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Benefits of Transformational Leadership in the Context of Education

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Abstract

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Following expansive changes in the management of schools and the methods of organizing the teaching as well as the changes in the styles of leadership as the function of management, contemporary approaches to leadership: transactional, charismatic, transformational and interactive become more often the focus of research interest. Each of these theoretical approaches has far-reaching impacts and values not only in time but also in a certain context. However, in this paper we give priority to transformational leadership taking into consideration the claim that transformational leadership style is the most suitable for guiding the students within the school conditions. This type of claim has its stronghold in these three points: 1) the ethical dimension of transformational leadership, that is, the moral basis; 2) the validity of previous researches supported by evidence, and 3) evidences of the leaders' practice in the field of education.

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1. Introduction

Speaking of educational leadership Naylor (Naylor, 1999; Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015) defines it as a process of influencing employees to achieve organizational goals and organizational excellence. Leadership in an educational context is the ability of vision, respectively, a leader must have a clear vision of the institutions including the futuristic dimension of actions, taking into account the achievement of the desired state in the long run that he/she would divide with all the members at the institutional level but that would also further reflect and create new programs of teaching and learning as well as politics, priorities, plans and procedures which daily life of the institution is consisted of. Therefore, a key element of leadership in education is the ability to predict the future. Looking at Peretomode's (1991) understanding of the essence of leadership in education it boils down to the leader's exemplary and verbal inspiration of the system, through effective influence on behavior, thoughts and feelings of those who work within the education system and thus providing a strategic vision of creating alignment through the entire system. No matter how effective, every leader of complex institution such as academic institution is facing numerous obstacles that must be managed and "moderated" in order to succeed in his/her efforts.

For describing different leadership types in the functioning of educational institutions various adjectives are used in scientific literature (such as instructional, moral, democratic, participatory, transactional, transformative, distributed, strategic...). Among the many authors, Leithwood *et al* (2004) have pointed out that these designations primarily include various stylistic and methodological approaches in the implementation of two main goals that are crucial for the effectiveness of any organization: to help establishing a set of "reasonable" guidelines and thus influencing members to act according to these guidelines. According to them, the leadership in educational institutions is both simple and complex process. Of course, the effectiveness of leadership is perceived through the organization's success. Without diminishing the importance and benefits of other types of leadership for the adequate functioning of educational institutions and educational groups in it, in this paper, special attention is given to the advantages and benefits of transformational leadership in education, especially when it comes to directing the students within the school conditions.

2. Transformational leadership and ethical component

Burns' (1978) understanding of transformational leadership has shown that this theory is fundamentally different from other theories of leadership by its orientation to long-term vision, by its focus on personal followers' development and thus transformation of the followers into leaders and moral agents. By observing the literature review related to the leadership outcomes on the performance of educational institutions, it can be concluded about the high productivity of transformational leadership, which entails a change in the culture of the organization for the sake of its effectiveness and efficiency. This multidimensional construct has its theoretical foundation in the relationship theories that have been known as transformational theories, which focus on the relationship that is established between the leader and the follower. According to these theories, leadership is seen as a process

through which a person engages with others and is able to connect with others, resulting in enlargement of morale and motivation of both, leaders and followers.

Unlike the earlier theories of leadership, which did not include the ethical component, Burns (1978) connecting transformational leadership with higher-order values perceives morality as a crucial component. According to him, during the mutual interaction between transformational leaders and followers the level of morale and motivation of both is raised. According to this concept, during the interaction of leaders and followers their ethical aspirations are improved which is a sign that a true leadership occurs. By describing the characteristics of transformational leadership using moral concepts, Burns actually defines this style of leadership as a moral leadership. Yukl (2002) stated that only those who appeal to the high ideals, moral values and higher-order needs of followers can be called transformational leaders. Through charisma or idealized influence the leader expresses his/her beliefs, takes up attitudes and appeals to followers on an emotional level through a clear system of values that is presented in any action as soon as he/she becomes a model for followers. Trust between leaders and follower is built in that way that stands on solid moral and ethical grounds. Simola *et al.* (2012) define transformational leadership as a type of leadership in which interactions among interested parties are organized "around a collective purpose" in such a way that "transform, motivate and enhance the actions and ethical aspirations of followers." It can be concluded that our behavior is directed by the inherent system of moral values so that transformational leadership can be seen as a leadership style that leads to positive transformations and changes of the followers through the impact on the structure and strategy of the organization.

Presenting transformational approaches as opposed to transactional leadership regarding the ethical component in school settings was indicated by Millers (Miller & Miller, 2001, p. 182): "Transactional leadership is leadership in which relationships with teachers are based upon exchange for some valued resource. To the teacher, interaction between administrators and teachers is usually episodic, short-lived and limited to the exchange transaction. Transformational leadership is more potent and complex and occurs when one or more teachers engage with others in such way that administrators and teachers raise one another to higher levels of commitment and dedication, motivation and morality. Through the transforming process, the motives of the leader and follower merge."

Although the theories of the relationship are often compared with the charismatic leadership theories concerning the interaction between certain qualities of leaders and followers (such as trust, extraversion and accurately set values) and can be seen as the best possibilities to motivate followers, charisma still makes up only one part of the transformational leadership. Many years earlier Bass pointed it out by himself (1985) by defining transformational leadership as a way in which a leader influences followers, in terms of faith, admiration and respect for leaders. Even then, Bass established three possible ways in which leaders can influence followers: 1. raising awareness of the importance of the task and values; 2. focusing on team goals and organization rather than on own goals; 3. awakening of higher-order needs. Four component of transformational leadership are (Bass, 1985): 1) individualized consideration (leaders know follower personality including personal goals, strengths and developmental needs, 2) intellectual stimulation (constant improvement through constant challenge of the assumptions and values guiding "old" thought process), 3) inspirational motivation (motivating others to act in

accordance with the shared vision by leaders' communication skills, personal charisma, role-modeling and personal accomplishments) and 4) idealized influence (leaders' behavior that focused on instilling pride in followers). Through charisma, intellectual stimulation and individual appreciation, the leader transforms and motivates and encourages followers to find these and other unique ways to overcome the *status quo* and the variable environment in order to achieve the expected results. Thus, the relationship or transformational leaders motivates and inspires people by helping group members to recognize the importance of greater well-being of the tasks. This type of leaders' influence is often referred to in literature as "the generating of feelings" (Bass, 1999), which increases the awareness of leaders according to what is important and appropriate to the employees which in turn ensures the importance of what they do and this kind of leadership focuses on the process by which leaders can affect the performance and achievements of the group members but also to each group member individually to fulfill their potential. High moral and ethical standards are main characteristics of these leaders (Charry, 2012).

3. Researches of transformational school leadership

Leithwood (1994) contributed to the conceptualization of transformational leadership in educational environments. On the basis of seven quantitative studies he has take out following conclusion (Leithwood, 1994, p. 506): "Transformational leadership practices, considered as a composite construct, had significant direct and indirect effect on progress with school-restructuring initiatives and teacher-perceived student outcomes." Six dimensions to transformational school leadership are: 1) identifying and articulating a vision, 2) fostering the acceptance of group goals, 3) providing individualized support, 4) intellectual stimulation, 5) providing an appropriate model, and 6) high performance expectations (Leithwood, 1994; Geijsel, Slegers & Van Den Berg, 1999; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

By studying the effects of transformational leadership Leithwood *et al* (1999) have identified as many as 20 studies that provided evidence of the relationship between leadership and the teachers' outcomes. Many authors have found that transformational leadership consistently predicted the willingness of teachers to devote extra effort and change their teaching practices or attitudes. The most consistent findings associate transformational leadership with organizational learning, organizational effectiveness and organizational culture. Also, by studying the transformational leadership in the educational context, Leithwood *et al* (2004) draw attention to the necessity to change the school and classroom conditions in order to improve learning. Transformational leaders of the school, whether it comes to teachers or school principals, focus on the restructuring of schools/classrooms and improving conditions in the school.

In the last more than 20 years transformational leadership style in the school context became the subject of research interests and empirical examinations. After 1999, studies have been based on the examination of relationship between transformational leadership and numerous variables and showed that this style has positive impact on: satisfaction (Griffith, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Bolger, 2001) motivation (Griffith, 2004; Kruger, Witziers & Slegers, 2007), commitment (Geijsel, et. al., 2003; Yu, et. al., 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2002) professional growth (Kruger, et. al., 2007),

organizational conditions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000), school learning culture (Barnett, McCorminck & Conners, 2001; Kruger, et. al., 2007; Silins, Mulford & Zarins, 2002) school culture (Sahin, 2004; Barnett & McCormick, 2004), school climate (Blatt, 2002), bullying (Cemaloğlu, 2007), organizational health (Korkmaz, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008), bureaucratic school structure (Buluc, 2009), student achievement (Griffith, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Chin, 2007; Politis, 2001).

There are just a small number of research about leadership of teacher who "act" in the classroom as an educational group but there is a plenty of research on school leadership but mostly focused on formal positions of leaders, specifically the effects of principal and managers leadership on school climate (Crowther, et. al., 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Pounder, 2006; Treslan, 2006). Snell and Swanson (2000) argue that in literature about educational leadership there is a lack of "teachers' voice". In a world of growing complexity, the progress of schools must include the experience of teachers who are leaders in their classrooms but also the experience of the students.

Patterns of transformational leadership are harmonized with the organizational culture and structure of school and their impact on the meaning which people connect with their job and their volition and readiness to take risks of change. Teachers who practice transformational leadership style convince, inspire and motivate students towards the achievement of excellent results and that will not happen with the transactions, ie, with the rewarding and punishing but influencing on internal values and motivation of students and their modeling in accordance with the mission, vision and values of the school. Bartlett (Bartlett, 1990) and Senge (1990) pointed out that the learning process is change, and therefore learning is transformations. Finally, it seems appropriate to cite Sergiovani's (2007, p. 72) statement that transformational leadership in schools works "because it fits better the way in which schools are organized and work because of its ability to tap higher levels of human potential."

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the question of transformational leadership in education, exactly in school, is the question of great importance. Transformational leadership will improve schools, change teachers' classroom practices, enhances quality of teaching, student learning and achievement and student engagement as learning outcome. According to many authors, transformational approach proved to be very useful for educational organization. Studies in the area of school leadership point to the benefits of transformational leadership.

In specific terms, speaking of school principals, transformational principal leadership style is an important factor that relates to the teacher acceptance, better performance and increased job satisfaction at school. In other words, this leadership style of principals increases job satisfaction, creates positive school climate, enhances performance at school, involves in problem solving and decision making, develops quality at all levels, increases school members' commitment, capacity and engagement in meeting goals and improves teachers' acceptance, motivation, commitment and professional growth. Transformational leadership of teachers affects positively the learning outcomes of students, and primarily relates to the development of high-quality learning and teaching in schools. It focuses at its core on improving learning and representing a mode of leadership based on the principles of

professional cooperation, development and growth. Teachers and leaders govern the classroom and beyond, identifying and contributing to the community of teachers and influencing others in order to improve educational practice.

Speaking about teachers, their transformational leadership style is an important factor that impact student satisfaction, motivation, empowerment and learning and it is style where students' active engagement in developing knowledge and skills, critical thinking, higher-order skills, and communication are facilitated by the teacher. It includes greater teacher commitment to school, higher satisfaction, higher collective efficacy, effectiveness of teaching, student engagement in teaching activities, participation in decision making, self-efficacy, self-confidence, academic self-concept, and aspects of self-esteem. The benefits of transformational leadership style of teachers comprises in empowering and increasing student motivation, enhance learning and engagement of students, experiencing success, improving students' performance and achievement, developing quality of relations in classroom etc. It can be said that the essence of transformational leadership consists in looking up at encouraging growth and development of members of the education group (of teachers/students) and strengthening their commitment by highlighting their goals. In comparison to all other theoretical frameworks (such as instructional) transformational leadership provides a powerful theoretical framework for the interpretation of the behavior of principals/teachers because thinking about principals/teachers as transformational leaders directs researchers to study workplace conditions. It also refers to the professionalism of teachers in decision-making at the level of school organization and the level of educational groups. This approach recognizes that the funding and operation objectives of the teacher cannot be determined with certainty in advance.

The focus should be on creating a positive school climate for all participants in educational process which would make the school a “better place for living and learning” and that can be achieved by the practice of transformational leadership style. *Transformational leadership is very substantial for schools to move forward.*

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