The New age of Transformational Leadership: Evolution and Attributes

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Abstract

After an intensive and systematic review of the literature on transformational leadership and analyzing its various approaches and theories, we realized that the results are either directly or indirectly related to an organization's performance. The review also helps to uncover the characteristics of transformational leadership, analyzing its effect on organizational change. A leader and his/her behaviors affect the performance of employees, job satisfaction, perceptions of justice, sense of trust towards one another and towards the organization. The culture in particular along with the business atmosphere determines the dynamics of an organization. Of all the leadership styles, transformational leadership is relatively a new approach which focuses on how leaders can create valuable and positive change within the organization. Historically, it was Burns who first introduced the concept of transformational leadership while studying political leaders but this term is now used for studying organizations whereby transformational leaders focus on "transforming" others to support each other and the organization as a whole. In this sense, this article focuses on the transformational aspect of leadership. Transformational leaders demonstrate four factors, which are mainly individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence. Moreover, transformational leaders show individualized consideration to followers by paying attention to and meeting the needs of their followers. They stimulate ideas and creativity from followers by creating a safe environment to challenge the status quo. They also have a vision that inspires and motivates followers to achieve important goals. They serve as role models, allow their followers to identify with a shared vision and provide them a sense of meaning and achievement. Besides, transformational leaders can be easily identified with the traits that they are enthusiastic and passionate about their work. They tend to see the big picture, may be not the details. So, the risk is, if they do not have people to take care of this level of information, then they are usually doomed to fail. Their basic aim is to transform people and bring about the desired change that the organization entails. In our view, transformation could take place if leaders specialize in bringing a systemic change, analyze what to change, increase their teams competency, capability and capacity. Finally, they look for experiences from old patterns which do not fit or work and they innovate new ways to resolve the day to day organizational challenges.

Key words:

Transformational Leadership - History, Attributes and Change, Resolving Organizational Challenges, Managing Change

INTRODUCTION

There are many styles of leadership and their relevance depend upon a specific time period or a particular situation. Transformational Leadership (TL) seems to be the most apt for the present day context. Previous studies have consistently shown a positive relationship between transformational leadership and effectiveness. However, despite the findings about what transformational leaders perform, at least one fundamental issue deserves further examination more particularly about how do transformational leaders influence an individual follower as well as a group as a whole and why do followers react to their leaders' leadership behaviors? As pointed out by several researchers (Bass, 1999; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Yukl, 2006) these questions have not been fully addressed when it comes to explaining transformational leaders and transformational leadership. (Cho et al, 2010, p. 409)

TL is one of the leadership styles in which leaders and followers are encouraged to motivate others and bring about the change in an organization whereas transformational leaders mainly focus on building a better tomorrow. They are willing to take risks and dig deep in to the unknown. Moreover, they are willing to challenge themselves, their thoughts and put it to action which involves taking risk. Lewis, Goodman and Fandt (1998) believe, in order to make any job effective, leaders and followers require several abilities like team-work, effective communication, team spirit, problem solving and aspects of transformational leadership. TL starts with the development of a vision. Something that is on the way, yet to happen, is anticipated by the transformational leader. Transformational leadership phenomena need to be examined with a multi-level perspective in order to give us a better understanding of their impacts in contemporary organizations. For example, in current business practices, more and more individuals work in team or group-based structures. (Cho et al, 2010, p. 410)

The impact that transformational leadership has on members of an organization can be best examined by comparing it to transactional leadership, where leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another. (Burns, 1978, p. 3) For instance, exchanging work on a project for a raise in compensation. Instead, a transformational leader mobilizes his or her followers toward reform by an appeal to values and emotions. Bennis and Thomas (2004) believed that great leaders possess mainly four essential traits. They discovered these happen to be the same that allows a person to find meaning which could be termed as a devastating experience. First, is the ability to engage others in shared meaning, then secondly being a distinctive and compelling voice. Third is a sense of integrity; this implies having a strong set of values. Finally, the most critical skill is the adaptive capacity. This is, ideally applied creativity. It is a magical ability to transcend adversity and emerge stronger than before. It has two basic qualities; the ability to grasp context and hardiness. The ability to grasp context implies an ability to weigh a welter of factors, ranging from how very different groups of people will interpret a gesture to being able to put a situation in perspective. Without this, leaders are utterly lost, because they cannot connect with their constituents. (Bennis et al, 2004, p. 68) Transformational approaches to leadership have a wide range of potential benefits.

At the organization level, transformational leadership practices can produce strategic organizational change (Waldman, Javidan, & Varella, 2004). Perceived transformational actions have also been shown to alter staff perceptions of EBPs in mental health service settings (Aarons, 2006) increase staff satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), reduce stress and burnout (Seltzer, Numerof, & Bass, 1989) and reduce turnover intentions (Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Martin & Epitropaki, 2001). While limited research has linked transformational leadership directly with client outcomes (such as treatment engagement) staff perceptions have implications for

clients. For instance, lower staff burnout has been associated with higher counselor rapport ratings among clients within substance use treatment organizations (Garner et al, 2007). Currently there are a number of instruments available that measure transformational leadership, for example the one suggested by Bass & Avolio (1995). However, some important components (such as empowerment), are not routinely assessed. Additionally, most existing instruments include scales with only one or two marker items that reflect important themes within a core component. This approach works well when assessing a *global* construct of core transformational components, but is inadequate when examining components in greater detail for self-assessment and training purposes. Furthermore, the most commonly used and most comprehensive measures of transformational leadership such as the "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" are available (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Knowing what is happening and anticipating the actions needed for tomorrow is the fundamental quality to transform or change. In this sense, the first practice is to ask what needs to be done. Note that the question is not "What do I want to do?" it is asking "what has to be done?" and doing it meticulously. Drucker believes this is very crucial for managerial success. He further holds that failure to ask this question will render even the ablest executive ineffectual. (Drucker, 2004, p.16) Transformational leadership inspires people to achieve unexpected or remarkable results. It gives workers autonomy over specific jobs, as well as the authority to make decisions once they have been trained. Some of the basic characteristics of transformational leadership are inspirational, in that the leader can inspire workers to find better ways of achieving a goal mobilization because leadership can mobilize people into groups that can get work done, and boost their morale through excellent rapport. They are also good at conflict resolution. (Rooke et al, 2004)

Transformational leaders possess some kind of crucible; a single-minded needs to streamline or change things that no longer work. The transformational leader motivates workers and understands how to form them into integral units that work well with others. (Rooke et al, 2004). This review focuses on the historical development of the concept and the qualities of the transformational leader.

HISTORY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The term "transformational leadership" was coined by sociologist Downton in 1973. Leadership expert Burns defined transformational leaders as those who seek to change existing thoughts, techniques and goals for better results. Referring to transformational leaders he further added, they are the ones who focus on the essential needs of the followers. Transformational leaders excel in a variety of sectors.

Bass (1985) carry forward Burns (1978) work and explained the psychological mechanisms from his view point. He discussed about transforming and transactional leadership, in particular and he put emphasis on the term "transformational" instead of "transforming." Transactional leadership refers to the exchange relationship between leader and follower to meet their own self-interests. (Bass, 1999, p.10) He supported the TL idea of Burns (1978) in reference to how it (transformational leadership) could be measured and how it could impact follower's motivation and performance. This focuses on the extent to which a leader is transformational which is measured first, in terms of his influence on the followers. Furthermore, the followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader and because of the qualities of the transformational leader, then followers are willing to work harder than originally expected. These outcomes happen because the transformational leader provides followers something

more. They give followers with an inspiring mission and vision and give them a unique identity. The leader transforms and motivates followers through his (or her) charismatic influence (also referred to as charisma), intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. Moreover, the (transformational) leader encourages followers to come up with new innovative ways and challenge the status quo allowing altering the business environment and as per the need of the hour and thus be successful. However, unlike Burns, Bass suggests that leadership can simultaneously display both transformational and transactional leadership. (Bass & Avolio, 1994)

TL is an approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance. (Drucker, 2004)

METHODS

The question of how to bring together and interpret research studies that are independent from one another is a basic and important question in all sciences. The inadequacy of the results of a single study and the need to synthesize findings by scientists has led to the development of methodologies that allow for combining the results of many Independent studies. Many methods have been used to synthesize the findings of multiple studies. Systematic review and meta-analysis are two approaches aimed at synthesizing different studies that are independent of one another but also compatible. This review is the result of systematically investigating appropriate scholarly data bases such as Google scholar, JSTOR, Emerald, EBSCO and so on.

ATTRIBUTES OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS' IN TODAY'S ORGANIZATIONS

TL can be found at all levels of the organization more particularly in teams, departments, divisions and in the organization, at large. Such leaders are visionary, inspiring, daring, risk-takers and thoughtful thinkers. They have a charismatic appeal. But charisma alone is not sufficient for changing the way an organization operates. Bennis holds that leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. (Bennis et al, 2004)

For bringing the key changes, our investigation reveals that transformational leaders should possess the following attributes:

- 1. Inspirational Motivation: The foundation of transformational leadership is the promotion of consistent vision, mission, and a set of values to the members. Their vision is so compelling that they know what they want from every interaction. Transformational leaders guide followers by providing them with a sense of meaning and challenge. They work enthusiastically and optimistically to foster the spirit of teamwork and commitment.
- Intellectual Stimulation: Such leaders encourage their followers to be innovative and creative. They encourage new ideas from their followers and never criticize them publicly for the mistakes committed by them. The leaders focus on the "what" in problems and do

not focus on the blaming part of it. They have no hesitation in discarding an old practice set by them if it is found ineffective.

- 3. Idealized Influence: They believe in the philosophy that a leader can influence followers only when he practices what he preaches. The leaders act as role models that followers seek to emulate. Such leaders always win the trust and respect of their followers through their action. They typically place their followers' needs over their own, sacrifice their personal gains for them and demonstrate high standards of ethical conduct. The use of power by such leaders is aimed at influencing them to strive for the common goals of the organization.
- Individualized Consideration: Leaders act as mentors to their followers and reward them for creativity and innovation. The followers are treated differently according to their talents and knowledge. They are empowered to make decisions and are always provided with the needed support to implement their decisions. According to Bass (1985), an individually considerate leader recognizes individual differences in terms of a follower's particular needs and expectations and provides individualized support for the development of the follower. This type of leader, acting as a coach or mentor, guides his or her follower using empowering behaviors that correspond with the follower's particular needs. In addition, such supporting behaviors are delivered to the follower in a friendly, close, and equal manner (Bass, 1985). As the concept of individualized consideration implies, it is highly likely that a leader's support will vary among different followers depending on their differing capabilities and needs. Also, each follower could have different perceptions of the leader's behaviors (Bass & Avolio, 1998), based on individual personality differences (Yammarino, Dansereau, & Kennedy, 2001). As a consequence, a transformational leader's individualized consideration within this study is conceptualized at the individual level. (Cho et al, 2010, p. 410)

Of these four aspects, mentioned above, idealized influence is the most appreciated. However, transformational leaders develop their own leadership capacity by motivating their followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. They help the followers to grow and develop the leadership in them by responding the unique needs. These leaders empower their followers with smart objectives and goals of the followers. Any organization requires a leader whom the followers can trust and help each other for the development to a higher level of morale and motivation; a leader who propel the organization forward. Transformational leadership involves a committed relationship between the leader and his followers. (Bass and Riggio, 2008) As a result, transformational leaders are often given management positions in companies since they are known for the ability to develop a vision and inspire others to follow them towards it. Transformational leaders are viewed as charismatic and able to motivate followers to achieve goals that exceed expectations through vision and motivation. In contrast, transactional leaders also reward followers for performance but do not intervene unless goals are not being met. Thus, the main challenges presented by transformational and transactional leadership are similar to the problems of measuring leadership behaviours of Path-Goal and Vertical Dyad-Linkage theories. In addition, the dynamics of the charismatic element of transformational leadership are difficult to conceptualize and measure. Charismatic leadership has been described by examples of charismatic leaders and in terms of the stages or process of charismatic leadership; but the dynamics between charismatic leaders and followers require further clarification. The transformational leadership style draws on assorted capabilities and approaches to leadership, creating distinct advantages for the organization. A leader using this

approach possesses integrity, sets a good example and clearly communicates his goals to his followers. He expects the best from them. He inspires people to look beyond their own interests and focus on the interests and needs of the team. He provides stimulating work and takes the time to recognize good work and good people. Furthermore, any attempt to develop transformational leadership must acknowledge the organizational realities of other styles of leadership. This is one of the key strengths of the full range leadership model. It explicitly acknowledges that managers are likely to use a whole palate of styles ranging from the non transactional, through transactional to transformational. (Kirkbride, 2006, p.31)

For effective leadership among teams, according to us, transformational leaders should be:

- 1. Very well-organized and expect their followers to be creative.
- 2. Team-oriented and expect that followers will work together to create the best possible results.
- 3. Able to give and get respect.
- 4. Taking full responsibility of their team.
- 5. Acting as coach or mentor. In this sense, they should provide training and motivation to reach the desired goals.
- 6. Having the ability to influence followers to bring about a positive change within the organization.

TL's aspect of formulating a vision makes it unique from other leadership styles. Doing so, also enables to quickly assess the organization's current situation and create a suitable strategy for its growth. In this sense, transformational leaders communicate their visions properly and communicate at all levels effectively. This characteristic also helps transformational leaders to deal smoothly during calamity and remain focused; allowing every employee to see the big picture than complaining on small issues. Furthermore, this leadership style creates an enthusiastic environment and encourages creativity and innovation at work. When employees work with self-confidence, self-motivation and collective vision, such an approach guarantees them higher level of efficiency and maximum output. Besides, transformational leaders being passionate about their job, get people to work and thus optimize performance.

During difficult times, transformational leaders normally rely on their inner instinct and guide employees in the right direction. Additionally, when it comes to the management decision making, strategy formation, TL ideally contributes to create, motivate, develop and build the organization and its people. The following steps are involved:

- **Step 1: Create an Inspiring Vision Vision of the Future.**
- Step 2: Motivate Teams to Engage and Deliver Teams to Engage and Deliver upon the Vision.
- Step 3: Develop Clear Operational Strategies Strategies that are easily executable.

Step 4: Build Strong, Relationship-Based Cultures – Cultures that are rock solid. Yukl (1999) offers easy tips to new age of transformational leaders. They are as follows:

- 1. Develop a challenging and attractive vision, together with the employees.
- 2. Tie the vision to a strategy for its achievement.
- 3. Develop the vision, specify and translate it to actions.

- 4. Express confidence, decisiveness and optimism about the vision and its implementation.
- Realize the vision through small planned steps and small successes in the path for its full implementation.

CONCLUSION

The question of how to bring together and interpret research studies that are independent from one another is a basic and important question in all sciences. The inadequacies of the results of a single study and the need to synthesize findings by scientists have led to the development of methodologies that allow for combining the results of many Independent studies. Many methods have been used to synthesize the findings of multiple studies. Systematic review and meta-analysis are two approaches aimed at synthesizing different studies that are independent of one another but also compatible.

Transformational leadership is based on the assumption that people will "follow" or work for or do great things for a person who inspires them. A person with vision and passion can achieve great things, and the way to get things done is by instilling people with enthusiasm and energy. Transformational leadership starts with the development of a vision, a view of the future that will excite potential followers. The next step, which in fact never stops, is to constantly sell the vision. This takes energy and commitment, as few people will immediately buy into a radical vision, and some will join more slowly than others. The Transformational Leader thus takes every opportunity and will use whatever works to convince others to join with him or her in the quest to get the job done. The main criticism of Transformational Leadership is that the passion and confidence of the leader can easily be mistaken for truth and reality. It is true that great things have been achieved through enthusiastic leadership, but it is also true that many passionate people have led the charge right over the cliff and into a bottomless chasm. Just because someone believes they are right, it does not mean they are right.

Paradoxically, the energy that gets people going can also cause them to give up. transformational leaders often have large amounts of enthusiasm which, if relentlessly applied, can wear out their followers. Another criticism of Transformational Leadership is that transformational leaders tend to see the big picture, but not the details, where the devil often lurks. If they do not have people to take care of this level of information, then they might meet failure. Finally, Transformational Leaders, by definition, seek to transform. When the organization does not need transforming and people are happy as they are, then such a leader will be frustrated. Like wartime leaders, however, given the right situation they come into their own and can be personally responsible for saving entire companies.

Today's business environment is surrounded by uncertainty, global turbulence and organizational instability. This calls for a new age leadership in order to triumph at all levels for the organization. The organization and its people need to change and transform to the changing scenario. 'Transformational Leadership' is undoubtedly the answer. It is a key to success and a pathway to supersede business challenges. Transformational leaders demonstrate high levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. They show the organizational citizenship behaviours and feel accountable not just for their work but for their organization like a patriot thinks for his nation. Bernard Bass's article offers a good synthesis of what we have learned and what remains to be learned about the transformational leadership workings. However, progress will be achieved only if theory building efforts lead to precise hypotheses to be tested. In this commentary, I focused on five areas of needed research namely, (1) construct validation (the

linkage between a construct and its measurement), (2) personality attributes of transactional and transformational leaders, (3) effects of training in transformational skills on organizational outcomes, (4) contextual influences, and (5) the search for mediators. (Bass, 1999, p.31)

Our research suggests that transformation could take place if leaders specialize in bringing a systemic change, knowing what change is required, maximizing their teams' competency, capability and capacity, look for experiences from old systems and methods that do not fit or work in the present scenario so they innovate new ways to resolve the day to day organizational challenges. Besides, the transformation from being an expert to achiever is the most commonly observed and practiced among businesspeople and by those in management and executive education. (Rooke et al, 2004) For more than two decades, training departments especially of corporates have been supporting the development of managers to transform from experts into achievers by running programs like "Management by Objectives" (also commonly referred as MBO) "Effective Delegation" and "Managing People", "Leadership Development Program" (also commonly referred as LDP) and many others. These programs typically emphasize getting results through building flexible strategies and make trainees learn the ability to change people and situations according to the need of the hour in favor of the organization.

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