Section 5. Applied psychology

A STUDY OF THE APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN UK PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This article critically explores the conceptual distinction between leadership and management, tracing the theoretical evolution from transactional to transformational leadership and its implications for contemporary educational settings. Drawing on seminal frameworks by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), the paper distinguishes transactional leadership as task- and exchange-oriented, maintaining organizational stability through contingent reward systems, while transformational leadership inspires followers toward higher levels of motivation, ethical engagement, and collective purpose. Integrating Goleman's (2000) concept of emotional intelligence, it argues that effective leadership requires self-awareness, empathy, and social skills that foster collaborative school cultures.

Focusing on educational leadership, the study reviews empirical models by Hallinger (2003) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), showing how transformational leadership enhances school culture, teacher commitment, job satisfaction, and instructional practice. Transformational leaders empower teachers by cultivating shared vision, professional autonomy, and moral integrity, thereby generating both first- and second-order effects on learning and organizational change. The article also contrasts transformational and instructional (transactional) leadership models, noting that the latter's top-down, directive nature is less conducive to sustained educational reform.

The paper concludes that while transformational leadership offers a compelling model for fostering empowerment, collaboration, and innovation in schools, it must be balanced with transactional mechanisms for accountability and structure. Ultimately, the integration of both approaches – anchored in ethical practice and emotional intelligence – produces the most effective leadership for school improvement, professional growth, and community cohesion.

Keywords: *educational leadership psychology, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, emotional intelligence, teacher motivation, school culture*

Introduction
Leadership versus Management

In my introduction I have used the terms leadership and management interchangeably but I feel that there is a difference between the two titles that needs to be distinguished. Writers such as Smither (1994) argue that managers are appointed to their positions by people who are above them in hierarchy and that this hierarchy defines their objectives. He contrasts this with leadership, arguing that leaders motivate their followers to move to a goal and sometimes these people do not necessarily have to be allocated a place of authority, they simply take lead. He points out that managers on the other hand get human and material resources allocated to them towards achieving the set goal. Other writers such as Shackelton and Wale (2000) also argue a similar point that leaders influence people and that there must be a goal to be accomplished.

Furthermore, there are writers who write on the personal characteristics of a leader: for example; on their charisma, visionary flair, the ability to motivate and to enthuse others (Law and Glover, 2000). This analysis on personal characteristics by Law and Glover moves towards perhaps trying to capture traits of individuals who are successful leaders. Leadership styles do reflect an individual's personality and I will further explore this reality when I will look at transactional and transformational leadership.

In essence management is perhaps more about maintaining the status quo. Management, for example focuses on *keeping an already setup system in place which runs smoothly*, while leadership is about *bringing in change*, making the team or organization move towards a positive vision of change with clear and transparent steps leading to the goal.

Or rather as Harris (2003) puts it, that leadership is essentially a process of building and maintaining a sense of vision, culture and interpersonal relationships. In contrast he argues that management is the co-ordination, support and monitoring of organizational activities. He makes a further point by saying that in order for both roles to be successfully carried out there needs to be a 'careful balancing act'.

The definitions: Transactional leadership and Transformational leadership

Burns (1978) first distinguished two forms of leadership in the late 1970's. His main distinction in his studies was how transactional and transformational leaders motivate their followers by appealing to their values and emotions. In essence he argues that Transactional leadership works on motivating and engaging the follower's *self-interest* and that it is an *exchange relationship*; in other words, the follower has to comply or conform in return for certain rewards. Burns points out that this type of leadership might produce an efficient or productive work place, but is limited compared to transformational leadership.

Burns argues that transformational leadership raises the level of motivation in the followers beyond that of the exchange values. This helps followers achieve a higher level of performance and *self-actualization*. This is particularly important in many work places where there are no visible rewards, so the motivation must come from with the individual to make the change happen. Furthermore, Burns saw transactional and transformational leadership as being at opposite ends of each other as part of a continuum.

Bass (1985) on the other hand argued that a *Two-factor theory* whereby transactional and transformational forms of leadership were built on each other; he saw them as independent notions but were both a related element of leadership. He argued that transformational leaders put their followers at the heart of the organization, where not only followers' needs were recognized but also strong attempts were made to raise and develop those needs, and this in turns encourages the followers to do more than expected. I will discuss this notion of *to do more than expected* in the next section.

Thus, transactional leadership is generally sufficient for maintaining the status quo but transformational leadership is development-orientated for the purpose of change. The success of transformational leadership is visible by increased productivity, and where followers develop their own skills and potential for leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1990).

Bass and his associates (Bass and Steidlemeier, 1998) put forward the following

four dimensions of transformational leadership based on empirical research using the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) theory, these are: (see glossary p.19 for details).

1. Charismatic leadership.
2. Inspirational Motivation.
3. Intellectual stimulation.
4. Individualized consideration.

According to Bass and Avolio (1990) they class the two theoretically distinguished dimensions of *idealised influence* and *inspirational motivation* as one because there is no strong empirical evidence to suggest that they are indeed separate.

Goleman (1998) in his paper 'What makes a leader?' echoes similar sentiments and argues that effective leaders are all alike and share a common characteristic; a high degree of 'Emotional Intelligence'. Goleman (2000) describes emotional intelligence as the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships effectively. He identified emotional intelligence of consisting of four capabilities, they are: (see glossary p.19 for detail).

1. Self-awareness.
2. Self-management.
3. Social awareness.
4. Social skills.

Furthermore, Bass and his associates (Bass and Steidlemeier, 1998) also hypothesized four behavioral dimensions that lie beneath transactional leadership that link in with transformational leadership. Together they form two aspects of a broader range of leadership conceptualization (Bass, 1985). Below are the transactional leadership dimensions: (see glossary p.19 for detail)

1. Contingency rewards.
2. Management by exception-active.
3. Management by exception-passive.
4. Laissez-faire leadership.

Furthermore, by comparing the two styles, in essence transformational leadership has been contrasted and compared with transactional behavior, in which co-operation is obtained by establishing exchange-rewards as mentioned by Burns earlier. Hence, why Bass sees them as being linked.

Bass (1999) argues that transformational leadership theory is supposedly behavioral based, so in actual fact the transformational leadership style can be learnt. However, another interesting point arises, which is that transformational leadership is linked to components of personality, as evident in Goleman (2000) and his list of criterions; this then counter acts Bass's view that this type of leadership style can be learnt. A major criticism leveled at Bass's model of transactional leadership is its underdevelopment. Since transactional practices are built on, or augment transactional leadership (Silins 1994).

Why Transformational Leadership emerged?

According to Hallinger (2003) the past 25 years have witnessed the emergence of new conceptual models in the field of educational leadership. The foremost models in this field have come about by a number of empirical studies; according to Heck and Hallinger (1998) these models are Instructional leadership and Transformational leadership. In his article Hallinger points out that these two models replaced earlier models of leadership that were applied in schools such as (situational leadership, contingency theory, etc,). These models focused primarily on the manner in which educational leadership exercised by school administrators and teachers brought about improved educational outcomes (Southworth, 2002).

Instructional leadership models emerged in the early 80's from early research on effective schools. This initial body of research identified a strong, directive, instructional approach to leadership in schools, with a strong focus on the curriculum under total control of the principal. These were characteristics of effective schools teaching children from poor, urban communities (Edmonds, 1979).

Instructional leadership focused predominantly on the role of the school principal in coordinating, controlling, supervising and developing curriculum and instruction in the school (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985); according to Leithwood and Montgomery (1986), instructional leadership was generally conceived to be a unitary role of elementary schooling. A lot of studies of effective schools focused on poor urban schools in need of substantial change, so it was not really surprising to note that instructional leaders were subsequently, conceived to be 'strong, directive leaders' (Edmonds, 1979).

Some writers have characterized instructional leadership as a directive and top-down approach to school leadership (Barth, 1990; Day et al, 2001). As Cohen and Miller (1980) argue that instructional leadership emphasizes the head teacher/principal's coordination and control of instruction. Lambert (2002) classes instructional leadership as 'first-order' as it is a single individual controlling from the top. Hallinger (2003) argues that instructional leadership explicitly focuses on school improvement; it would be characterized as transactional leadership in the sense that it seeks to manage and control organizational members to move towards a predetermined set of goals.

As a result, Hallinger (2003) argues that the term transformational leadership emerged during the 1990's as a broader dissatisfaction began to occur with the instructional leadership model, which many believed was too principle-orientated and was very power- and authority-led.

The shift occurred when leadership models began to be construed as being more consistent with evolving trends in educational reform such as: empowerment, shared leadership and organizational learning began to emerge (Hallinger, 1992).

Accordingly, transformational leadership seeks to generate second-order effects. Transformational leaders increase the capacity of others in the school; this in turn produces first-order effects on learning (Lambert, 1998). Transformational leadership seeks to influence people by building from the bottom-up rather than from the top-down. Transformational leaders create a climate in which teachers and staff engage in continuous learning and in which they routinely share their learning with others (Hallinger, 2003).

It was Leithwood (1994) who first carried out the most substantial adaptation of Bass' (1985) model of transformational leadership in educational settings and its effects, followed by further works by him and his colleagues (Leithwood et al; 1996, 1999). Leithwood (1994) highlighted the people-effect as a cornerstone of the transformational leadership model.

Are Transformational leaders needed for schools today?

According to Yukl (1989) transformational theory emphasizes emotions, values and attributes that are important to symbolic behaviour and conceptualizes the role of the leader as helping in making events meaningful for followers.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) looked at transformational leadership research from 1996 to 2005. The evidence about transformational forms of leadership in school is provided by 32 empirical studies in their review paper. The paper focuses particularly on the variables of transformational leadership, looking at both moderating and mediating factors related to this form of leadership and its effects on students.

Leithwood and Jantzi look at some of the positive effects of transformational leadership on students in their review. Hence, in today's schools, transformational leadership has a positive effect on the following aspects:
- School culture;
- Organizational commitment;
- Job satisfaction;
- Changed teacher practice;
- Strategies for change;
- Decision making;
- Instructional quality;
- Teacher efficacy.

A lot of points in the above list are interlinked. I would like to closely look at the first four bullet points as I feel that last four bullet points are interconnected within them.

i. School Culture

In order to bring about a change in the school culture, leaders have to be strong communicators. The leader must have excellent skills of both listening and sending out clear, convincing and well-tuned messages (Goleman, 2000).

Mazzarella and Grundy (1989) noted that effective school leaders in particular, are good at communicating and have the aptitude and skills they need to interact well with others; they know how to communicate. Nickse (1977) studied teacher change agents and reported that strategies such as developing one-to-one communication with teachers in the lounge and listening to others

were particularly facilitative in implementing change at these schools.

Interestingly enough, Joiner (1987) stated that leaders for change must recognize that people are its greatest resource. He looked at three dimensions:

1. Leaders valuing the professional contributions of staff.
2. Leaders' ability to relate to staff/people.
3. Leaders developing collaborative relationships.

He argues that the first acknowledges individual skills and expertise while the other two are about interpersonal skills. So, leaders of change not only help followers realize the vision but also have the skills which help them relate to others to build collaborative relationships. This is extremely important in schools, as a sense of community needs to be built where every member of the school has a productive place in that community; a sense of collective efforts is important and every member's needs are addressed. Transformational leaders help form teams, support team efforts, develop skills that groups of individuals need and provide the necessary environment for them to flourish. Leaders that bring in change, value and trust the strengths of others, they acknowledge their efforts and contributions in the realization of their organization's vision.

Murphy et al., (1991) states an assumption about leaders who change their organization; that only the people on the top of the hierarchy will lead. However, this assumption of change coming only from the top is not representative of the true reality. In fact, there is an invisible leadership of lower-level staff members who implement the change; they need to be empowered and a sense of autonomy is very important – i.e. each member having a responsibility. The sense of autonomy needs to be appreciated by the leaders, so the staff feel that they are contributing to the system. Hoy and Brown (1988) note that the most effective leader behavior is strong in both initiating structure and consideration. So effective leaders in schools are both task and people-orientated.

ii. Teacher/ Staff Commitment (Organisational Commitment)

As Barth (1990) and Lambert (2002) point out that transformational leaders work with others in the school community to identify personal goals and then link these to broader organizational goals. This transformational leadership approach is believed to increase commitment of staff who see the relationship between what they are trying to accomplish and the mission of the school.

The reason why these changes are seen as second-order effects as the principle/head teacher creates the conditions in which others are committed and self-motivated to work towards the improvement of the school without specific direction from above (Hallinger, 2003). Transformational leadership has an impact on teachers' perceptions of school conditions, their commitment to change, and the organizational learning that takes place (Fullan, 2002; Day et al., 2001).

According to Barling, weber and kelloway (1996) Transformational leadership has been linked to a variety of outcomes, such as employee commitment to the workplace; employee commitment is crucial to educational workplaces, as everybody needs to be committed to the greater cause.

Linking with the above point Porter et al. (1974) looked at organizational commitment: they defined it as the strength of the individual identification and involvement with a particular organization. The concept of organizational commitment had three components as defined by Porter et al (1974), as follows:

1. A strong belief in acceptance of organizational goals and values.
2. A willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization.
3. A definite desire to maintain organizational membership.

In their study they found that transformational leadership had a positive and influential effect organizational commitment, rather than transactional leadership, which had adverse effects on these components. Leaders need to address followers' self-worth in order to engage them and make them commit. So, it seems that this is really one of the strongest motivators of transformational leaders (Shamir, 1991).

Barnett and McCormick (2003) conclude that building a shared vision actually helps to bind people together and establish a group ownership. This consensus and commitment

to school vision are developed through leadership practices such as communication, leader credibility and the involvement of the school community in collaborative processes.

Vision is a major part of a transformational leader described both by Bass (1985) and Goleman (2000). Similar sentiments are shared by Sergiovanni (1990), who states that school leaders not only need the vision but also the ability to communicate that vision or idea, much rather like a shared covenant; i.e., a development of this shared vision occurs within the team or organization. When leaders invite, encourage and support others to take part in shaping and developing this shared vision then mutually respectful and collaborative relationships are developed. Sergiovanni (1990) describes this aspect of leadership as bonding, where the leaders and followers have a set of values, which they share, and this bonds them in a common cause to meet a common goal. Once there is a shared vision then there is a commitment to change and the transition to change is much smoother. This way the followers feel less threatened as the ideas and values are mutual and shared.

iii. Job satisfaction

Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and job experience. It results from the idea that an employee's job actually provides what he or she values in the work situation. Following the works of Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) researchers have been defining and measuring job satisfaction as a global concept (Nguni et al, 2006). This concept has two distinct aspects, which include intrinsic (level of job satisfaction with various features associated with the job itself) and the extrinsic (level of satisfaction with features associated with the environment in which the work is performed) job satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Dinham and Scott, 2000).

Research conducted in school settings has shown that leaders behaviours have influence on job satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Dinham and Scott, 2000; Ostroff, 1992). To illustrate the last point Maeroff (1988) reported that job satisfaction is positively related to participative decision-making and to transformational leadership. They point out further that in the case of school settings, teachers reported greater satisfaction in their work when they perceive their principal as someone who shares information with others, delegates authority and keeps open channels of communication with teachers (Nguni et al, 2006). Other studies indicate that strong principal leadership emerged as a consistent factor affecting teacher job satisfaction and motivation (Morris and Sherman, 1981).

Similarly, Leithwood et al (1996) found that transformational leadership behaviours have been found to have a positive effect in relation to teacher job satisfaction. Likewise, Leithwood and Jantzi (1996) argue that transformational leadership has both direct and indirect effects on teachers' job satisfaction; indirect effects were through teachers' perceptions of occupational prestige, self-esteem, autonomy at work and professional self-development.

Subsequently, Bogler (2001) carried out research in Israeli secondary schools and concluded that the influence of transformational leadership on teachers' job satisfaction was positive. Despite the large amount of corpus available on the effects of transformational leadership, Nguni et al (2006) argue that there is still very little evidence about the effects of transformational school leadership on teachers' job satisfaction or organizational commitment in schools – especially primary schools – in the developing countries, as the evidence is widely based from the western world.

iv. Changed teacher practice

Leithwood (1992) reported that transformational school leaders were in a continuous pursuit of the following three primary goals:

1. Helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture;
2. Fostering teacher development;
3. Helping them solve problems together more effectively.

Firstly, creating a collaborative school environment enables the staff members to talk, observe, critique, and plan together. These norms of collective responsibility and continuous improvement encourage staff to teach one another, and, as a result, learn how to teach better (Leithwood, 1992).

Leithwood (1992) continues by giving examples or strategies used by leaders to build and maintain a collaborative school culture by involving the staff members by setting goals together which results in reducing teachers' isolation. As Liontos (1992) argues that the school leaders are responsible for actively communicating the school's cultural values, norms and beliefs. The catalyst to all this process is by sharing leadership with others and as an example perhaps to delegate power to specific school improvement teams.

Secondly, fostering teacher development; Leithwood (1992) suggests that teachers' motivation for development is improved when they internalize goals for professional growth. This process is facilitated when they engage in establishing a school mission to which they are committed to. Teachers' development can be enhanced by giving them a role in solving non-routine school improvement problems and ensuring that the goals are clear, explicit and challenging but not unrealistic (Leithwood, 1992).

Thirdly, helping teachers solve problems more effectively; in order to achieve any meaningful school improvement, staff members need to work harder. This is why teachers have come to value transformational leadership because it acts as a stimulant for engaging them in new activities and putting forth that extra effort (Leithwood, 1992).

According to Leithwood (1992), transformational leadership has a sizable influence on teacher collaboration and a significant relationship exists between its aspects and the changes of teachers' attitudes toward school improvement and altered (enhanced) instructional behavior.

Bass and Steidlmeier, (1998) argue that in order to bring about these changes, the transformational leader must promote a model of values which are honesty, loyalty and fair including the end values of justice, equality and human rights. They further argue that transformational leaders are committed to a clear and stated code, which is enforced continually, and an enforced ethical code of conduct. They should also build an organization with high ethical standards where all members have shared moral standards.

Accordingly, transformational leaders are truly concerned about the good that can be achieved for their group and they openly bring about changes in the followers' values by the worth and relevancy of their ideas and mission to their followers' ultimate beliefs and fulfillment (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1998).

Conclusion

In conclusion from what I have read it would seem that the argument for transformational leadership is soundly justified. This is further evident from old and new literature, and particularly in literature where significant empirical studies have been carried out.

The most important aspect of transformational leadership is the idea of teachers and administrations working together to support, acknowledge and appreciate each other. This in turns boosts staff relations and has a positive effect on pupils. A transformational leader makes every member feel valued hence promoting a strong educational community in the school. The idea of sharing power and giving self-worth to all members of an organization promotes the idea of equality and a shared sense of responsibility.

Interestingly enough there is a view also that transformational leadership goes against ethical constraints (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1998); as it is not merely about motivating people but rather about manipulating people to actually act upon the leader's vision and adopt the leader's ideas and values, where they have to put the extra effort in.

However, I feel that in the short term there is a need for transformational leadership, but a more balanced approach is best suited in an organization such as a school. Writers such as Leithwood (1992) reflect a similar viewpoint, arguing that transactional and transformational leadership are complementary to each other. Similarly, Bass (1985) argues that transformational leadership does not substitute transactional leadership – in fact, evidence indicates that the best leaders are both transformational and transactional.

Jackson (2000) suggest that transformational leadership requires a higher tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty from the principle/ head teacher and being able to live with the messy process of change, in other words; transactional leadership limits uncertainty.

Hoy and Brown (1988) also found that teachers responded more favorably to

principals with a leadership style that combined both structure and consideration. Indeed, as Hallinger (2003) concludes that the study demonstrates the effectiveness of integrated learning – both transformational and transactional (instructional), in eliciting the transactional leadership of teachers for improving school performance.

Similarly, as Jackson (2000) and Fullan (2002) observe that school improvement is a journey. The type of leadership that is suitable to a certain stage of the journey may well become a limiting or even counter-productive force as the school develops; hence the type of PF leadership at any given time depends on the type of school and its specific developmental requirements.

Glossary

Bass and his associates proposed the following four dimensions of transformational leadership based on empirical research using the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ),

Charismatic leadership: The leaders are role models for followers, inspire those around them, create an attractive vision of the future, elevating follower goals and inspiring enthusiasm and optimism.

Inspirational Motivation: Inspires followers with challenges and meaning for engaging in shared goals and undertakings.

Intellectual stimulation: Transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation to point out problems in current situations and contrast then with the vision of the future.

Individualized consideration: to an extent of how transformational leaders treat their followers as individuals, how much leaders give their personal attention for coaching, mentoring, personal advice and opportunities for development.

Goleman (2000) describes emotional intelligence as the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships effectively. He identified emotional intelligence of consisting of four capabilities:

Self-awareness: Being aware of your own emotions, Accurate self-assessment – your own strengths and limitations and self-confidence.

Self-management: This includes self-control over own emotion, trustworthiness in own character, conscientiousness to manage yourself and responsibility, adaptability, achievement orientation i.e. to meet internal standards of excellence and initiative a readiness to seize opportunity.

Social awareness: Having empathy, sensing other people's emotions, organizational awareness, networking etc., and service orientation – to recognizes and meet customer needs.

Social skill: visionary leadership, have influence, develop others, communication, change catalyst i.e. leaders that initiate change, conflict management, building bonds and lastly teamwork and collaboration.

Bass's transactional leadership dimensions:

Contingency rewards: The extent to which leaders set goals, make rewards on performance, obtain necessary resources, and provide rewards and performance goals are met.

Management by exception-active: The extent to which leaders closely monitor followers' performance and keep track of mistakes.

Management by exception-passive: The extent to which leaders may not be aware of problems until informed by others and generally fail to intervene until serious problems occur.

Laissez-faire leadership: The extent to which leaders avoid responsibility, fail to make a decision, are absent when needed, or fail to follow up on requests.

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