Leadership Styles in Basketball

INTRODUCTION

Basketball belongs to a group of complex sports whose popularity has reached amazing proportions. The very fact, that a basketball team has about 20 players, out of which 12 are defending the team colours, speaks for the complexity of structure and interpersonal relations within a team. The group of players of different basketball quality, temperament and attitude should be gathered in such a way so that they function as a whole, i.e. as a mechanism in which everyone has a role on the way of achieving the final goal. That is exactly where the competence of the administrative board and the coach becomes significant, as they have to direct the „orchestra” by setting a personal example. It is necessary to establish a balance between the experience and the youth, competence and motivation, desires and needs. It is only possible if we combine the experience, of the coaches who have been working for a long time and have already been successful, with the ambition, of the coaches who are open to science and permanent education. Basketball is advancing rapidly and the playing style has been changing year after year. Only the teams, who adjust the way they play and work, to the current trend in basketball, and the ones who direct their view, opinion and philosophy towards future, can expect to achieve success.

Management represents interdisciplinary area, whose action field many scientists have tried to dis-
cover, theoretically define and practically acknowledge. Various research connected to the phenomenon of leadership styles were not only different in the assumptions (hypotheses) from which they started but also in the conclusions which they have reached based on the data gathered in the research. The researchers came to different conclusions, which undoubtedly confirms the fact that leadership styles are a complex phenomenon in a more complex area - the management. Based on all this research, several theories of leadership styles have been created which are different to a higher or a lesser extent.

In our country, the research of management in sport is very rare. Due to the constant development of sport, scientific research of all the phenomena in sport is necessary so that this area can be raised to a higher level.

Management can be defined in numerous ways. Management marks a process of maximal exploitation and use of all available resources of an organization. The meaning of management is often directed towards closer defining of people who are directly in charge of management and supervision in an organization with a goal to accomplish a set of given tasks. Management consists of five functions, which only if they are mutually balanced, can contribute to the achievement of business goals. The functions are namely:

- planning function – defining long-term and short-term plans, marginalized strategically, by which all the activities are scheduled and efforts of all the members are coordinated in such a way to ensure achievement of set goals,
- organizing function – coordination and correlation of all the members of an organization and their clearly defined roles,
- staffing function – employment procedure, selection of candidates, professional development,
- directing function – motivating the personnel as well as mutual communicating in order to achieve the planned results,
- controlling function – activities related to monitoring the defined tasks and corrections in case of any aberration.

Directing represents one of the management functions that the researchers in the recent period have approached in a way that they emphasize the human factor as a very significant one, according to some authors even the most determinant one.

Modern researchers, whose field of interest of defining leadership enters behavioural scope, direct the attention to a MAN, to interpersonal relations in an organization as well as to the potential of human resources in accomplishment of the goals of the organization. As the most important elements of functioning of an organization, these behaviourists emphasise coordination, motivation, communication and conflict resolving. The most prominent authors, who distinguish themselves in the domain of behaviourism and firmly promote the importance of the human factor, are Oliver Sheldon and Mary P. Folet. They emphasise the necessity of directing leadership towards interpersonal relations, as well as the significant participation of employees in management within an organization (Tomić, 2001).

The authors who are behaviouristic-oriented, directed their research towards gathering data to find out what makes leaders effective, based on the success of their organization. In that way, they made an absolute step ahead from the „born-to-be-leaders” and the authors who studied the significance of personal traits of an individual as the determinant factors in the success in leadership. The behaviouristic research shows that a certain type of behaviour does not guarantee the success of these leaders in all the situations. According to this, the necessary and completely natural adjustment procedures, as to the group that they lead so to the organization, depend on the person’s development degree and maturity stage. The study of leadership, viewed by behaviourists, implies the research procedure of two aspects, namely:

- leadership function and
- leadership style.

Leadership function relates to emphasizing the significance of the phenomenon of a group, thus moving the focus towards group leadership. In that way, the tasks and obligations of a leader are defined as a necessary compromise between the group tasks (problem solving of a group - business function), marginalized by defined goals and the needs of individuals who make that group and who with their synergetic effect influence the group success (social function).

Leadership style is classified, according to some authors, into two extreme possibilities: authoritarian style and the subordinates’ discretion stimulating style. The authoritarian style is defined as a style where the control of the subordinates is a dominant
function and where all the activities in the organization run according to the leaders ideas. Authoritarian leaders aim towards task realisation, as their main goal, even if they neglect the education, development and achievement of social needs of the subordinates. Unlike an authoritarian, leaders, oriented towards stimulating subordinates’ discretion, as their main goal, see the satisfaction of the adherent; therefore, the dominant factor of this style is the motivation of the subordinates. It is more adequate to say, the motivation of the employees (not the subordinates), due to the fact that leaders with this style make it possible and even encourage the participation of the employees in a decision making process. (Todorović, 1997)

It often happens that authors, consciously or unconsciously, use the leadership and management as synonyms, while describing certain phenomena. Many authors, yet, put up resistance towards this occurrence of clearly defined difference between these two terms.

Petrović states that the essential difference between these two terms is in the fact that, the leadership is defined as addressing the organization towards the very people who work in it and emphasizing the significance of these people; in contrast to management that relates to the function of an organization as a whole. It is primarily concerned with, planning, organization, control and employment policy. He emphasizes the function of management in communication with the external environment of the organization, as distinguished from the leadership which is directly aimed at the internal factors, i.e. the people within an organization. (Tomić, 2001).

One of the authors who draw a sharp and concrete line between the terms is John Maxwell. He stresses that the management is a process by which one can ensure that the programme and aims of the organization are carried out and completed, unlike leadership which he defines as a way of motivating people and creating a vision. Maxwell especially stresses out the significance of leadership and puts it in the very peak of the pyramidal significance and the tasks given to the members of an organization:

- “Gaining knowledge about how something should be done, is the job of an employee,
- Demonstrating something to the others is the job of the teachers,
- Checking whether a job is done properly is the job of a manager,
- Inspiring others to perform better is the job of a leader.” (Maxwell, 2005)

According to Tomić, leadership consists of several sub functions; the following are stressed out:

- Delegating authority – delegating authority, authorization and responsibilities to the “subordinates”,
- motivating – a procedure by which leaders convince their adherents to claim responsibility for certain assignments,
- coordination – delegating tasks to the adherents based on their abilities and skills, to ensure the best possible combination of tasks and people who perform them,
- communication – a sub function that enables realization of all the other sub functions of leadership (Tomić, 2001).

Tomić believes that in sport, it is more appropriate to give preference to the term leadership due to the fact that interpersonal relations are dominant in sport, above all, in the relation between the coach-players. He thinks that in sport’s clubs, leadership, as a motivating, delegating, communicating, coordination and conflict resolving function, is notable as a direct action aiming to increase sports results. Leadership is also apparent the sector of active sport participants and in the sector of employees who are not active sport participants; it should be noted that leadership in this sectors is different particularly in proportional incidence. More accurately, leadership is dominant in the surrounding of active participants because the interpersonal relations are more prominent due to nature of their job (players, coach). Tomić believes that leadership becomes more present from administration in sport’s organizations and he stresses out that leadership is accomplished even when there is no management. (Tomić, 2001).

Leadership styles are defined as a way in which a manager influences the employees to accomplish a previously set goal. At the same time, they use appropriate tools to motivate required behaviour. Managers have a different attitude towards a group which they belong to, as well as to the goals and the ways of their accomplishment. It is typical for leadership styles that they manifest themselves in the same way in different situations and that the managers are not willing to make a change. What becomes very specific for leadership styles is the interaction between managers and employees. The interaction itself depends on the managers and the employees; therefore the success of a group also depends on the existing relations.
If we observe the leadership styles through the criteria, namely, a way in which a leader influences his group members, we can define autocratic and democratic style.

In **autocratic leadership style** the power is concentrated in one person’s hands. Managers, individually, set the goals and choose activities for their achievement. They reach a decision and take responsibility for the behaviour, results and achievement of the goals of the organization. From their employees they demand explicitly to follow the directions and instructions given to them, as well as to respect and carry out their decisions. They rarely talk to their subordinates and if they do, it is strictly professional. Autocratic managerial style is efficient in gaining the right results in critical situations, when it is necessary to reach a decision quickly and efficiently to overcome an unfavourable situation. It is applicable in groups where the group members are indecisive and dependent; in these situations, this managerial style brings short-term positive results. However, if it is applied in a longer period, not critically and without taking care of the level of human potentials and needs to liberate the employees, it becomes the limiting factor to the development of an organization. Manager control employees and based on their behaviour and productivity, they determine their punishment or reward. This style is distinctive by one-way flow of information—from managers to employees. The managers, who apply it, justify it by their superiority and good results.

There are numerous characteristics of leadership styles, where the following criteria (Majić, 2003) are basic for their classification:

- approach of a manager to motivating his employees (compelling or stimulating),
- a way in which a manager reaches a decision,
- the power sources that a manager uses to influence the employees,
- the ability of a manager to adjust his guidance to different situation.

There are numerous researches of leadership styles and based on them, many classifications of the same. This research enclosed two dimensions: autocratic- democratic and the orientation towards people- tasks. The dimension of autocratic- democratic leadership is based on classification given by Levin and associates, which served as a benchmark later on to many researchers. According to Levin and associates (Rot, 1980) in practice, there are three basic leadership styles: autocratic, democratic and free (laissez-faire). The dimension of orientation towards people- tasks is based on Liekert’s classification (Franceško, 2003). This paper describes the autocratic and democratic style on the one dimension and the orientation towards people- tasks on the other. The research covered the scope of five levels, from explicitly autocratic to explicitly democratic style, i.e. from explicit orientation towards people to explicit orientation towards tasks. The questionnaire used in the research represents a modification of leadership styles questionnaire by Franceško (Franceško, 2000).

**Graph 1.** Five levels of leadership styles in the dimension of autocratic (A) / democratic (D):
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determine the outcome of the game. There are no second chances. Coaches (managers) have to maintain the motivation level within their players (employees) throughout the entire game to prevent the opponent from taking a lead, or to keep the team’s lead over the opponent. The rise and fall of a result, in a sense of significant oscillation from a great lead to a great drop back or vice versa, is often notable in games. In those situations it becomes visible whether a team is psychologically prepared, compact or strong and if the manager is a good leader. Managers of higher levels have to provide maximal conditions for trainings and preparations of basketball players as well as the conditions where managers of lower levels (coaches) will have a chance to put their personal philosophy in action. Furthermore, they have to have control to ensure that the organization is moving towards the right direction and motivate to get better results. Also, managers of lower levels have to keep balance between autocratic and democratic style. They have to motivate players, build up team spirit, allow a certain degree of creativity but at the same time control the players and if needed punish or reward them.

It has also been studied what managers pay more attention to, the group tasks or establishing good atmosphere and interpersonal relations. Based on these questions, the data has been collected that belongs to the domain of the dimension autocratic-democratic leadership.

Basketball is a sport in which success is measured through the ratio between a win or loss, i.e. ratio between scored or received shots. This sport has crossed a long road from explicit need for game to explicit need for profit. Managers in basketball attach importance as to tasks so to people.

Theoretically speaking, the aim of this research has been to define leadership styles in basketball and thus take a more definite shape of one segment of a more complex phenomenon called leadership; it has been observed from a sports point of view (more accurately basketball dimension). Furthermore, the aim was to use the research results to expand the scientific cognition about leadership in sport in Serbia.

The same significance is given to the aim to use the obtained results for practical purposes, which is introduction of managers to styles in basketball, mutual comparison, analysing, and final correction in terms of further education, theoretical and practical in the domain of management and leadership.

Tasks of the research roused from the topic and aim of the research, therefore, thy have been formulated as follows:

- construct (modify) a questionnaire about managerial styles,
- conduct a survey of managers (coaches),
- define leadership styles for every team and every manager (coach),
- statistically process the data,
- draw a conclusion.

Based on the topic, aim and tasks of the research, using adequate references as well as the specific characteristics of basketball teams as organizations, the following hypotheses have been defined:

- Orientation towards tasks is a managerial style predominant in basketball, due to the fact that the pressure, managers have been subjected to, is higher as the ambitions towards high (unrealistic) results rise.
- Mixed managerial style is predominant if we observe the dimension of autocratic-democratic leadership.
- All leadership styles are present, and the difference in every basketball team is only in the percentage proportion.

METHOD

In the thesis transversal research of experimental character has been applied, with application of empirical and bibliographic method. The significant data has been collected through the method of a survey. The research has been conducted in basketball clubs of Serbia B League- Men in the period from 3 February 2007 to 10 March 2007. The research has enclosed 21 managers in eight basketball clubs. In these clubs, basketball coaches manage the teams in the competitive and transitional period; by the way they direct them, they influence the players, their behaviour, their game and the obtained result. Furthermore, they have to have control to ensure that the organization is moving towards the right direction and motivate to get better results. Also, managers of lower levels have to keep balance between autocratic and democratic style. They have to motivate players, build up team spirit, allow a certain degree of creativity but at the same time control the players and if needed punish or reward them.

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necessary for accurate fill in of the data (answers) in the questionnaire. Throughout the research, there have been no irregularities that could influence the veracity of the data and the quality of the research. A simple procedure, introductory remarks and instructions contributed to this to a great extent.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The dimension autocratic (A) – democratic (D) leadership (leadership styles) – relates to the way in which managers (leaders) influence the employees.

Based on the obtained results, it is visible that managers are equally oriented towards mixed 28.6% and moderately democratic style 28.6%. There is slightly smaller percentage 23.8% of managers with explicitly democratic style. Managers with moderately autocratic style represent 14.3%, whereas explicitly autocratic oriented managers subsist in 4.8%.

Graph 1. Proportion of leadership styles in the dimension of autocratic-democratic leadership

The dimension of orientation towards people (P) / tasks (T) – relates to the significance that managers give to technical that is human aspects in work.

On another dimension, the highest percentage of managers is divided in orientation towards people-tasks 42.9%. It is followed by an equal percentage of managers of explicit orientation towards people and explicit orientation towards tasks with 19%. There is slightly less percentage of managers with moderate orientation towards people 14.3%. Managers with explicit orientation towards tasks represent only 5%.

Graph 2. Proportion of leadership styles in the dimension of orientation towards people- tasks

CONCLUSION

The research results show the proportional variegation of incidence of leadership style.

According to the obtained results, it is noted that a larger number of managers is in the half that belongs to democratic leadership style, if we observe the continuum with two poles (on the one pole autocratic-oriented and on the other democratic-oriented managers). Based on these results it can be said that the mixed leadership style is not dominant if we observe the dimension of autocratic-democratic leadership, but it is present in the same percentage as the moderately democratic style.

On another dimension, the largest number of managers is divided in their orientation towards people-tasks i.e. leadership style of orientation towards tasks is not dominant.

Based on these research results, the occurrence of all 5 levels is visible, from explicitly autocratic to explicitly democratic style, i.e. from explicit orientation towards people to explicit orientation towards tasks. That confirms the hypothesis that the research
enclosed teams comprise all leadership styles; where only the proportional incidence in basketball clubs is different.

It should be emphasized that the research enclosed basketball teams of Serbia B League- Men and that all generalizations to other leagues and levels of competitions is not applicable. The fact that younger teams are more prone to the influence of their coach supports this argument, so other completely different results are quite possible in relation to the professionals in Serbia B League- Men.

Another factor that does not allow generalizations is the gender of the examinees. The research is conducted in male basketball teams, so it is inappropriate to neglect the possibility of gaining other results when it comes to female basketball.

Basketball represents a complex sport where many factors are complemented, namely, ability, knowledge, creativity, harmony, determination as internal factors; and arbitration, spectators, the media, sports public and even luck as external factors. In such demanding conditions, coaches as leaders of a team, have to possess adequate characteristics and abilities, knowledge and skills to be able to influence the adherents (players) efficiently.

A successful basketball club has to conform to the action of all its factors: president of a club, sports director, coach, auxiliary coach, psychologist, auxiliary workers (doctors, physiotherapists and so on) and players. The action domains of club’s leaders as well as their duties and responsibilities have to be defined. In such a complex hierarchy different leadership styles co-exist. A success is possible only if the leadership styles are in accordance.

Based on these research results, in compliance with previously listed needs of clubs, different suggestions and solutions have appeared:

- education of coaches in basic management and management applied in sport,
- incorporation of professional psychologists and their coordination with coaches aiming to define the best possible way to apply training and competitive programmes,
- permanent testing of coaches in the domain of leadership styles,
- cooperation with sports academies and universities and the like.

Due to the fact that the research incorporated managers (leaders) of basketball teams in Serbia B League, where the majority of them are at the same time the coaches of those teams; the above formulated suggestions are directed exactly towards coaches as leaders.

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