of relation exists between the perception of administrative leadership style and perception of inclination towards organizational learning in selected administrative organizations. More specific, the correlation between

administrative leadership style, on one hand, and each learning level, exploration and exploitation of learning, on the other, was going to be examined on the basis of personnel's perception (Appendix).

Table 2

The operationalization of the inclination to the organizational learning

Category	Number of items
Individual learning processes	10
Group learning processes	9
Organizational learning processes	11
Feed-forward processes	27
Feed-back processes	12
TOTAL	69

Source: author's research

The first category comprises 10 items relating to individual learning, i.e. intuiting and interpretation as the phases of organizational learning at individual level in organization (Appendix).

The second category relates to learning disciplines characteristic for group learning, i.e. dissemination and interpretation of information at group level in organization (Appendix). The exchange of information among the members of organization, team work and lack of barriers to free communication and expression of the opinion are key factors for successful learning at group and organizational level. On the other hand, bad relations, defensive routines and lack of communication represent significant barriers to learning processes.

The third category comprises the statements about the features of the learning 'stocks' in organization – information systems, structure, strategy, procedures and culture (Appendix). Paying attention to the existing performance indicators and organizational strategy indicates their relevance for reflection and behaviour of the employees. Positive attitude to experimentation and innovation arises from the perception of the working environment as incentive for learning and based on the mutual confidence. The condition of the information system addresses the ability of systems to capture and store information (Nemeth, 1997).

The perception regarding circumstances inducing or impeding the transfer of the learning processes from individual and group level to organizational level (feed-forward) was measured on the basis of the items in fourth category (Appendix).

The fifth category refers to the impact of the learning 'stocks' to individual and group learning through feed-back processes (Appendix).

The part of the research instrument related to administrative leadership style comprises the items about the administrative leaders and their relations with other employees in the selected city governments (Appendix).

Pearson Correlation was used by means of the SPSS programme in order to determine whether the correlation between the administrative leadership style and the inclination to organizational learning in selected organizations exist. The analysis was conducted in relation to mean scores obtained for each category of administrative leadership style and organizational learning (Appendix).

4.3.   Data analysis

The results on correlation between administrative leadership style and specific categories of the organizational learning in selected city governments are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson's correlation coefficient between administrative leadership style and organizational learning

		Administrative leadership style
Individual learning processes	Pearson Correlation	.473[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
	N	126
Group learning processes	Pearson Correlation	.632[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
	N	126
Organizational learning processes	Pearson Correlation	.670[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
	N	126
Feed-forward processes	Pearson Correlation	.690[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
	N	126
Feed-back processes	Pearson Correlation	.617[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
	N	126
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

Source: author's research

There is a significant positive correlation (p<0.01) between administrative leadership style and each category of inclination towards organizational learning. Accordingly, the research hypothesis of the study is confirmed by the empirical research. It means there is a positive correlation between authoritarian/transactional administrative leadership style and lower inclination towards organizational learning as well as between participatory/transformational administrative leadership style and higher inclination towards organizational learning. Although it is not possible to determine causal relationship between the variables within this type of survey, it can be further assumed that administrative leaders with transformational leadership style have strong impact on the development of organizational learning in administrative organizations.

This is in conformance with the statement that *"organizations that are ready, able, and willing to change are more transformational than transactional in terms of the new paradigm of leadership"* (Bass, 1996, after Bass, 2000: 20) and some empirical studies in the field. Bass (2000) admits that some components of transactional leadership style (such as contingent reward) can foster organizational learning changes, but he emphasizes that improving leadership performance depends on increasing the frequencies of transformational leader behaviours. The survey conducted on a sample of 168 Spanish firms confirmed that transformational leadership influenced organizational performance positively through organizational learning and innovation (García-Morales et al., 2012). The findings of the study on leadership style and organizational learning conducted in elementary schools in northern Israel demonstrated the correlation between principals' transformational leadership style and school organizational learning (Kurland et al., 2010).

Furthermore, it seems that other organizational and contextual variables with potential intervening effect, i. e. internal organizational structure, number of employees, ruling political party and its continuity, have not influenced the perception on administrative leadership style and organizational learning in selected organizations. Although communication intensity can be measured by number of internal and external communication points, it seems that administrative leadership style rather than number of communication points had a key role in organizational learning practices in selected organizations.

The findings of the study can serve administrative leaders to examine their position and influence the development of organizational learning in the organization which they manage. Having in mind the importance of organizational learning for organizational performance (García-Morales et al., 2012; Oh, 2009), the administrative leaders should try to develop transformational leadership style in order to, at least indirectly, improve organizational performance. It might than result in various positive effects such as higher staff motivation, organizational legitimacy, user satisfaction, etc.

5.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research interest of scholars concerning the fields of administrative leadership style and organizational learning has been converged in the analysis of the relation between those two variables in different types of organizations. Although both leadership style and organizational learning are the phenomena developed and analysed in relation to private sector organizations, the interest in the field has been growing within the studying of administrative organizations since the end of the last and beginning of this century. However, there is still a lack of significant empirical research regarding the relation between those variables (Sadler, 2001: 415; Kurland et al., 2010: 8).

In general, it is assumed that more participatory/transformational leadership style is positively correlated with organizational learning. The aim of the study was to verify theoretical postulates on correlation between the administrative leadership style and inclination towards organizational learning in administrative organizations and to give some recommendations for administrative leaders based on the results obtained.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on the organizational learning model developed by Crossan et al. (1999) referring to three levels of learning in organizations (individual, group and organizational) and two processes of learning across different levels (feed-forward and feed-back) as well as on some theoretical postulates regarding relation between administrative leadership style and organizational learning in administrative organizations.

A cross-sectional study in three city governments in Croatia was applied as the basic research approach. The main variables have been measured on the basis of civil servants' perception of certain indicators of administrative leadership style and inclination to organizational learning in each administrative organization. Accordingly, the data have been gathered by the survey conducted among the personnel of selected organizations.

The data obtained were statistically analysed on the basis of Pearson Correlation used by the means of SPSS programme.

The results of the empirical research confirmed the hypothesis on the correlation between administrative leadership style and inclination towards organizational learning. Furthermore, there is a significant positive correlation (p<0.01) between administrative leadership style and each category of organizatioanl learning in selected administrative organizaitons. It means there is a positive correlation between authoritarian/transactional administrative leadership style and lower inclination towards organizational learning as well as between participatory/transformational administrative leadership style and higher inclination towards organizational learning.

It can be assumed that participatory/transformational administrative leadership style facilitates organizational learning in administrative organizations. Accordingly, administrative leaders should examine their position and potential

influence on the development of organizational learning in the organization which they manage. However, further research in the field should be conducted in order to determine the direction of the impact between analysed variables by means of regression analysis and other statistical methods.

The results obtained cannot be generalized for other administrative organizations due to the specific characteristics of local organizations as well as the sample. However, the aim of the research was not to provide statistical, but analytical generalization, i.e. the verification of the theoretical postulates (Yin, 2003). There are also some potential limitations of the study in the form of "respondents' bias" since the same respondents evaluated the administrative leadership style and elements of organizational learning. The future research should comprise wider scope of organizations to be studied as well as organizations from different parts of public administration system. Additional research instruments should also be taken into consideration. Thus, more general conclusions regarding relation between administrative leadership style and organizational learning could be drawn.

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Appendix

Multi-item constructs used to measure main variables in the study

Inclination to individual learning construct

Item	Measurement scale	Mean value
Individuals generate many new insights.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,35
Individuals take actions that are experimental in nature.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,99
Individuals are able to break out of traditional mind-sets to see things in new and different ways.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,02
Individuals are able to grow through their work.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,43
Individuals feel a sense of pride in what they do.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,06
When individuals make an error they will usually try to cover it up. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,95
The origin of most of our innovative ideas are people within the organization.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,05
Individuals feel a sense of accomplishment in what they do.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,07
Individuals accept negative feedback without becoming defensive.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,67
Individuals are too busy to invest time in improvement. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,79

Source: author's research

Inclination to group learning construct

Item	Measurement scale	Mean value
Employees are encouraged to share their ideas with others.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,07
Group work in the City Government is valuable.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	4,19
The employees of other administrative bodies in the City Government co-operate with us in order to share relevant information.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,97
The existing practices of work in my administrative body are deeply rooted and unchangeable. (reverse scale)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,99
We have effective resolution of conflict in my group.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,46
When we work in groups, ideas arise that did not occur to any one individual.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,81
We share our successes with others.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,16
We share our failures with others.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,01
We have too many unproductive meetings. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,83

Source: author's research

Inclination to organizational learning construct

Item	Measurement scale	Mean value
The organizational structure is adequate for achieving organizational goals.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,11
The organization culture in the City Government fosters learning.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,73
The City Government is a learning organization.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,75
The organizational structure of the City Government needs to be reassessed. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,31
The IT of the City Government is out of date. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,81
The organizational structure supports our strategic direction.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,96
Relevant performance indicators are set in the City Government.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,60
We have an organizational structure characterized by a high degree of trust.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,55
We only implement cosmetic changes in the City Government. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,98
The exchange of good practice with other organizations is accepted part of the policy in the City Government.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,03
Information acquired from the customers are used for the improvement of our performance.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,57

Source: author's research

Feed-forward processes construct

Item	Measurement scale	Mean value
Employees rarely think or act beyond the boundaries of their own jobs. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,10
Individuals tend to act in their own self interest. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,42
Individuals are discouraged by the resistance they receive from others when trying to affect change. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,69
Employees value new ideas.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,43
We seem to continually "reinvent the wheel." (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,04
Individuals understand how their work contributes to the performance of the organization.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,29
We routinely communicate the lessons learned from our past actions throughout the organization.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,11
There are many good ideas that seem to go nowhere. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,94
When a good person leaves the organization, we lose valuable information. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,28
Knowledge and information acquired by employees is rarely applicable in practice. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,24
If someone makes a mistake, it is often held against that person. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,93
No one in my group wants to hear new ideas. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,75
Group decision-making is an important step in making organization-wide changes.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,92
No matter what we do, the City Government does not seem to change. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,07
In spite of the awareness of the critical issues affecting the work in the City Government, no action is taken to change the existing state of affairs. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,99
Communication in organization is reduced to minimum. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,00
Employees freely communicate their own attitudes regarding job to their supervisors.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,03
Employees are frustrated due to the inability to change the existing state. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,41
In order to protect themselves from inconvenience, employees represent the existing state of affairs as better. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,96
Information, knowledge and experience acquired by individuals and groups lead to changes in information management at the level of the City Government.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,74
Relationships in the City Government are tense. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,38

The City Government has forums for meeting with and learning from experts from outside the organization.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,48
Information, knowledge and experience acquired by individuals and groups lead to changes in the existing informal rules and procedures at the level of the City Government.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,69
Information, knowledge and experience acquired by individuals and groups lead to changes in communication at the level of the City Government.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,77
The City Government has forums for meeting with and learning among the employees.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,38
Employees feel they have input into the critical decisions made by their supervisors.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,98
In order to protect themselves from inconvenience, employees camouflage certain facts. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,10

Source: author's research

Feed-back processes construct

Item	Measurement scale	Mean value
Employees implement directions and orders without any reconsideration. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,14
Valuable information from success or failure of past programs is not available. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,14
In meetings, we have access to the right information to make the best decisions.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,27
When making decisions for the future, we do not seem to have any memory of the past. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,86
Our organizational structure facilitates the sharing of ideas.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,71
Information systems in the City Government facilitate simple exchange of information among employees.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,25
Key information are available through information systems in the City Government.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,14
Our policies and procedures of the organization block new ideas. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,08
Resources for learning are readily available to all individual.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,63
Individuals are directed by the vision and strategy of the City Government.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,79
The knowledge, information systems and procedures of the City Government are not used enough. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,66
Individuals understand the vision and strategy of the organization.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,80

Source: author's research

Administrative leadership style construct

Item	Measurement scale	Mean value
The head of my administrative body continually ensures that new knowledge and information are disseminated to all parts of the City Government.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,35
The head of my administrative body provide time, resources, and venues for identifying problems and organizational challenges.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,29
The head of my administrative body invites input from others in discussions.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,32
The head of my administrative body acknowledges his/her own limitations with respect to knowledge, information, or expertise.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	2,75
The head of my administrative body criticizes views different from his/her own. (reverse scaled)	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,32
The head of my administrative body understands the challenges the employees are faced with.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,47
The head of my administrative body encourages innovative ideas and suggestions.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,54
The head of my administrative body supports employees in learning and development.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,53
The head of my administrative body provides time, resources, and venues for reflecting and improving on past performance.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,12
The head of my administrative body listens attentively.	1 – strongly disagree ... 5 – strongly agree	3,61

Source: author's research

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KORELACIJA IZMEĐU STILA UPRAVNOG VODSTVA I SKLONOSTI ORGANIZACIJSKOM UČENJU U LOKALNIM UPRAVNIM ORGANIZACIJAMA

Sažetak

Svrha rada je provjeriti teorijske postavke o korelaciji stila upravnog vodstva i učećih procesa u lokalnim upravnim organizacijama. Glavna istraživačka hipoteza je da stil upravnog vodstva pozitivno korelira sa sklonošću organizacijskom učenju u lokalnim upravnim organizacijama, bez obzira na druge organizacijske i kontekstualne varijable, kao što su unutarnja organizacijska struktura, broj zaposlenih, politička stranka na vlasti i njezin kontinuitet. Empirijsko istraživanje provedeno je putem kros-sekcijske analize između gradskih uprava tri hrvatska grada. Glavne varijable mjerene su na temelju percepcije lokalnih službenika o stilu upravnog vodstva i sklonosti organizacijskom učenju. U radu su prikazane korelacije stila upravnog vodstva, na jednoj strani, te svake razine učenja u organizaciji i procesa učenja između razina u organizaciji, na drugoj. Na temelju rezultata istraživanja autorica daje opće zaključke te preporuke za upravne organizacije.

Ključne riječi: stil upravnog vodstva, organizacijsko učenje, lokalne upravne organizacije, Hrvatska

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