## Transformational Educational Leadership: A Review of Relevant Literature with a Focus on Implications and Recommendations for Good Practice

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**Abstract**

*Educational leadership is a position that demands high-level skills and knowledge. The present paper attempts to summarize a few major aspects of transformational educational leadership. The paper first starts by briefly introducing the historical background of educational leadership in general and transformational leadership in particular. The paper then defines transformational leadership, focusing on the theory's main elements and its behavioural implications. Several relevant research is then introduced. The paper concludes by emphasizing the significance and effectiveness of the theory in the educational field. Finally, implications and recommendations for good practices are presented for further application.*

## 1. EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The concept of educational leadership has undergone several changes since it was first introduced. According to Owings (2012), a shift took place from focusing on personality traits to skills acquired through knowledge and practice. Moreover, another shift that took place is related to the leader's role in a collaborative environment instead of the leader's role in isolation. A successful leader is not one that can make decisions, but one that can help members become decision-makers in order to achieve progress in the organization (Owings, 2012). Murphy (2018) believes that a leader must encourage teamwork and collaboration. Gordon, Taylor-Backor, and Croteau (2017) highlighted the major aspects of the shift in a leadership roles to include a focus on community, collaboration, and professional-ethical behavior. As far as the educational setting is considered, a leader's role is not only limited to administrative issues anymore but should also include teaching practices and classroom instructions as well (Murphy, 2018). The educational leader must be involved in all the issues related to the institute such as curriculum, classroom practice, and assessments, along with administrative issues.

One of the notable theories in educational leadership is Fullan's (Stoll, 2006 & Datnow, 2006). Fullan believes that a good leader must be capable of creating a context where members can share their vision and develop creative ideas and skills. He strongly believes in collaboration between the leader and the team, in addition to possessing high-level

cognitive skills, good communication skills, and a high level of moral actions (Stoll, 2006). Fullan made a significant contribution to educational leadership (Stoll, 2006). Datnow (2006) stated that Fullan "has provided us with much food for thought about the future directions of the field of educational change" (p. 135). According to Fullan, change is a never-ending complex act. His theory is based on the idea that a leader's task is not to make others change but to create a context in which others can share their visions and develop new skills. He believes that leaders must work collaboratively to make the required change happen.

Another major figure in the field is Peter Senge (Fillion, Koffi, & Ekionea, 2015). Senge's ideas are also based on the concept of 'change' but from a system's perspective. He emphasized the importance of creating a less controlled working environment. Senge stressed the significance of the power of learning and developing members' commitment (Fillion, Koffi & Ekionea, 2015). Senge's ideas are based on success resulting from a less controlled environment that provides good learning opportunities. His goal is to focus on ways to create and share new ideas and knowledge. According to him, the organization's main focus should be on developing its members' commitment and ability to learn in different dimensions.

A major change that took place in educational leadership was the introduction of the model of collaboration in general and the idea of transformational leadership in particular. The theory has emerged as one of the most dominant leadership theories. Transformational leadership was and is still considered one of the major theories developed in the field. The theory aims to inspire, encourage and motivate members toward a common goal. The theory provides leaders with the major concepts and ways of implementing them to reach a more effective leadership practice (HA-VIKSTRÖM, 2018).

## 2. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

James MacGregor Burns introduced transformational leadership in 1978 as a model based on collaboration among leaders and their team members (Burns, 1978 & Conger, 1999). Burns's (1978) focus was on increasing team members' motivation through engagement in the organization's vision. Bass (1990) defined a transformational leader as a person with characteristics that motivate employees to be committed to their organization's goals and objectives. Bass and others provided evidence from the literature indicating that transformational leadership is one of the most effective leadership styles (Alrsheidi, 2021). Bass (1985) also found a positive relationship between transformational leadership, followers' ratings of leader effectiveness, and followers' satisfaction ratings.

Bass (1985) defined the four components of transformational leadership as charisma/idealized Influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Bass and Avolio (2004) and Bass and Riggio (2006) further defined these four factors in relation to transformational leadership. Idealized influence refers to the leader's ability to affect others and build loyalty to the organization. Inspirational motivation refers to when a leader works to enhance the members' motivation. Intellectual stimulation is where leaders challenge traditional assumptions to encourage positive behaviour and provide guidance to members. Finally, individualized consideration considers the individual's skills

and needs. The following figure illustrates these four factors as presented by Bass and Bass (2008).
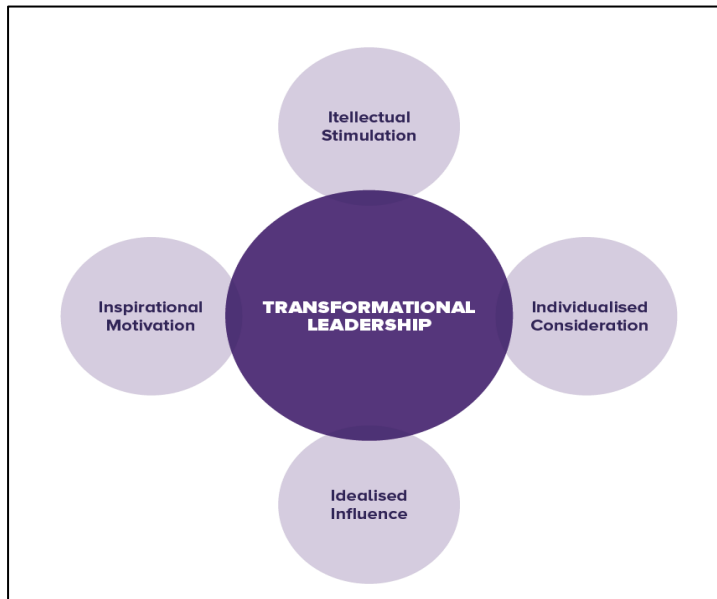


*Figure 1:* Transformational Leadership's Factors (Bass & Bass, 2008)

The following section elaborates on each component and provides behavioral examples to illustrate each element further.

## 3. ELEMENTS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Bass and Bass (2008) identified the four elements mentioned above as part of the transformational leadership framework. Several behavioural practices were identified for better implications for transformational leadership, see Figure 2.

### 3.1. Idealized Influence

Idealized influence is the leader's ability to positively influence the members' behaviours by exhibiting high morals and showing respect to all members (Bass, 1985 & Zdaniuk & Bobocel, 2015). In other words, leaders must act as role models (Flanagan, 2019). As a result, members will start to follow their leaders who act honestly and truthfully (Abun et al., 2020).

### 3.2. Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation is reflected in leaders' behaviours by being optimistic and enthusiastic in communicating and implementing their shared vision (Bass, 1985). Leaders inspire others through personal skills, knowledge, and self-confidence (Wodehouse, 2018). Inspirational motivation is not the act of simply telling but encouraging members to implement change and face different challenges (Abun et al., 2020).

### 3.3. Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation refers to the act of encouraging members to solve problems, question beliefs, and be innovative and productive (Bass, 1985). Members are given the chance to become decision-makers by involving them in solving the organization's problems creating a sense of belongingness (Abun et al., 2020).

### 3.4. Individualized Consideration

Individualized consideration is an action created when leaders are capable of listening effectively and delegating tasks successfully (Bass & Avolio, 2004). This kind of behavior can help in establishing a supportive environment where individual differences are respected and utilized (Bass, 1998). Moreover, this type of environment can help in developing members' needs to bring out the best in them (Abun et al., 2020 & Vahalik, 2022). The following figure illustrates the four elements along with their behavioral skills.
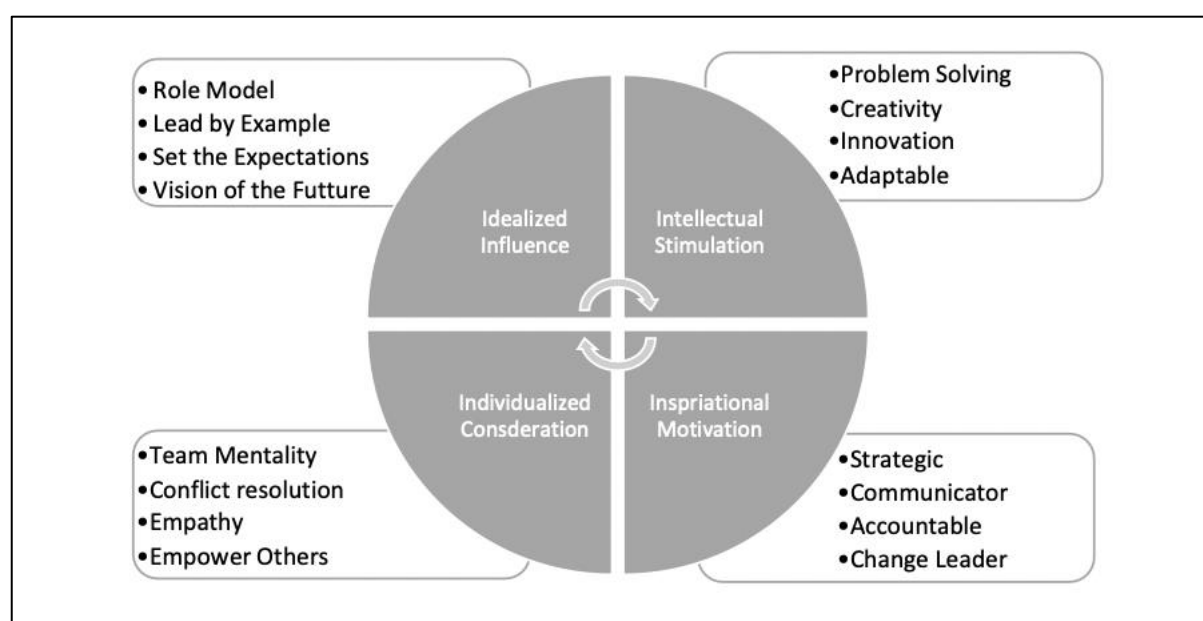


*Figure 2:* Transformational Leadership Elements and Behavioral Skills (Crefton, 2022)

### 3.5. The Transformational Leadership Style's Implications

The transformational leadership theory still exists as one of the most "central and most influential leadership models in the field of education administration" (Berkovich, 2016, p. 609). The theory was further developed to include concepts related to moral standards, using reasoned, persuasive appeals, and creating high ethical standards. It is an approach still adopted by leaders to help increase members' motivation, morale, beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions and to increase their commitment, capacity, and engagement in the organization to foster positive change that can impact the whole organization (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Northouse,

2001; Warrick, 2011; Northouse, 2015 & Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Transformational leadership is considered an ideal school leadership system and has become a standard curriculum in most principal training programs (Berkovich, 2016). According to White (2022), the transformational leadership theory is still relevant and strong in educational settings.

When reviewing the literature, many studies investigated the role of transformational leadership (Basham, 2012; Boateng, 2015; Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Phaneuf et al., 2016; Liborius, 2017; Pham-Thai, 2017 & Ndlovu, Ngiranda, Setati, & Zhuwao, 2018). These studies were a mix of both quantitative (Boateng, 2015; Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Liborius, 2017; Ndlovu et al., 2018) and qualitative (Basham, 2012). Other studies have examined how transformational leadership helped achieve positive results and improve higher education settings (Boateng, 2015; Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Pham-Thai, 2017).

Several studies have focused on the positive relationship that exists between transformational leadership and good performance (Howell & Avolio, 1993; Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994 & Herold, et al., 2008). Transformational leadership was found to play an effective role in leading to employees' overall satisfaction in their workplace, eventually leading to better job performance (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015). The theory is widely recognized as an effective way to elicit positive performance and job satisfaction among members (Hater & Bass, 1988; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wolfram & Mohr, 2009; Alamir et al., 2019 & Alrsheidi, 2021).

Jyoti, and Bhau (2016) examined transformational leadership with 392 teachers working in higher education at ten different colleges. Their findings showed that transformational leaders create a better understanding of the workplace. Pham-Thai (2017) also found transformational leadership to affect innovation and high performance positively. Pham-Thai (2017) surveyed 394 pairs of educators and their administrators to investigate the effects of transformational leadership on their job engagement, innovation, and performance. Findings indicate that employees' engagement and performance increased when transformational leadership was implemented. According to Pham-Thai, transformational leadership was found to be of great importance, especially in higher education, in helping achieve the institution's goals and mission.

Sun and Leithwood (2017) found that transformational leadership practices positively influenced teacher competence, commitment, trust, and efficacy. Williams (2018) developed a quantitative study that examined the relationship between principal leadership style and teacher motivation, among other aspects. His findings show a positive correlation between leadership style and teachers' motivation. Transformational leadership significantly increases teachers' autonomy (Vahalik, 2022).

Bambang (2018) conducted an experimental study on two groups of 40 principals and 240 teachers. Bambang's findings indicate that teachers' motivation, teamwork, and the overall school environment improved when transformational leadership was implemented. In another study conducted by Alamgir et al. (2019), the impact of transformational leadership on organizational commitment in higher education in Syria was examined with a focus on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Findings indicate that transformational leadership positively affects employees' job satisfaction (Alrsheidi, 2021). Similarly, Baba (2019) studied

transformational leadership in high education using 719 questionnaires. Their analysis indicates that improving transformational leadership attributes positively improved the work environment.

Bunce (2021) reported that when transformational leadership was implemented, faculty members felt valued and performed better. The main focus of the study was on how transformational leaders were able to share their vision and foster growth. The study emphasized the acts of sharing the organization's vision with all members, good communication, and encouragement. Findings indicate that a positive state of mind occurred when leaders engaged and supported faculty members. The study suggested that transformational leadership helped faculty members to feel respected and valued by their leaders, who took the time to listen to their opinions and thoughts.

Moreover, the study emphasized the importance of the flexibility of their leaders, the feedback they received, and their belief in their abilities to create a positive work environment. Merry, Noureen, and Noshaba (2022) investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and 510 university teachers' performance focusing on intrinsic motivation. A positive relationship was found between transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation. The researchers reported that the transformational leadership style inspired employees and ensured their job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization.

Moreover, many studies have reported that successful leaders in educational settings significantly influence students' performance (Jambo & Hoongde, 2020; Karadag, 2020; Mosley, 2020; Tebogo, 2020 & Stronge & Zu, 2021). Cheng and Chin (2022) used a meta-analysis and the structural equation model to explore the relationship between principals' transformational leadership, teachers' behaviour, and schools' effectiveness. The researchers examined 47 journal articles and doctoral and master's papers. Findings indicate a significant positive correlation between the three aspects under investigation. The principals' transformational leadership style was found to positively impact teachers' behaviour, which eventually positively affected the schools' environment.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed in this paper strongly indicates the significance of the transformational leadership theory in the educational field. Transformation theory was found to positively impact members, including their values, attitudes, and behaviours resulting from a feeling of being understood and appreciated (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo 2005). The transformational leadership theory also helped in building an organized working team that thrives to achieve the institution's goals and vision (Ewell, 2018). The theory was successful in fostering enthusiasm in the workplace and creating a more positive environment where employees demonstrate a sense of institutional identity and a constructive relationship with their leaders (Udin, 2020). The theory is, therefore one of the most effective theories that should be strongly considered in educational systems and put into implementation for a successful work environment.

## 5. Recommendations

The transformational leadership theory's strength lies in its ability to create a positive working environment where members work in a context where the hierarchy and standardized procedures carry less power (Campbell, 2018). In addition, transformational leadership generates strong interpersonal ties, a sense of collective efficacy, and cooperation among members (Campbell, 2018). However, implementing transformational leadership requires extra effort in addition to extra time. The process also requires more self-control (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Breevaart and Bakker suggested that daily cognitive demand and workload are basic factors to be considered for a successful transformational leadership implementation. Leaders are, therefore, expected to stay close to members, be aware of all details and consider individuals' demands at all dimensions. Some practical implementations include developing future educational leadership programs that can be introduced in educational settings. These programs should be directed to leaders to help them develop a number of skills, including the ability to connect for positive relationships, motivation, and bringing the team together to create a mutual goal (Hallowell, 2011; Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Pham Thai, 2017). According to Mezirow (1991), leaders must understand how faculty feel to motivate change, a goal that can only be achieved through good communication and connection (Hallowell, 2011).

Moreover, leaders should develop the ability to make faculty members feel respected and valued by including everyone in meetings and discussions (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Pham Thai, 2017). According to Pham Thai (2017), organizations became successful when faculty members were engaged and inspired to become more creative and innovative. Another point to consider is the ability to be supportive. Jyoti and Bhau (2015) found that members act better in overcoming difficulties and challenges when leaders are supportive. Considering all these points is expected to lead to an effective positive work environment.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The present paper attempts to review related literature and highlight some important aspects to be implemented in educational leadership systems. To sum up, it is recommended that leadership training is implemented systematically to enhance transformational leadership (Merry, Noureen & Noshaba, 2022). The following list indicates some points to be considered:

- Leaders should reflect on their leadership style.
- Leaders must be able to understand their strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders should attend regular training on best practices and effective leadership skills.
- Leaders need to understand programs well to contribute to increasing the program quality.
- Leaders should work closely with staff and focus on developing good communication skills.
- Leaders should develop the ability to receive new information and adapt to change.

The implementation of these points is to be considered by stakeholders and is expected to lead to better practice.

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