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Transformational Leadership for Schools: A review of existing Literature

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Abstract

Education system deals with extraordinary state/government accountability for school performance and student attainment in Qatar. Education system, especially the schools have started to operate more like businesses or corporations with more complex management and leadership styles. Leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring schools progress and is a critical part to promote teachers' performance. It is an obligation of the school leaders to make sure that teachers are satisfied at work and perform their tasks to their fullest potential. However, every school leader has different management skills, styles of leadership to guarantee successful functioning of schools. A review of management literature suggests that transformational leadership theory has been studies and discussed the most in the new era. Transformational theory has been extensively utilized in school leadership system in education. Education leaders in Qatar may get the advantage from training and implementing in transformational leadership styles established to boost performance in business as well as educational organizations. Most researchers consider transformational leadership as an appropriate leadership style for today's schools. Transformational leadership encourages the motivation of followers, build a vision to bring the change by inspiring them, and foster an ethical work environment with clear standards. With these interests in mind, this article discusses transformational leadership in schools and its impact on teachers' performance. The purpose of the study is to help schools in emerging a deeper knowledge of the transformational leadership approach need to make school leaders to produce constructive modification in their educational sector. Secondly, the aim of this study is to ascertain the individual transformational leadership practices that would enhance staff performance and schools' progress.

1. Introduction

The modern environment, within which a school works, faces rapid growth and change. This development represents a challenge for schools in responding to this change effectively while maintaining a positive outlook and avoiding being stagnant. Therefore, it is essential that leaders/principals possess pleasant and charismatic personality traits with broad vision to inspire their followers. Leaders with transformational leadership style combine these qualities that ignite enthusiasm among teachers to ensure optimal progress by the use of their talents and competences to the highest level leading to better teachers' performance (Abu-Tineh & Sadiq, 2018) [2]. According to research data, it has been proved that transformational leadership yields positive outcomes on schools' environment, as well as on teachers' performance by resulting job satisfaction (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Lin Tengi *et al.*, 2017) [26, 27, 28, 29]. Moreover, the enhanced teachers' performance can have a significant effect on students' as well as whole school progress (Balyer *et al.*, 2017) [12].

Educational institutes in Qatar seek to attain a competitive edge; therefore, the focus is on the maximum utilization of staff (MERatings-Middle East Credit Rating Agency, 2019) [31]. The transformational leadership in this study, based on the traits of transformational leadership, suggests Qatar's school leaders' approach to provide positive and supportive work environment to their staff and school to achieve the best performance from teachers and eventually improve the overall performance of

schools. Qatar has introduced new educational reforms in recent years due to substantial shifts in many aspects of global community ("Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016 Towards Qatar National Vision 2030," 2011) [35], One of the key elements in most of these reforms is educational leadership, which plays as a leading aspect of such educational development initiatives which promises several positive outcomes. These reforms have initiated various alterations thereby requiring principals to combat challenges in their role of leading and administering the schools. Therefore, with all these changes and challenges, it is anticipated that transformational leadership may help principals to tackle the issues that might eventually impact teachers' performance. The aim of this research is to contribute to the apprehension that is highlighted with the regard to the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' performance. Extant review of articles reveals that transformational leadership has been researched more than all other leadership styles (Quin *et al.*, 2015) [36].

2. Literature review

The term transformational leadership was invented by James MacGregor Burns in his book, Leadership, in 1978. According to Burns, transformational leadership transforms followers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, inspire and motivate them to improve their performance to meet organizational expectations; and boost self-esteem and trust through charisma (Ramendran *et al.*, 2020) [37]. Bass (1980) further developed it by explaining that transformational leaders create a supportive environment where followers respect individual differences, encourage relations with followers with the leaders' awareness of individual needs (Nurtjahjani *et al.*, 2020) [32].

Kenneth Leithwood leadership model (1994) provides the revolutionary research on Transformational leadership styles in educational settings. Leithwood suggests transformational leadership style be exercised and introduced as elements of principal training programs. In his study, he found a total of 121 articles discusses about leadership that proves extensive research has been done about the effective of transformational leadership in schools. He described transformational leadership along six elements: structuring school vision and goals; offering intellectual stimulation; contributing individualized support; representing professional practices; indicating high performance potentials; and evolving structures to foster contribution in school decisions (Leithwood & Sun, 2012) [28].

According to Nurtjahjani *et al.*, (2020) [32] it has been proven that transformation leaders is capable to inspire followers by establishing the meaning and the importance of work through words and actions in education sector. Transformational leadership has shown a positive impact on teachers ' motivation and this ensures students' academic progress. Furthermore, Kouni *et al.*, (2018) [23] suggest that transformational leadership is strongly correlated with positive work attitude and satisfied employees. In the context of educational sector, principals act as transformational leaders which leads to better educational outcomes through teachers' performance at work. The survey results revealed that teachers' performance at work is significantly improved when principals act as transformational leaders.

Leadership in education

The leadership and actions of an educational leader impact the goals and accomplishments of educational organizations considerably. The appropriate leadership style becomes an important factor for educational leaders as they need to deal with the needs of students, staff, curriculum and many other factors thus maintaining balance in performing all these functions is crucial for the attainment of the vision of the organizations (Earley & Greany, 2017) [18].

Moreover, education sector of developing nations has been transformed to a certain extent by increased globalization that has changed these nations socially, political and economically (J. M. Adams & Velarde, 2020) [5]. Cultural diversity is also a challenge for educational leaders due to specific differences that leads to miscommunication (Walker & Riordan, 2010) [40]. Hence, it is important for educational leaders to identify the best way to manage and lead a diverse team to ensure success rate to the institutions. Thus, Walker & Riordan (2010) [40] suggests that the role of leadership is vital to the success of educational organizations especially for those with cultural diversity.

Scholars, practitioners and policymakers all come towards a common consensus that improved performance of educational institutions depends on educational leadership. Hence, more attention to the leadership style has been paid to successful educational leaders (Adam *et al.*, 2017) [3]. Odhiambo & Hii (2012) [33], in their research on key stakeholder' perceptions of school leadership, found that educational leaders must maintain contact with all stakeholders, facilitate stakeholders to communicate, provide positive work environment, aware of problems and improve the progress and reputation of the educational institute.

Traditional leadership theories by Frederick Taylor (1909) and Max Weber (1904) where the focus was on the end products and on authority and power (Abu-Shawish, 2016) [1], have been replaced by the notion of 'people to people' relationships due to current developments in educational sector and market changes. The main emphasis is now on creation of relationship of employees in tasks oriented environment (Berdayes, 2010) [15]. Based on contemporary leadership theories, heads of educational institutions are suggested to act more like change agents by attempting to transform organizations by restructuring, setting visions and missions, and to inspire and motivate people (Balyer *et al.*, 2017) [12].

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership theory (BM Bass, 1990) [13], the foundational theory of this study, involves motivating employees to perform beyond expectations. Transformational leadership has drawn the focus of several researchers in the field of leadership within different types of organizations (B. Bass & Riggio, 2010; Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2017) [14, 22]. According to Burns (1978) [16], one of the first supporters of the transformational leadership model, transformational leaders enhance their employees' level of awareness, and also leads to better performance by inspiring them that results in the attainment of organizational goals (Lai *et al.*, 2020) [24]. Therefore, the research has revealed that transformational leadership produces positive outcomes to organizations.

Transformational leadership is the leader's ability to influence employees to improve their mindfulness regarding the importance of work and to prioritize their interest and emphasise on employees' attainment of a better life (Nurtjahjani *et al.*, 2020) [32]. Transformational leaders inspire followers promising an optimistic future, using an approach to guide employees to work towards specific directions to achieve the desirable objectives (González-Cruz *et al.*, 2019) [19].

Bass and Avolio (1995) further conceptualized four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. He proposed that these elements boost followers' awareness and dedication and provide support and inspiration. From this perspective, transformational leadership style has the power to shift supporters' beliefs and improve their emotional wellbeing by giving importance to the subordinates, which benefits the leaders to develop emotional attachment to their workplace has the ability to shift the supporters' beliefs and values and improve their emotional wellbeing (Adams & Velarde, 2020) [5]. These attributes are rare in all other leadership styles that make transformational leadership style most appropriate for the present study. Transformational leadership helps in changing the followers' attitudes in order to achieve organizational goals (Mccleskey, 2014). Compared to other leadership styles, transformational leadership is people-oriented and advocates that organizational success is achieved by employees through honest commitment and dedication; and those employees are the product to transform organizations.

Transformational leadership in education
Research data show that transformational leadership positively impact schools' progress, teachers' behaviours and emotional well-being, their motivation and job satisfaction, and also students' performance, hence it suggests that transformational leadership is effectively applied in educational set up (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Lin Tengi *et al.*, 2017) [27, 28, 29]. Leithwood (2012) [28] proposes that transformational leadership style guarantees to improve school leadership's competence to make the essential renovations in educational organizations that assist in meeting stakeholders' accountability and in fulfilling the requirement of improved performance. Therefore, Leithwood suggests that transformational leadership approaches should be exercised by school leaders and be incorporated in principals training programs (Anderson, 2017) [9].

Education leaders and transformational leadership
It is the responsibility of the educational leaders to transform school culture to meet the demands of different stakeholders. The viewpoint of transformational leadership asserts that leaders always inspire employees to encourage them to perform better and to exceed expectations and to bring a constructive change by motivating them towards higher levels of performance (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2016). They suggest that transformational leadership traits lead employees to put more trust in their leaders, resulting in enhanced employees' performance. According to Anderson (2017) [9], transformational leadership encourages employees in schools to participate in different educational programs, improve existing skills and to develop new skills to achieve

extraordinary performance.

The transformational leadership has four main components; individualized consideration which identifies that leaders listen to the concerns and needs of their followers, show empathy and provide support by acting as a mentor, a coach or a guide to them (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019) [38]. In the same line, intellectual stimulation describes a behaviour that challenges leaders to re-evaluate assumptions, take risks and beseech followers' ideas. Leaders support the subordinate to try new methods and to create innovative ways of handling organizational matters (Al-Mansoori & Koç, 2019) [8]. Another characteristic identifies that these leaders have inspirational motivation which is a level to which leader conveys an engaging vision to inspire and motivate followers and to give them a sense of confidence to perform beyond expectations. Likewise, the idealized influence identifies that these leaders are exemplars for their followers because they participate in high levels of moral and ethical behaviour (Yin *et al.*, 2020) [41]. These leaders show have impressive communication skills and gain followers' trust and respect by inspiring them. Consequently, transformational leadership shows strong association with employees' (Jensen *et al.*, 2020) [20].

Transformational leadership traits displayed by principals plays a vital role in the improvement of schools where principals focus is to build a culture of a 'shared vision'. Transformational leadership strives to create an environment where employees can think innovatively and establish 'shared vision' to work collectively towards the achievement of it, hence developing transformational leadership skills for principals is of paramount importance (Arokiasamy *et al.*, 2016; Burns & Harper, 1978) [11, 16].

Transformational leadership in schools and teachers' performance
Ensuring high level of employee performance in general becomes more a challenge due to the continuous development and increase of market standards (Vosloban, 2012) [39]. The impact that employee performance has on organizations success has attracted a lot of attention among researchers. For organizations to maximize their competence in prevailing markets, employees need to perform their duties and be efficient in them (Maamari & Saheb, 2018) [30]. According to Armstrong, 2010 the utmost responsibility of leaders is ensure high employee performance as it is the critical aspect of organizational efficiency. Employee performance is important in all organizations, but its importance increases specifically in educational organizations because the crucial role played by teachers in creating and nurturing future generations that can promote the country and the society. Thus, teachers' performance is vital as it contributes to the schools and increases the efficiency of the education sector (Kaur *et al.*, 2015) [21].

The philosophy of transformational leadership is to inspire employees to accomplish goals, to achieve better outcomes and to bring a positive change by motivating them towards higher performance levels (Pendidikan *et al.*, 2018) [34]. In educational organizations, teachers look at principals with transformational leadership style as role models and appreciate principals for inspiring teachers by showing trust in them (Balyer *et al.*, 2017) [12]. According to Balyer *et al.* (2017) [12] transformational leadership brings positive changes in organizations as it allows teachers to use their expertise to carry out their tasks and to feel more assured by

demonstrating higher performance. Studies show that transformational leadership leads to greater job commitment and improves the performance (González-Cruz *et al.*, 2019) [19].

3. Discussion
It is evident from earlier research that transformational leadership helps teachers in their professional development, with the provision of individualized support that contributes to their progress (Akhtar *et al.*, 2019; Burroughs *et al.*, 2019; Lai *et al.*, 2020b; Quin *et al*., 2015; Torlak & Kuzey, 2019) [6, 17, 25, 36, 38]. Transformational leadership generates contentment at work as it is connected to higher level of motivation conforming to the teachers' desires for acknowledgement, appreciation, sense of achievement, self-actualisation, independence (Bentea *et al.*, 2012). Transformational leadership creates strong interpersonal relationships among teachers and principals. Since transformational leaders can correspond to the requirement for change and inspire followers, which has fascinated the interest of the government over the last years, in order to execute reforms, requires transformational leadership (Leithwood, 1994) [26].

Transformational leadership style has confirmed to be a useful method to improve the performance of educational system. Schools have come into an era where the performance of teachers has extraordinary accountability for the overall school performance. This expands the responsibilities of leadership and management as well to meet the benchmarks decided by the government and the stakeholders. Therefore, it is rational and essential to explore the leadership styles that will improve the ability of educational leaders to lead schools effectively. The transformational leadership style is endorsed by eras of research on the significant positive influence of leadership style in boosting performance in school settings.

The literature reviewed effectively highlights that the transformational leadership style is a sustainable choice for educational leaders pursuing to transform schools to meet the demands of stakeholders. The capability of the leadership style as an efficient tool to bring a positive change in schools' system and teachers' performance has been recognized by researchers during the past two decades. The success of transformational leadership in business organizations as well as in school settings is well acknowledged by researchers. However, literature review does not show any negative link with the transformation leadership hence negative aspects have to be studied to offer a thorough understanding of the effectiveness and limitations to the application of this leadership style in school settings. Insight into the positives and negatives of transformational leadership style will facilitate educational leaders to structure training and development programs. The literature reviewed successfully highlights that teacher perception of principal leadership had great impact on teachers' performance and job satisfaction. It shows that high achieving schools with exceeding expectations are resulting from the use of transformational leadership traits by principals. More knowledge could be acquired by researchers by discovering other countries using transformational leadership in schools to help them to get a deeper understanding of utilizing transformational leadership style in educational set up.

Overall, based on the theories of transformational that have been presented by different researchers, transformational leadership style plays an important role in improving the effectiveness of the leadership of school leaders. Therefore, leaders of schools in Qatar will benefit with the provision of adequate acquaintance and training to enrich their leadership in order to implement more effective leadership in schools. This will also help to achieve the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV2030) to improve the abilities of Qatari citizens by proving world-class education system that offers exceptional prospects for quality education and training.

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