

Principal as Transformational Leader: Getting to Know New Dimension in School Leadership

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Abstract

New conditions and demands certainly place new pressures on school principals, and though the new tasks and challenges can be viewed positively as bringing new opportunities. There is an introduction of new concerns of transformational leadership on principals from which they change their conventional leadership style into transformative one by experimenting in their day to day activities. They incorporate various new methods developed and integrated by other principals from the countries prominent in educational scenario. The article mainly focuses on dimensions of transformational leadership, its concept and review on gaining popularity among school principals through an understanding on transformational principal development models.

Keywords: Principal, Transformational, School, Leadership, Change

In the Beginning

Some researchers have put their views that the jobs of principals have become very difficult to manage due to changing school scenarios and ability to understand their task to cope with the situations rightly (Caldwell, 2002, Edwards, 2002, Budhal, 2000). It is the leadership quality of the principal to develop vision, keep competitive, and make the organizations able to take competitive advantage. For this, principals these days need competency to transform, lead and run the schools to which they head. Researchers have given clues that every year more than 100 million are spent on the initiatives of transformational leadership to executives including school principals. Based on the sample data of 28,810, Right Management Group (2010) revealed that in a number of countries - United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, UK, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, China, India, Japan, South Korea transformational leadership ability is reflected in the form of - (1) Value employees, (2) Lead by example, (3) Have the capability to make organization successful, (4) Are visible to employees, (5) Encourage feedback across my organizations, (6) Ensure that projects are completed, (7) Behave consistently with organization values, (8) Communicate effectively about change in my organization, (9) Implement change effectively in my organization, (10) Respond appropriately to changing external conditions, (11) Make decisions consistent with my organization's strategy. Such transformational leaders are capable of making their subordinates engaged. It is found that the engaged workforce is more productive by 50% and retained by 44%.

Review on Transformational Leadership

Researchers have suggested that School Principals should have an understanding of the "real issues" to facilitate the smooth operation of school and they are to be transformed to 'stand up' and do 'what is right' in the future. (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993). Mere opening of schools, appointments of principals in them does not ensure that schools are responsive to the direction of training right human resources required in the country. Is the appointed leader capable to create right organizational climate and culture where schools staffs and teachers are empowered to do their jobs properly and contribute to the growth of the school organization? Can the school principal develop a sense of urgency to motivate others, bring teachers and staffs together to make transformation, produce and articulate a vision, eradicate barriers, and execute short and long-term adjustments to policies, procedures and services? In the context of rising cost of schooling, can the principal as a leader be innovative to reduce operating costs, improve educational quality, and increase student and parental satisfaction? Can the principal handle crises in time of emergency? Can the principal as a leader work in collaborative way to handle the teamwork effectively by taking consensus through team participation?

Can the principal show his/her skill of coaching and counseling the teachers and staffs to inspire them to develop new techniques of handling students psychologically? These were the challenges that a school principal faced earlier. Do schools principals have gained experienced to understand the situations, know the challenges, and dare to take actions so that better results can be achieved? These were some of the crucial issues that resulted principal in using Transformational Leadership.

Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as a process where leaders and followers engage in a mutual process of 'raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation.' Burns' argued in favor of transformational leadership to be more effective than transactional leadership. According to Burns, transformational leadership can be seen when leaders and followers work together for the common goals with high level of trusting work culture; they recognize each other not on the basis of immediate benefit but on the basis of long lasting common benefit.

There are four components of transformational leadership.

Intellectual Stimulation	Transformational leaders not only challenge the status quo; they also encourage creativity among followers. The leader supports followers to investigate new ways of doing things and new opportunities to learn.
Individualized Consideration	Transformational leadership also involves offering support and encouragement to individual followers. To promote accommodating relationships, transformational leaders maintains channel of communication open so that followers feel free to share ideas and so that leaders can offer direct recognition of the unique contributions of each follower.
Inspirational Motivation	Transformational leaders have a clear vision that they are able to articulate to followers. These leaders manage to assist followers experience the same passion and motivation to fulfill these goals.
Idealized Influence	The transformational leader serves as a role model for followers. And followers see the greatness of the leaders while working because leader is the ideal person, followers have no reason to suspect the personality characteristic of leader.

Authors Bass and Riggio(2008) have explained that transformational leaders stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary results and, during the process, enlarge their own leadership capacity. Moreover, transformational leadership is seen as the way to develop leadership quality in the followers.

Researchers have found that this style of leadership can have a positive effect on the group. Ronald E. Riggio has indicated that groups led by transformational leaders have higher levels of performance and satisfaction than groups led by other types of leaders. The reason, he suggests, is that transformational leaders believe in empowering people for the best performance.

New Dimension of Transformational Leadership in School

Based on the extensive literature, the answer to the question that transformational leadership can be taught and learned, the answer is yes in the research of Balring and Kelloway (2000). Therefore, this research adopts theoretical model as Transformational Leadership that affects superior performances in the organizations. Albert Bandura's theory that believes that extra performance in any organizations can be achieved through transformational leadership. This research endeavors to link transformational leadership and performance in a school. James McGregor Burns and Bernard Bass (1978, 1985) initiated Transformational Leadership Theory. Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991) established four primary behaviors that constitute transformational leadership. They are (1) idealized influence (or charismatic influence), (2) inspirational motivation, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) individualized consideration.

Albert Bandura's (1997 & 2001) developed Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). This theory states that employee behaviour (extra-role performance) is the result of a combination of personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy), contextual resources (e.g., transformational leadership) and motivation (e.g., work engagement). This study stresses that transformational leadership develops self-efficacy. With the self-efficacy subordinates involves into the work in a greater degree and gives extra roles and performance so that school becomes more effective.

Self-efficacy is the beliefs in one's capacities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments 'engagement. Research shows that people with high self-efficacy perceive troubles as challenges, are highly committed to the activities they carry out and invest more time and effort in their daily activities (Bandura 2001). Work engagement refers to the extent of persons mind, time, intensity, and devotion towards the work (Schaufeli et al. 2002).

According to the model there are two components in the work engagement- vigor and devotion. Vigor means a large extent of zeal and force that a person put in the work to achieve the goal whereas dedication means putting mind to work intellectually, persistently, emotionally, honestly, despite the difficulties arise in the works.

Balring and Kelloway(2000) has given 5 components of transformational leadership which are; idealized influence attributes, idealized influence behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration.

Transformational Leadership Development Models in School

Researchers have indicated that varieties of methods have been developed over the decades to develop Transformational principals. The models ranges from developing syllabus and imparting the training to most well devised real action oriented models like, 360-degree feedback, executive coaching, mentoring, networks, action learning and job assignment.

360-Degree Feedback

360 degree feedback is a tool, designed by the schools to rate performance of principal. Filipczak et al. (1996) states that these days 90% of the top business firms listed in fortune 1000 uses this form. The possible benefits of 360s for school principal are many. First, they can create participative work environments. That is, the use of the 360 allows subordinates to give feedback to principal and thus to have a say about their work environment. Increasingly, this system has proliferated and is being used for diverse purposes by principal (e.g., executive coaching, talent management, performance evaluation, succession planning, and leadership development.

Executive Coaching

Over the last twenty years coaching has had a meteoric rise in popularity in schools. It appears that this has been driven by the growing recognition that learning and development are more effective when based on real time challenges at work and involve the whole person, rather than sub-sets of skills. Another driver has been the need to develop transformational principal who are far more skilled in relationships and engagement than has ever been necessary in the past. Hooper and Potter (1997) emphasized to release human potential of creativity and ability by winning the people's mind.

The schools must have number of trained and experienced coaches within its workforce who coach future principal on a normal basis. Coaching is accessible to all staffs as part of the learning and development suite of development tools. Coaching can help to -develop leading, managing, and supervising ability, change initiatives, building relationship, managing conflict, setting up plans, etc.

Mentoring

Mentors are generally defined as individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward mobility and career support to their protégés (Kram, 1985). Studies show 70 – 90% of workplace learning occurs through mentoring and informal on-the-job training (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; Tannenbaum,1997 as cited in Munro, 2009), and at least one third of organizations with a minimum of 500 employees have launched formal mentoring (Kim,2007; Nemanick, 2000, as cited in Munro, 2009). Also they have put forward their opinions about mentoring stating that mentoring accelerates career progression, acclimatizes new recruits to organizational culture and values; and is recognized as an unrivalled approach for transferring organizational wisdom, skills, and abilities from seasoned practitioners to new recruits. Mentoring lessens the agony of trial and error (Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991), reduces job ambiguity, enhances job performance, and decreases absenteeism and employee turnover (Lankau & Sandura, 2002; Garvey, 1995). Mentoring has been introduced to groom high-potential principal, to fulfill their developmental needs (Hegstad & Wentling, 2004; McCauley & Douglas, 2004).

Networks

Opportunities while working to relate with different stakeholders is an experience for the executives. Relations with the people of different fields and sharing ideas through different activities organized formally or informally can lead success. Currently there are tools that help to development of networks required for the managers and principals of schools. Every organization has a number of stakeholders, so balance networking with them is worthwhile and this can be taught to the managers and principals. Such networking tools are designed to give every employee the opportunity for a constructive discussion with their manager about their role and performance. These provide a link between the individual, team and council objectives, and ensure employees know what is expected of them.

Job Assignments

Studies have proved that challenging job assignments generally have positive effects on job performance and career development. Challenging experiences motivate people to think about a situation in an alternative way; they force people to step out of their comfort zone of the daily routine (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988). Every organization has intense interest towards capable citizens to maintain constancy, provide stability, and keep higher level of competition. Authors have suggested giving challenging job assignments to the employees who are experienced and stationed for promotional opportunities. In addition, by the time staffs enter mid-career, cognitive demands become more difficult to administer, which creates negative influences on their ability to deal with cognitively demanding challenging assignments (Fried, Grant, Levi, Hadani, & Slowik, 2007).

Action learning

Revans, who propounded the action learning said that the essential point that learning and action require each other: there is no learning without action and no learning without action and no sober and deliberate action without learning. Pedler defined action learning is a pragmatic and moral philosophy based on a deeply humanistic view of human potential that consign us, via empirical learning, to address the intractable problems of organizations and societies. According to MIT Action Learning conference held in 2012, the process of developing transformational principal on hard (e.g., marketing, financing) and soft (e.g., vision, leadership, values) skills by having them work with others on real school challenges and reflecting on their decision-making and experiences throughout.”

Transformational Principal Preparation Syllabi

It is found in the research of Hess & Kelly (2007) that principals often are taught coursework’s besides the on the job methods of principal preparation to become transformational principal. These courses are classified into seven groups.

Managing results	“Accountability,” “evaluation,” “assessments,” “data management,” “decision-making,” “strategy,” “organizational structure,” and “change.”
Managing personnel	“recruitment,” “selection,” “induction,” “teacher evaluation,” “clinical supervision,” “motivation,” “conflict management,” “professional development,” and “termination” or “dismissal.”
Technical knowledge	“school funding,” “budgeting,” “due process,” “church and state,” “student and teacher freedoms,” “tort law,” “literature reviews,” “sampling,” “statistical analyses,” and “database management.”
External leadership	school board relations, collective bargaining, public relations and marketing, parent and community relations, and politics and policy
Norms and value	“stratification,” “multiculturalism,” “diversity,” “constructivism,” “inequality,” “equity,” “social justice,” and “gender.”
Managing classroom instructions	“curriculum,” “learning theories,” “instructional leadership,” “pedagogy,” “classroom management,” and “collaborative learning”
Leadership and schools culture	“the frames of leadership,” “symbolic leadership,” “leadership vs. management,” “creating a school culture,” “leading with vision,” and “school climate.”

One way to understand the prepared principal “leadership” is in terms of the ability to expand the zone of acceptance among subordinates.

A principal requires the qualities like, expertise, technical competency to run the schools and maintain relation with staff and teachers. And future and prosperous of any school depends upon the qualities of school principal.

At the End

Hence, radical principal preparation is supported by dimension of transformational leadership for the challenges of the 21st century in order to address the situation with optimism. New conceptualizations of the school principal have opened doors to changes in practice and adopting new dimension of transformational leadership. There are various effective programs operating that can be used across the country that can serve as guides to others committed to change. Four core questions guide the preparation of transformational principal and these are-How do policies shape the talent team? What are the present issues on leadership preparation? Why change is important? What are the alternatives for action? Armed with the answers, a joint effort of the government and the school can continue to work to create educational leadership development systems that will ensure success.

Equally important, they are strengthening the existing practices and innovations that show promise of future success. To amend this, transformational school principals demands that schools to be innovative in their transformational principal preparation programs. Schools on the other hand also welcome and support new providers and they must regulate their entrance into the marketplace in ways that encourage a maximum of healthy innovation and competitiveness while concurrently encouraging novel collaborations that combine the best of what the different schools have to offer. Transformational Principal also encourage all parts of the educational leadership development system to work together to make the system more consistent and, more significant, to make sure that the system produces exemplary transformational school principal. Since the primary purpose of schools is teaching and learning, all responsible stakeholders must support student achievement and that all preparation programs must develop transformational principal who can in turn provide instructional leadership.

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