



The Relationship between the Best Practices of Transformational Leadership and Quality of Good Teachers

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Abstract

It has been reported that transformational leadership impacts significantly the teachers and schools. It has also been argued that transformational leadership principles applied to teacher development is one possibility for achieving the desirable qualities among teachers. The study investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and the quality of good teachers. The study employed a quantitative paradigm. A self-developed instrument was established. A total of 776 participants responded to the survey. The findings demonstrate the best five components of quality amongst good teachers. The results also revealed the five sets of best practices within transformational leaders. The results yielded that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and quality of good teachers. In short, the findings inform that the best practices amongst transformational leadership which are perpetual desire for continuous learning, risk taking and value driven contributed significantly towards the development of desirable qualities in teachers. It is recommended that every effort be made by the education policy to promote the practice of transformational leadership.

Keywords: Transformational leadership; best practices; quality of good teachers.

1. Introduction

In the last two decades, there has been a growing research attention for the impact of school leadership on school effectiveness and school improvement. Most theories of leadership development stressed how to be effective within the status quo – what's called transactional leadership. A leader using these styles can be very influential, but they change very little. To use a popular expression, these people are good at “rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic”, but they can't keep the ship from sinking.

Research has revealed that a new concept of system school leadership' is emerging as it states, “effective in transformative leadership and curriculum management are intertwined and go hand in hand in any educational establishment to fulfill its role of imparting knowledge to students (Yeo, 2006). Obviously, transformational leadership influences significantly the teachers and the schools. Furthermore, research has been reported on the impact of transformational leadership in various settings. One central dimension of such impact is that transformational leadership has direct influence on the teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) and school performance (Bryman, 1992). This implies that transformational leadership not only fosters the types of outcomes for schools environment but stimulate continuous professional development among teachers (Zhu, Chew & Spangler, 2005; Yeo, 2006; Chew, 2007).

Thus, based on previous research and reports, the relationship between transformational leadership and organization performance has been analyzed. This result holds for different organizational contexts and different success criteria. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate how far transformational

leadership had influence on the qualities of good teachers.

2. Literature review

2.1 Qualities of good teachers

The question of what makes a good teacher has come again to the forefront of academic and educational discussions in recent years (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001; Sigford, 2006; Chew, 2007). It is therefore, timely as well as critical to identify the personal qualities of good teachers. Review and analysis suggested that teachers do function as leaders in the classroom that is important to have the qualities in teachers especially those qualities and characteristics developed through transformational leadership (Button, 2003; Loy, 2003; Sigford, 2005; Brower & Balch, 2005).

For the first half century, teachers were evaluated on attributes deemed important by administrators and teacher educators, such as professional attitude, understanding of students, creativity, and control of class, planning, individualization and pupil participation (Cruickshank, 2000). In the 1960, analytical skills were valued in teachers: the ability to methodically analyze components of their teaching and modify them if necessary. Emerging a bit later was the idea of the effective teacher: one whose students exhibited high achievement (Cruickshank, 2000). However, in the 21st century, teaching remains a relationship between a teacher and a roomful of personalities and good predictor of how well students will do in a particular teacher's class.

In addition, students' perceptions of their teacher's caring substantially associated with their evaluation of their teacher. This suggests that the collaborative and cooperative aspects of transformational leadership, such as embracing shared vision could help teachers to be more effective. So, what is transformational leadership?

2.2 Transformational leadership

There are various conceptions towards transformational leadership. One of the common one put forth by Downtown (1973) is that transformational leadership is a leadership when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Downtown, 1973).

At the same time, Burns (1978) first introduced the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership in his treatment of political leadership, but this term is now used in organizational psychology as well. According to Burns (1978), the differences between transformational and transactional leadership is what leaders and followers offer one another. Transforming leadership occurs when or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused.

The heart of transformational leadership is the leader's desire and ability to raise the consciousness of others by appealing to powerful moral values and ideals. The leader is able to transform followers beyond the dishonorable emotions of jealousy, greed and fear to higher principles of liberty, justice and humanitarianism. As Burns (1983) would say, the followers are raised from their "everyday selves" to become "better selves." Transformational leaders influence followers by serving as a teacher, mentor and coach. They seek to elevate and empower others to a higher level. Transformational leaders can be found within any organization and at any level in the organization. This is a leader that can influence superiors, peers or subordinates.

Bass and Stogdill (1990) expanded upon the earlier ideas of Burns (1983) with his own theory of transformational leadership. He defines this supervision in terms of the leader's motivational effect on followers. They feel loyalty, trust, admiration and respect toward the transformational leader. The followers are motivated to serve and achieve more than they originally were expected to. They are inspired to achieve *higher-order* needs and are made more aware of the organization's needs for their unique skills and talents.

Today, it is acknowledged that there are *four* various types of transformational leadership behavior. Bass (1985) outlined four main components of transformational leadership. The four components are idealized influence; inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration

The end result of transformational leadership is empowering others to take more initiative in their work, inspiring them to be more committed and building their self-confidence. Of course, these activities can't take place in a vacuum. Transformational leaders nurture an organizational culture by giving attention to priorities and concerns, maturely reacting to crisis situations, role modeling, wise allocation of rewards, and by defining the criteria for success. The paper focuses on the elements of transformational leadership in influencing the qualities of good teachers.

3. Method

The study employed the quantitative method, a set of questionnaire was constructed to survey and gather data from the respondents. The questionnaire consists of three sections. Section A requires the respondents to provide their demographics. Section B was designed to examine the qualities of good teachers and Section C was aimed to identify the best practices of transformational leadership from the perspectives of transformational leadership in literature and also from the existing leaders at schools.

For section B whereby it requires the respondents to provide their opinions on the quality of good teachers, the items used have been identified to measure the focus of the study was adaptations from previous developed instrument used by researchers and the report was published by [McKinsey \(2007\)](#) in the conduct of the study in relation to "How the world's best performing school system come out on top"?

For section C which aims to identify the best practices of transformational leadership was an adaptation of a research done by [Jane \(2009\)](#) in the study of "An understanding of transformational leadership in selected schools in Malaysia. [Jane \(2009\)](#) also asserted from her findings that the five major components of a transformational leader in the Malaysian schools context are risk taking, visionary, value driven, empowering and desire for continuous learning which had been mentioned above.

A total of 776 respondents responded to the survey. There was 69% of female teachers and 31% of male teachers. These respondents are teachers selected from four states in Malaysia. These schools were nominated by the state Ministry of Education. These schools were suggested as the principals had reported to have made significant improvement over the past five years. And, the principals were considered to have practiced transformational leadership principles.

4. Findings and discussion

The study attempted to evaluate the qualities of good teachers which are deemed importance by the influence of the transformational leadership. The results yielded that the most important quality of good teachers are their skills and knowledge (mean = 6.35). It is followed by the training development program either pre-service or in services duration provided for teachers (mean = 6.24). And, the third main component is the emotional intelligence of the teachers (mean = 6.20). Table 1 shows the mean of each component of qualities of good teachers.

It is clear that the most desirable qualities of teachers are their skills and knowledge. Skills and knowledge is deemed important to be amongst teachers. The educational system's role is to ensuring that teachers have the knowledge and capacity to deliver. In other words, teachers should develop a set of skills to perform effective teaching and learning.

It is also recognized now that training provided for teachers is essentially the contributing factors of qualities of good teachers. All the rapidly changing educational system recognizes the complexity and primacy of the challenges of the process of teaching and learning. Thus, providing training to the teachers help to sustain them and enhance professional development.

Nevertheless, the emotional intelligence amongst teachers has becoming one of the qualities identified to be of importance as yielded from the study. Teachers who honor their roles as leaders and mentors are constructive, supportive and adaptable within the framework of their own integrity and ethics. The clearly define the paradigm of quality of good teachers.

In sum, the investigation reveals that the desirable qualities amongst teachers are three most important qualities which are the teachers' skills and knowledge, the training program and teachers' emotional intelligence.

4.1 The best practices of transformational leadership

The results revealed the best practices of transformational leadership within the five components being examined. In order to conceptualize a comprehensive picture of the elements of transformational leadership, the key components were ranked. And, the most dominant component revealed is the desire for continuous learning, visionary, empowering, risk taking and value driven. Table 2 shows the mean for the five key components of the best practices of transformational leadership.

4.1.1 Desire for continuous learning

Transformational leadership adopts the attitudes of continuous learning. They are effective facilitator of the learning of individuals, teams, organizations and the community. They consistently create processes and opportunities for the teachers to learn. Another core aspect of these transformational leaders is the desire to raise consciousness of others by appealing them to learn. They believe human beings and their capacity to learn to become greater person. Hence, teachers who are at the influence of this transformational leadership believe their capacity to learn is their greatest asset and address great challenges. Ultimately, teachers express more satisfaction. This support the study of [Barnett and McCormick \(2003\)](#) that teachers expressed a high level of satisfaction if the environment is supportive to their learning.

4.1.2 Visionary

Transformational leaders lead with clear vision and passion. It can further achieve great things and it is felt the ways to get things done is by injecting enthusiasm and energy towards the teachers. They know exactly where to tell the teachers as where they are leading and set out targets. Transformational leaders articulate their goals and are aware of the current reality that they inspire the teachers to follow them. By being able to articulate a clear powerful and transformational agenda, they encourage teachers to be bold, innovative and creative. Subsequently, teachers broaden their interest and uplift their experience and willing to contribute to the betterment of the schools. The study by [Tim et al. \(2011\)](#) stated that the central aspect of transformational leadership is the inspiring vision and significantly move the subordinates.

4.1.3 Empowering

Transformational leaders admitted the tasks and responsibilities are simply overwhelming amongst teachers. They manifested a high of confidence in empowering. By empowering, they observe the intended outcomes could be more regardful and strongly believe it is the right strategy to be employed once they have set the mind right amongst the teachers. Transformational leaders involve empowering the teachers to be innovative and creative, approaching old problems in new ways. Eventually, teachers get jobs done independently and foster an inter-dependent relationship.

4.1.4 Risk taking

In risking taking, the transformational leaders remain up-front during his actions. They are always visible and will stand up to be counted rather than hide behind their troops even they know that bringing change to the development of the school would invite unpleasant reactions from the teachers. Thus, teachers reacted by speaking out their perspectives and their aspiration towards work. They are brave enough to venture into extremely challenging tasks in order to achieve improvement.

4.1.5 Value driven

What is excited about transformational leaders is that they have strong beliefs and are extra value driven. They are totally aware of their mission and focus in on education the school. They believe the conducive environment is the place to develop wholesome individuals. In reaction to that support, teachers are brought to a higher level of motivation and morality. Significantly, teachers identified the increased values in performing their responsibilities.

4.2 The best practices of transformational leadership and qualities of good teachers

It is also the aim of the study to examine into the best practices of transformational leadership in developing qualities of good teachers. Table 3 shows the relationship between the best practices of transformational leadership in developing qualities of good teachers.

It can be seen that the best practices such as desire of continuous learning, visionary and risk taking of transformational leadership has significant impact in developing the desirable qualities of good teachers. Table 3 shows the results of three best practices, namely the desire for continuous learning, visionary and

risk taking develop teachers with strong and significant qualities such as enhancing the skills and knowledge amongst teachers. As it was mentioned in the above section, transformational leaders whose contention that learning or rather continuous learning is essential amongst teachers. Hence, they themselves are prolific learning manager ([Kempster & Steward, 2010](#)), at the same time create and provide opportunities to enhance the learning attitudes. In a time when prevailing notions of teacher professional learning is still largely equate, some principles of teacher professional learning offered 20 years ago new to be placed right now ([Mockler, 2004](#)). The selected principles are:

- Incorporation of available knowledge bases
- Time to work on staff development and assimilate new learning
- Designs built on principles of adult learning and the change process

Interestingly, transformational leaders who practice empowering contribute significantly in the component of emotional intelligence amongst teachers. Empowering mean giving powers away. Lao-tzu said that giving power is the way to get more power ([Pielstick, 2006](#)). It reaffirms the belief that a transformational leader who empowers seek to make the school the place to be. The items which had been examined under the component of emotion intelligence are empathetic, self-regulation, and teachers' social skills. In brief, we can conclude that teachers who are in the culture and environment of transformational leadership learn to grow to be more self-aware. This quality is deemed important in the classroom as it provides a model for students, illustrating that such regulation is possible and desirable. It was supported by [Pounder and Coleman \(2002\)](#). The results also revealed that those value driven transformational leaders would contribute to the development of the teacher's personal characteristics which allows students to explain themselves and appreciate the freedom of choice for students to state their needs.

The investigation had revealed the possibilities of the best practices amongst transformational leaders in contributing to developing the desirable qualities of good teachers. Nonetheless, it is clear now that the influence of transformational leaders had on teachers. Hence, the practice of transformational leaders can actually expedite the transforming process of developing qualities of good teachers. However, these transformational practices could all be carried out at the discretion of individual teacher operating inside their classroom.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the findings on the contribution of transformational leadership towards developing quality of good teachers have indicated that there is a connection between the best practices of transformational leadership in developing quality of good teachers. It is also noted the best quality of teachers yielded from the study is the teachers' skills and knowledge. Teachers generally are expected to have in-depth subject knowledge. They are also expected to have equipped themselves with multiple skills in teaching with an additional adequate social skill to handle the classroom and challenges. Nonetheless, it can be said transformational leadership have great influence in developing quality of good teachers.

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Table(s)

Table 1: Main components of quality of good teachers

	Skills and Knowledge	Training Development	& Emotional Intelligence	Perspectives of a Teacher	Personal Characteristics
Mean	6.35	6.24	6.20	6.05	5.97
SD	.498	.594	.531	.628	.571

Table 2: Best practices of transformational leadership

	Desire for Continuous Learning	Visionary	Empowering	Risk Taking	Value Driven
Mean	5.71	5.62	5.59	5.54	5.36
SD	.986	1.005	1.020	.991	.897

Table 3: Best practices of transformational leadership and qualities of good teachers

	Perspectives of a Teacher	Personal Characteristics	Emotional Intelligence	Skill and Knowledge	Training & Development
Desire for Continuous Learning	.156	.249	.376	.421	.420
Visionary	.224	.268	.341	.397	.376
Empowering	.141	.288	.361	.322	.259
Risk Taking	.247	.322	.376	.407	.376
Value Driven	.189	.303	.331	.220	.183

Note: Number is indicate the Pearson Correlation's value