A Review of Teacher Transformational Leadership in Higher Education: The Fourth Wave of Teacher Leadership

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Abstract

Transformational leadership offers world-wide scholars a new paradigm to leadership research, and it occupies a central place in leadership research and is rendered as a crucial indicator of promoting students' academic outcomes. This literature review sought to provide a general picture of transformational leadership as well as its application in higher education context, through which its readers can have a better understanding of what has been done about the topic and what remains to be done in the future. It can be seen that the examination of the existing literature further confirmed the validity and effectiveness of teacher transformational leadership in higher educational settings.

Key words: Transformational leadership; Higher education; Student academic outcomes

INTRODUCTION

China has already entered an era of national participation in higher education with college enrollment and attendance on the rise, but college students' performance is on the wane. Educational policies in China stay focus on how to get students admitted into college, but fail to expound on what expectations it need to let students well prepared for future social life and occupational careers. As a result, students idle their college days away with decreased motivation to learn. Insufficient motivation or demotivation will lead to unsatisfactory learning results or even complete failures. Thusly, in faces of such severe situations of college students' demotivation or insufficient motivation, effective teachers can exert a direct influence on students' motivation and thereafter their learning (Jaasma & Koper, 1999; Richmond, 1990). Effective teachers are not only the information disseminators but also the classroom managers in fostering a welcoming environment of warmth, safety, acceptance, and genuineness where the students become more self-initiated, self-confident, self-directed, and less anxious learner (Rogers, 1983). In this sense, teachers much like organizational leaders can provide leadership in the college classrooms to influence a group of individuals (students) to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2010).

Many scholars across the world have done numerous research from the perspective of teacher leadership which is believed to have a direct influence on student academic learning, performance, and persistence (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009, 2010, 2011; Harvey, Stout & Royal, 2004; Pounder, 2008). Those scholars have placed more emphasis on the teachers' roles as classroom leaders because effective teachers are more than the knowledge disseminators in this technology-rich era as they did in the past with the students passively listening and the teachers

constantly lecturing for most of the time. Effective teachers are more like the classroom managers who provide leadership influencing the students' study towards their shared learning goals (Northouse, 2010). According to Chory & McCrosky (1999), teachers can be learning facilitators, conflict managers, resource allocators, and motivators in the process of student learning, etc. Thus, recent studies about teacher leadership have been in exponential growth because it is of great necessity for the teaching career but also critical significance to the educational reform efforts (Sergiovanne & Starratt, 1998).

Some of these studies have prima-facie relevance to education; for instance, the research of Slater and Narver (1995), Farrell (2000) and Coad and Berry (1998) indicated a link between transformational leadership and enhanced subordinate learning. This link is especially important given increasing criticism of the quality of teaching provided by educational establishments, particularly in the university sector. For example, the recent Arum and Roska (2011) report found that a large proportion of students in the US higher education system made little progress in terms of critical thinking and deep reasoning capacities, and communicating skills in writing as a result of their four-year university experience. Similarly, the following observation taken from The Guardian Higher Education Network is typical of a general concern about university teaching quality in British universities: "A revolution in teaching is needed to meet the needs of people relying on university education to help secure their future. More innovative approaches to teaching across the whole range of subjects are important in delivering employability" (Tatlow, 2012). Likewise, referring to the Australian higher education system, a report by the Gratton Institute (Norton, 2013) found that Australian students "rarely reported being pushed to do their best work, are often not actively participating in classes, and have little interaction with academic staff outside of class" (Norton, 2013). Henard and Roseveare (2012), in a recent publication commissioned by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development that examined the quality of university teaching generally in higher education, stated the following:

> Quality teaching in higher education matters for student learning outcomes. But fostering quality teaching presents higher education institutions with a range of challenges at a time when the higher education sector is coming under pressure from many different directions. Institutions need to ensure that the education they offer meets the expectations of students and the requirements of employers, both today and for the future. (p.3)

Aside from confirming the current spotlight on teaching, the authors also noted that there was no easy solution to the issue of enhancing university teaching and it was against this background that development in teacher leadership should be viewed. It is argued in this paper that teacher leadership in the classroom is one possible way forward for universities and colleges under pressure to improve the quality of teaching.

1. TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Originally, some administrators such as the principals or deans in higher education institutions are supposed to embrace leadership, but as time goes by, the roles teachers shoulders have gradually evolved by integration of both teaching and leadership. Thus the new term teacher leadership came into being, referring to "the exercise of leadership by teachers disrespecting their position or designation" (Frost & Harris, 2003), with a focus on the improvement of learning (Harris & Muijs, 2003, p.40). Teacher leaders can contribute to the school reforms, offer mentorship to their colleagues' professional development, and get actively engaged in problem-solving at the school level. Teachers as leaders can not only make use of accumulated professional skills to instruct their students but also excel in maximizing, allocating and managing the resources available for the sake of enhancing the school climate in terms of teaching and learning.

Literature regarding teacher leadership has come to prominence in the past 20 years. According to Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998), teacher leadership is pivotal for both teaching and educational reform efforts. Baba & Ace (1989) conducted an empirical study examining the relationship between teacher leadership behaviors and student academic achievement. Data were collected by sampling 2084 students in a business school for two years' span. The results of the study indicated that their student achievement is directly impacted by teacher leadership behaviors in the classroom (Stogdill, 1974). There are four factors regarding teacher leadership behaviors, which are considered to affect student achievement. Factor one, labeled as structure, involves the teachers' clarifying the material, meeting objectives, setting goals and being organized and prepared. Factor two, termed consideration, is about teachers' availability, concern, helpfulness, freedom, and openness. Factor three is labeled as efforts, which represents students' concern about workload, preparation, and difficulty they are confronted with. Factor four focuses on the evaluation mode and examination quality the students show concern about. This factor thus can be called evaluation.

Another study conducted by Yacapsin and Stick (2007) sought to explore the relationship between the teachers' leadership types and their preferred teaching styles in the college settings. To collect data for analysis, the authors administered the Kaleidoscope Profile (KP) to 100 graduate teacher education teachers working for Wilkes University (WU) and Performance Learning Systems (PLS) in Pennsylvania. Results manifested that there is a statistical significance between leadership types and teaching styles for the combined group of teachers from PLS and WU. Under the authors, teaching is an art,

which involves innovation and constant development of expertise. Teachers in higher learning context must plan, organize, and execute their teaching styles to students in a finite duration of time. That is to say teacher's planning, organization, visioning, goal setting, communication and activity management all belong to the respects of effective classroom leadership (Bass, 1990). Thusly, teachers displaying more effectiveness in the classroom instruction will deliver more value-added elements for higher education. Still, concordance between teacher's performance in teaching and the declared goals for student learning by the higher institutions will be realized.

Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000) categorized teacher leadership into three waves. The first wave of teacher leadership is concerned about the teaching function in the formal organizations by offering positions like the department chairs, master teachers, head teachers being the typical teacher leaders controlling the rest of teachers. During this first wave of teacher leadership, despite the opportunities of leadership provided to teachers, it has nothing to do with instructional leadership but stays more foci on the effective functions of the system (Frymier, 1987). Frymier claimed that teacher leadership is characterized by bureaucratic routinization of teaching and learning, in which teachers are deskilled workers manufacturing uniform products (students).

The second wave focuses more on the instructional aspect of teaching function by creating positions like team leaders and curriculum developers. Those positions still steer teachers way from the real management but more close to their professional knowledge, thus teachers in this wave are empowered outside leadership (Wiggerton, 1992), which requires teacher leaders work on the part-time basis rather than full time. This wave also stresses the control model as does at the first stage, disregarding the leadership from the teaching function. Therefore, teacher leadership in this period is portrayed as "remote controlling of teachers" (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Shulman, 1987).

The third and currently prevalent wave makes a big difference by incorporating teaching and leadership into teaching function. Teachers in this stage are recognized to have the right to voice their leadership opinions on the basis of professionalism and collegiality for the purpose of improving education. Teachers in this stage can be helpers in bettering the schools, mentors improving instructional practice of their colleagues, facilitators in promoting school-level problem solutions and advocates of professional development activities for their colleagues (Wasley, 1991). This was echoed by Silva, et al. (2000), teacher leaders should slide the door open to unlock the possibilities of teacher leadership by partnering with their colleagues, exchanging opinions on commonly emerging problems, and discovering effective ways to motivate students' inner desire to get involved in learning. Teacher leaders in this stage have shifted to leadership which is part of teachers' routine work.

Teacher leaders have a say in activities involved both the instruction and the leadership through collegiality and professionalism. For Berry and Ginsburg (1990), teacher leaders should get involved in activities such as a) mentoring and coaching other teachers, b) professional development and review of school practice and c) decision-making at the school levels. According to Silva et al. (2000), teacher leaders should be armed with the following five competencies: teacher leaders navigate the structures of schools, teacher leaders nurture relationships, teacher leaders model professional growth, teacher leaders help others with the change, and teacher leaders challenge the status quo by raising children's voices. The study conducted by Lieberman (1988) gave a summary of the eighteen skills typical of teacher leaders: building trust and rapport, making organizational diagnoses, using resources, managing work, and building skill and confidence in others.

Pounder (2006) asserts that the transformational leadership, as the logical extension of teacher leadership, is thought to be the fourth wave of teacher leadership, which is applicable in both the school and university settings. Under the framework of transformational classroom leadership, students' efforts, and satisfaction can be greatly enhanced. Teachers showcasing transformational leadership characteristics can be exemplary classroom performers to enhance student learning, creativity, and ethical behaviors. The following section will detail the concept pertaining to transformational leadership as well as its effectiveness and efficacy in the educational setting.

2. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP— THE FOURTH WAVE OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership (TL), first conceptualized by James MacGregor Burns in his work *Leadership*, offered scholars a new paradigm to leadership research, and it occupied a central place in leadership research (Northouse, 2010). Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to a higher level of motivation, performance, and morality (Burns, 1978). According to Northouse (2010), transformational leaders can motivate their followers to achieve what is beyond expectation.

Bass (1985) went further to expand Burn's theory by introducing four components of transformational leadership: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.

Idealized influence, also called charisma, is the emotional component of transformational leadership (Antonakis, 2012). It describes leaders as role models with moral standards and a vision that bring about

positive changes in the followers. This component of transformational leadership offers a measure of the extent to which their followers admire and respect their leaders (Pounder, 2006).

Inspirational motivation describes leaders' abilities to inspire or motivate followers by providing appealing visions to achieve shared goals. Inspirational motivation is closely related to individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation because its effectiveness depends on the interplay with the latter two components.

Individualized consideration describes transformational leaders as ones who support, encourage and coach their followers to actualize their individual goals (Bass & Steidlmeir, 1999). Leaders who embrace individualized consideration can greatly enhance the organization's effectiveness by treating followers as unique individuals, listening to their developmental needs, and then assisting them to achieve their potentials.

Intellectual stimulation involves behaviors "to stimulate followers to be creative and innovative and to challenge their beliefs and values as well as those of the leader" (Northouse, 2010). Leaders with intellectual stimulation can help their followers to figure out creative, innovative and novel ways of problem-solving. A team consisting of intellectually stimulated individuals can readily advance to higher levels of performance.

At an early date, the research concerning transformational leadership is mainly focused on its effects in the military, corporate, political contexts. The application of transformational leadership in those fields can better stimulate the employees to work actively and creatively with desired effects distinct from other leadership styles. The achievement in those settings has attracted the attention of scholars who seek to apply transformational leadership theory to instructional context.

3. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the section that followed, detailed discussions about transformational leadership both at home and abroad in education were provided to give the general picture of the development and trend regarding transformational leadership.

3.1 Previous Studies of Transformational Leadership Abroad

Studies concerning transformational leadership have been thriving vigorously since its emergence in 1978 because it has displayed substantial vigor in managing or stimulating the employees in fields like military, business, hospital and industry, etc. Grounded in the positive effects in the fields aforementioned, many researchers thereafter showcased great interests in transformational leadership applied in education field.

The study by Bolkan and Goodboy (2009) investigated the relationships between transformational leadership (i.e., charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation) in higher education settings, student learning outcomes, student engagement, and their perceived teacher credibility. The above variables are chosen because they are believed to be the predictors in the examination of student success and also they are related to effective teacher behaviors (Goodboy & Myers, 2008). In aggregate, 165 qualified undergraduates from a mid-sized Eastern university participated in the research and were administered a string of instruments to test the effects of transformational leadership on those variables. The results of the study showed that the three components of transformational leadership yield moderate to strong correlation with the academic outcomes, teacher's credibility and moderate correlation with student engagement. But the limitation of the study went to the sampling population selected in a single mid-size university, which will confine the generalization of the results in a less culturally and geographically diverse community. Thus, further research should also be done in multi-cultural settings.

Likewise, Bolkan and Goodboy (2010) also pointed out the roles of teachers as leaders in the classroom setting in that transformational teachers could be facilitators in the process of students' achieving both the individual and collective goals (Treslan, 2006) Thus, the authors concurred on the idea that transformational leadership developed in the business field could be applied to educational settings, by substituting employers with teachers and subordinates with students. They also remarked that in comparison with other leadership styles, transformational leadership had its uniqueness because it aligned the followers' individual needs with those of the team, enhanced the followers' concern for achievement and personal development, developed in the followers' autonomy and encouraged them to challenge work (Bass, 1999). Additionally, transformational leadership is thought to be positively related to student learning, student motivation, student communication, student involvement and perceived teacher credibility (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009). However, there is an existing weakness about what scale is used to measure transformational leadership despite its sound theoretical system. Although Bass's (1985) original Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is oftentimes adopted by many scholars to measure transformational leadership, it seems not to be effective because this scale is not developed with an educational context in mind, and also to date, there is no consensus upon a standard for measures of transformational leadership. Thus in faces of this, the authors intended to build up a quantitative measure of intellectual stimulation in the university settings on the premise that there existed operational scales to measure charisma and individualized consideration. According to the authors, the Student

Intellectual Stimulation Scale was established around three important behaviors, namely, using an integrative teaching style, challenging students and encouraging independent thought. The findings showed that the Student Intellectual Stimulation Scale embraces a stable factor structure, high internal reliability and convergent, and concurrent validity.

Pounder (2003), as one of the main contributors with extensive research done in the field of transformational leadership, went a step further to present the refined version to the original conceptualization by Den Hartog, Van Muijen, and Koopman (1997). His version of the transformational model made the implied aspects in the original model explicit. The author's refinement includes the following six dimensions: inspirational motivation, integrity, innovation, impression management, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation. He claimed that transformational leadership has great potential in the enhancement of the quality of management development instruction. Justification of this enhancement can be found by the natural connections between two dimensions (innovation and intellectual stimulation) of the refined transformational leadership model by Pounder (2001) and three of six learning aims by Bourner (1997) and learning outcomes by Ellington (1999). This study lent itself to the applicability and validity of transformational leadership in the instructional context. This study offered some useful insights on how the teachers could yield desirable learning outcomes through aligning notions of transformational leadership with the learning aims of the students.

Similarly, Pounder (2008) also conceived the classroom as a quasi-organization with teachers replacing managers as classroom leaders and students replacing followers. He examined the impacts of teacher transformational leadership in the university context on 475 undergraduates, who were administered to complete the modified version of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form 5x-Short; Bass & Avolio, 1995) to fit the classroom situations. The results indicated that teachers exhibiting qualities of transformational leadership positively and significantly impacted students' perception of classroom leadership outcomes, such as extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction. Besides, He indicated that teachers of transformational leadership could help to cultivate students' cultural curiosity, promoted innovation and aroused ethical conducts. The limitation of the study is the sample size chosen from a single Hong Kong University, thus limiting the generalization of the results to other student population. Further studies should be conducted by incorporating more universities of diverse geographies and examining more capstone courses.

Morton, Keith and Beauchamp (2010) carried out a qualitative study intending to investigate the transformational teaching behaviors perceived by adolescents in attendance of school physical education. The authors designed two studies with the first being the focus groups of 62 participants to examine the preferred transformational teaching behaviors and the second being follow-up semi-structured interviews to 18 participants sampled from focus groups to examine which transformational teaching behaviors positively influence their cognitive, affective and behavioral outcomes. Two major findings in the study are that transformational teaching is a conceptual framework that can be employed in physical education setting and that teachers utilizing transformational leadership can reap more student satisfaction, enhanced student motivation and effortful behaviors in their cognitive, affective and behavior outcomes. This study echoed with previous scholars claiming that transformational leadership can be applied into educational contexts with desired results (Pounder, 2003, 2008; Yacaspin & Stick, 2007; Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009, 2010; Noland & Richards, 2014) and also this study specifically indicated that transformational leadership is closely related with the enhancement of student intrinsic motivation amongst team members (Pounder, 2003, 2008; Singh, 2011; Noland & Richards, 2014). Students tend to exhibit motives in a self-determined way, when they perceive their teachers as transformational teaching advocates.

3.2 Previous Studies of Transformational Leadership at Home

Domestic literature on transformational leadership in colleges and universities is relatively little with most focusing on the functions of transformational leadership in contributing to school reforms, teacher management for better performance and organizational innovation of the schools.

In 2009, Zhang Yu, Sun Hongwei, Hu Qing and Wang Lijun (2009) conducted a quantitative and qualitative research in a university in Shandong Province by surveying 37 faculties and interviewing other university leaders, finding that leaders of transformational leadership could lead to better teacher satisfaction with their work and positive attitudes towards their careers.

In 2011, Chen Lijing, Dong Kuiling and Cao Wangcheng thought that transformational leadership as a scientific paradigm for leadership research and practice could be applied to college educational theory and practice with considerable significance. It could enrich and deepen the connotation of college leadership theories and contribute to constructing the innovative mechanism of college education and enhancing qualities of college leadership theories.

In 2012, Luo Lv conducted a study to 947 middle school students to explore the relationships between transformational leadership of the headmasters and classroom atmosphere. The headmasters showing transformational leadership behaviors played very

important roles in forging a welcoming and comfy environment for students to learn and could keep students of differing genders, and social backgrounds on the right track of learning.

In 2015, Tang Weihong and Zhao Jiawen conducted research on the impacts of the four dimensions of transformational leadership on the students' learning. They finally concluded that transformation leadership could positively affects students' learning and its application into the classrooms could contribute to the teacher professional development and meanwhile can greatly better the learning quality of students.

In 2018, Chen Xiaochun, Wu Zhenkun and Yuan Haoyan examined the relationship between transformational leadership and students' self-efficacy by administering MLQ 5X to 300 college students from different colleges and majors to make the sampling population representative. They found that the four dimensions of transformational leadership were positively related to the increase of students' self-efficacy.

In short, previous domestic literature concerning transformational leadership in education settings stayed centered on its utility in helping the administrators to manage the colleges and universities for the better, and improve teachers' satisfaction with and devotion to the work and higher education institution innovation. Seldom was done to examine the impacts of transformational leadership on promoting students' motivation to learn in higher education.

4. THE STRENGTHS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Grounded in its countless proved effectiveness positively correlated with increased organizational performance, subordinates' extra effects (Pounder, 2008), motivation (Wilson & colleagues, 2012) and their satisfaction with their leaders (Tsai & Lin, 2012, Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009), transformational leadership has offered a new paradigm for scholars across the world to apply the transformational teaching styles to their instruction on the ground that they asserted that classrooms in colleges and universities are quasi-organizations where teacher-student relationships resemble much that of leader-subordinates (Bolkan and Goodboy, 2009, 2011; Cheng, 1994; Harrison, 2011). Its mounting popularity enjoyed by the educators is due to its significant strengths:

Initially, transformational leadership by definition is concerned with change or transformation. As Northouse (2010) noted, transformational leadership involves a process to change and transform people : to move their followers to achieve what is more than expected. Teachers exhibiting transformational leadership can motivate their students to gain increased performance and maximum

potential in their learning (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1990) by setting higher expectations, providing clear visions and attainable goals.

Then, transformational leadership provides the teachers a model for transformational teaching. Most of the studies indicate positive correlation between teacher transformational leadership and student outcomes (Balwant, 2016). According to Hoehl (2008), the existing literature regarding the application of transformational leadership in higher education contexts produces enormous increase in students' affective learning, cognitive learning, motivation and perceived credibility of their teachers.

Third, transformational leadership is a visionary leadership. Instructors with integration of transformational leadership into daily teaching can provide their students with a compelling vision for their future development. This echoed with what Conger (1991) thought that the creation of an inspiring vision speaks of the core of transformational leadership because students with inspiring vision in minds can visualize the future outcomes and further be sober-headed as to what they will head for and what it will take to live up to that vision. So transformational instructors can be the lighthouses in students' learning process, providing directions and guidance to keep them on the right track to their success.

Additionally, transformational leadership differs from other leadership theories in that it puts great emphasis on the commitment of the staff. Its application in higher education can work positive impacts on the teachers' increased job satisfaction, reduced turnover rates, enhanced commitment to reforms and changes to their workplaces, all of which in turn yield a benign circle between teaching and learning: Teachers willing to put out extra efforts and engagement in teaching are more likely to create an welcoming learning atmosphere of warmth, safety, acceptance, and genuineness where the students become more self-initiated, self-confident, self-directed, and less anxious learners (Rogers, 1983).

CONCLUSIONS

Ever since its conceptualization by Burns (1978), transformational leadership has taken a central place in the leadership research and attracted substantial attention from the communication scholars. As a newly emerging and well-documented theory, it was originally applied in fields like military, business and corporate communities, etc. with proven desired results that the organizational leaders could utilize it to move their followers to work towards their shared goals with efficiency. Transformational leadership, as Northouse (2010) said, in his masterpiece *Leadership Theory and Practice* is a process involving the influence exerted by the leaders on moving their subordinates to achieve what is beyond the expectation. Likewise, Avolio & Bass (2004) defined transformational

leadership as the incorporation of a string of behaviors showcased by organizational leaders with the intention to inspire, empower, and motivate the followers to transition to the next higher level of goals or missions. Leaders who display transformational leadership behaviors can bring about dramatic changes in the followers by aligning the individual needs with the team goals, encouraging them to work out innovation and novel ways to resolve the "old problems", and intellectually motivate them to put in extra efforts to act towards the shared goals.

With those benefits transformational leadership brings to organizations, communication scholars sought to apply transformational leadership to higher educational contexts. According to Bolkan and Goodboy (2009), transformational leadership was rendered as a crucial indicator of students' motivation to learn. Transformational leadership is an applicable tool in the higher education in that universities and colleges are much like the organization where the leader-subordinate relationship is replaced by the teacher-student relationship. Teachers can provide classroom leadership, which means teachers' roles go beyond just instructions, but also involve the classroom management, resource distribution, participation into the school reforms, and so forth. These roles can be described as the fourth wave of leadership—transformational leadership which involves both the school and university contexts. Teacher transformational leadership can lead to increased student performance, student satisfaction with their teachers, students' motivation to learn and deep learning approaches, and so on.

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