

Exploring Transformative Leadership Approaches in Modern Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study examines transformative leadership within Philippine educational settings to discern its impact on student outcomes, staff development, and institutional effectiveness. A descriptive qualitative analysis involving diverse stakeholders revealed that transformative leadership diverges significantly from traditional management, emphasizing innovation, empathy, and adaptability. It fosters a culture where staff confidence and autonomy lead to professional growth and improved educational outcomes. In addition, the findings suggest that such leadership is essential for educational institutions navigating the complexities of modern education, including technological advancements and societal changes. Effective communication and systematic evaluation were identified as key for transformative leaders to measure and enhance student success, despite facing resistance to change. The study concludes that transformative leadership will become increasingly central in education, driving institutions towards inclusivity and a forward-thinking ethos. It was recommended that Philippine educational institutions adopt transformative leadership to bridge disparities, enhance quality, and prepare for future educational demands. The approach is particularly beneficial for public schools, higher education, TVET institutions, private educational providers, policymakers, and community learning centers, promising to elevate the quality of education in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

KEYWORDS

Transformative leadership; innovation; empathy; adaptability; staff development; professional growth; descriptive qualitative; Philippines

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of modern educational institutions, leadership emerges as a critical factor influencing the trajectory of learning environments. The complexities of the 21st-century educational context demand innovative approaches to leadership that go beyond traditional paradigms. Transformational leaders are characterized by traits such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bojovic & Jovanovic, 2020; Pawar, 2016; Alahmad, 2016). These leaders model the behavior they seek, inspire with a clear vision, address individual needs, and encourage creative thinking, all aimed at enhancing the motivation and performance of their followers (Saad, 2021; Afsar, 2017).

The concept of transformative leadership, rooted in the seminal work of Burns (2004) and expanded upon by Sorenson (2015), emphasizes leaders' capacity to inspire positive change and exceed conventional expectations. As educational institutions grapple with diverse student needs, technological advancements, and global interconnectedness, there is

a growing need for leaders who can navigate these challenges effectively. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) assert that effective educational leadership involves envisioning and implementing transformative changes tailored to the institution's unique needs.

The 21st-century educational landscape is marked by unprecedented complexity, requiring leaders to adopt adaptive and forward-thinking strategies. The influence of technology, the diversification of student populations, and the emphasis on global citizenship necessitate leaders to engage in transformative practices (Reimers, 2020; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). This research explores how leaders in modern educational institutions conceptualize and implement transformative leadership in response to these challenges.

To guide the investigation, this research adopts a theoretical framework synthesized from the work of Zhu et al. (2012). The framework encompasses key dimensions of transformative leadership, including vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation. By applying this framework, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how transformative leadership manifests in the day-to-day operations of modern educational institutions.

The findings of this research hold significant implications for leadership development programs, policy formulation, and institutional practices. By shedding light on transformative leadership's application, challenges, and impacts, this study contributes to the scholarly discourse on effective leadership practices in the educational sphere. Ultimately, it seeks to advance our understanding of transformative leadership approaches that are crucial for steering modern educational institutions toward success in a rapidly changing world.

Objective of the Study

The study's main purpose was to explore the evolving practices of transformative leadership in contemporary educational settings. This exploration aimed to identify how transformative leadership styles impact student outcomes, staff development, and overall institutional effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research design

The research used an exploratory qualitative approach to comprehensively illuminate the application, challenges, and nuanced dimensions of transformative leadership approaches in modern educational institutions. In the context of this study, the descriptive qualitative design is best suited to explore transformative leadership approaches in modern educational institutions.

Research Locale

The study encompassed a diverse range of modern educational institutions, spanning various educational levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary), ensuring a comprehensive exploration of transformative leadership practices in the Philippines.

Research Participants

Purposive sampling was employed to select educational leaders, including principals, department heads, and administrators, focusing on individuals with extensive experience in implementing transformative leadership approaches. Participants were drawn from both public and private educational institutions. A total of 30 participants were included, ensuring a diverse range of experiences while maintaining depth in individual narratives.

Data Gathering Procedure

A semi-structured questionnaire was formulated to garner an in-depth understanding of the motivations and hurdles encountered by these educators. The Google Form link was strategically disseminated via diverse platforms, including social media groups, to ensure a broad spectrum of participants. Notably, these platforms comprised members predominantly from various educational levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary). Reminder notifications were judiciously dispatched two weeks post the initial circulation to optimize participation and ensure higher response rates. The data was carefully collated and examined for insights after the stipulated one-month response window.

Ethical standards

The participants were introduced to the study's objectives via an embedded consent form in Google Forms, ensuring informed participation. Ensuring anonymity, the study refrained from collecting identifying details, and any inadvertent personal data were removed during analysis. Data was stored securely, accessible only to the research team, reinforcing confidentiality. While participation was purely voluntary, with the freedom to withdraw anytime, the presentation of findings maintained strict transparency, highlighting participants' views without bias or alterations.

Data Analysis

The researchers utilized thematic analysis to distill and interpret the qualitative data amassed for the study. The process embarked on a "familiarization" phase, where all gathered responses were diligently read multiple times, ensuring the team was fully immersed and conversant with the depth and breadth of the data. This immersion paved the way for the "coding" phase, wherein discernible patterns within the responses were encapsulated with preliminary codes. As the process evolved, these individual codes converged, forming more encompassing themes and subthemes in the "theme development" stage. However, the journey of these themes did not end there; each underwent a critical review against the backdrop of the initial codes and the dataset to affirm their validity and resonance. Subsequently, in the "defining and naming themes" phase, these themes were crystallized further and assigned descriptive monikers that encapsulated their essence. This rigorous analytical journey culminated in the "reporting" phase, where the researchers articulated their findings, lending them weight and authenticity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The themes are extracted from the evolving practices of transformative leadership in contemporary educational settings.

Understanding Transformative Leadership

The theme concerns understanding how this leadership style fundamentally differs from conventional management.

One participant describes transformative leadership as "*a management philosophy that encourages and inspires employees to innovate.*" This statement highlights transformative leaders' proactive stance in fostering an environment where creativity and new ideas are welcomed and actively encouraged.

Another consensus insight of the participants on transformative leadership is that it "*inspires and motivates individuals to transcend their own self-interests.*" This perspective

emphasizes the altruistic and collective focus of transformative leadership, which aims to elevate the goals and achievements of the group or organization above personal gains.

Furthermore, the concept is characterized by a leadership approach "*that goes beyond routine management tasks and seeks to inspire positive change.*" This statement encapsulates the essence of transformative leadership as overseeing day-to-day operations and striving to enact change that has a lasting and positive impact on the organization and its people.

Therefore, these statements paint a picture of transformative leadership as a dynamic and influential force that drives innovation, fosters a sense of shared purpose among employees, and pursues meaningful change beyond the confines of standard management practices.

Transformational leaders are characterized by traits such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These leaders model the behavior they seek, inspire with a clear vision, address individual needs, and encourage creative thinking, all aimed at enhancing the motivation and performance of their followers (Koveshnikov & Ehrnrooth, 2018).

Impact on Staff Development and Empowerment

Transformative leadership is seen as a catalyst for the professional growth of staff members. One of the critical aspects underlined is the belief that "*Supporting continuous learning and offering opportunities for skill development enhances teacher confidence.*" This statement emphasizes the role of leadership in providing ongoing learning opportunities, which in turn contributes to the professional assurance of educators.

Furthermore, it is noted that "*these approaches recognized autonomy, empowerment, and professional development among teachers.*" This observation underlines the importance of approaches that acknowledge the independence of teachers, support their capacity to make decisions and foster their professional growth.

Finally, the text posits, "*Allowing the teachers to work on their ways, to be innovative and creative will boost their confidence.*" This reflects the understanding that when teachers are free to explore their methods and ideas, it fosters innovation and creativity and strengthens their professional confidence.

Overall, this suggests that transformative leadership plays a crucial role in the development and empowerment of staff by advocating for continuous learning, recognizing teacher autonomy, and encouraging innovative and creative practices. These elements are instrumental in enhancing the confidence and capabilities of educators, which can lead to more effective teaching and enriched learning environments (Kilag et al., 2023).

Fostering Innovation and Institutional Effectiveness

Exploring strategies leaders employ to nurture a culture of innovation that contributes to the institution's overall effectiveness. This underscores the necessity for leaders to articulate a coherent plan that outlines the vision for innovation within the organization. Such clarity helps align the efforts of team members and provides a roadmap for achieving innovative outcomes.

Moreover, the participants stated, "*Creating a workplace where creativity and democratic principles were encouraged.*" This statement emphasizes the importance of establishing a work environment that fosters creative thinking and adheres to democratic principles, implying that every member has a voice and can contribute to the innovation process.

Additionally, a leader mentions, "*I utilize various strategies such as reinforcement and proper and clear communication.*" Here, the leader acknowledges the use of multiple

tactics to promote innovation, emphasizing the importance of reinforcement—likely referring to positive reinforcement of innovative behaviors—and the role of clear communication in ensuring that the innovation strategy is understood and embraced by all institution members.

These statements convey the multi-faceted approach required to drive innovation in institutional settings. They highlight the need for clear strategies, an inclusive and creative workplace culture, and effective communication and reinforcement tactics to support and sustain institutional effectiveness through innovation (Al Harbi et al., 2019).

Involving Stakeholders in the Educational Process

Describing the importance of including students, parents, and staff in decision-making processes to enhance the educational experience. This inclusive approach is pivotal for developing a comprehensive decision-making process that incorporates the perspectives of all parties affected by educational policies and practices.

One participant highlights this collaborative spirit: "*Well, since we have shared goals, I also ask for suggestions, especially from the staff.*" This statement suggests a leadership approach that values the input of staff members, recognizing that those who are directly involved in the educational process may offer practical insights and innovative ideas that can benefit the institution as a whole.

The involvement of stakeholders is further detailed: "*Stakeholders were involved through assembly such as in the planning phase.*" This points to the proactive engagement of all relevant parties from the beginning stages of planning, ensuring that their contributions can effectively shape the outcome.

Additionally, the text mentions, "*We conducted meeting and discussion on a certain issue or topics through PTA and Parents' Meeting.*" This indicates how parents are included in the conversation, specifically through organized forums like Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) and dedicated meetings. Such discussions ensure that parents' perspectives and concerns are heard and can be integrated into the educational strategy.

Moreover, it underscores the necessity of a participatory approach where students, parents, and staff are not merely informed about decisions after they are made but are actively involved in shaping them. This collaborative approach can lead to more effective educational strategies and a sense of shared ownership over the educational process (Gutierrez & Kim, 2017).

Measuring the Impact on Student Outcomes

Discussing methods to evaluate the effect of transformative leadership on student success and learning outcomes. One approach is through "*Outcomes Measurement,*" as one quote suggests: "*The impact of the transformative leadership can be measured by employing Outcomes Measurement...*" This implies using specific tools or systems to track and evaluate the results of educational initiatives led by transformative leaders, aiming to understand their effectiveness in improving student outcomes.

The process involves a collaborative effort involving different parties: "*By defining the key performance indicators, which stakeholders will be involved in measuring its performance.*" This indicates that it's not just about what is measured but also about who is involved in the measurement process, ensuring that there is a comprehensive approach to evaluating performance that includes various perspectives.

Additionally, practical tools are employed in this evaluative process: "*I utilize monitoring and checklist as to their performances.*" This statement points to the use of

systematic methods to keep track of progress and ensure that all necessary criteria are met in pursuing educational goals.

These statements together outline a structured approach to gauging the effectiveness of leadership strategies in education, where the ultimate aim is to enhance student learning and success. They emphasize the importance of clear metrics, stakeholder involvement, and systematic monitoring to ensure that the leadership's impact is positive and measurable (Njah, 2019).

Navigating Challenges and Resistance

Addressing the obstacles and resistance leaders face when implementing transformative approaches within educational settings. It addresses the common hurdles and pushback that leaders may encounter.

The participants said that "*Resistance to change and a need for extensive communications efforts*" reflects the inherent difficulty in altering established routines and mindsets within an institution. This highlights leaders' need to invest significantly in communication to manage and mitigate resistance to change effectively.

Another insight provided is, "*It is the resistance to changes from individuals or groups within the organization.*" This statement acknowledges that resistance can come from individual stakeholders and collective groups, suggesting that leaders must be prepared to address concerns at multiple levels within the organization to foster acceptance of new initiatives.

Lastly, the participants mention a specific challenge related to personnel: "*Resistance and time discipline. Sometimes, older employees who were my colleagues were also the ones who resisted the leadership change.*" This points out that resistance is not just about new policies or strategies but can also be personal, involving relationships and dynamics between colleagues, especially when changes in leadership are involved.

These statements underscore the multifaceted nature of resistance leaders face when promoting change. Overcoming this resistance requires a comprehensive approach that includes clear communication, understanding the sources of resistance, and addressing the concerns of all individuals involved, including those with long-standing ties to the organization (Kho et al., 2020).

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

Considering the importance of emotional intelligence in leading and driving change within educational institutions. The participants emphasize self-awareness and self-management: "*Being aware of and managing my emotions, as it helps me understand and connect with the emotions of students, teachers, and staff.*" This statement underlines the importance of leaders being cognizant of their emotional states to foster better relationships with others within the institution.

The role of emotional intelligence extends beyond the self, as indicated by the following quotation: "*Emotional intelligence allows leaders to empathize with diverse experiences and perspectives.*" This suggests that emotional intelligence equips leaders with the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, which can be crucial when navigating the complexities of educational leadership and the various stakeholders involved.

Finally, a rationale for the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership roles: "*It is evident to be aware of the emotional intelligence so that I will be more empathetic and relay a good mentoring and guidance.*" This highlights the connection between emotional

intelligence and the ability to provide effective mentorship and guidance, both of which are key components of transformative leadership within educational settings.

Collectively, these statements capture the essence of emotional intelligence as a vital component of effective leadership. It contributes to a leader's ability to connect with others, understand and respect diverse perspectives, and offer supportive mentorship—all of which are critical in leading and enacting positive change in educational institutions (Gul et al., 2019).

Envisioning the Future of Educational Leadership

Speculating on the future directions and continuing evolution of transformative leadership in education. The participant statements forecast the significance of this leadership style: *"I think it will be the driving force of leadership in the days to come."* This anticipates transformative leadership becoming even more central to educational leadership, shaping how institutions are managed and how they respond to new challenges.

The evolution of this leadership approach is further described as: *"The future of transformative leadership in education will revolve around adapting to change, embracing innovation, prioritizing inclusivity."* This outlines a future where educational leaders must be agile, open to new ideas, and committed to creating environments that welcome and support diverse populations.

Lastly, the impact of transformative leadership is seen as far-reaching: *"Being a transformative leader...will likely influence educational demands, technological advancements, and societal needs."* This implies that transformative leaders will not only respond to the current landscape but will also be proactive in shaping the direction of education to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world driven by technology and evolving social expectations.

Moreover, this suggests a dynamic future for educational leadership, where being transformative is synonymous with being forward-thinking, inclusive, and responsive to current and emerging global trends (Clodfelter & Tapp, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study underscores the pivotal role of transformative leadership in shaping the future of education. It is characterized by its departure from conventional management, emphasizing innovation, empathy, and adaptability as key drivers of change. Such leadership enhances staff development by nurturing confidence and autonomy, cultivating a fertile professional growth environment. In addition, the collaborative nature of this leadership style, which incorporates diverse stakeholder perspectives into decision-making, contributes significantly to enriched educational experiences and outcomes. The findings also highlight leaders' need to employ clear communication and systematic evaluation methods to effectively measure and foster student success. Moreover, despite facing resistance, transformative leaders who leverage emotional intelligence are more adept at guiding their institutions through the evolving demands of the educational landscape. Looking ahead, transformative leadership is anticipated to be increasingly influential, steering educational entities through the currents of technological advancement and societal shifts with a forward-thinking, inclusive, and responsive approach.

Recommendations

In light of the study's insights, it is advisable for Philippine educational institutions to integrate transformative leadership into their operational ethos to enhance the educational experience significantly. Public schools serving a demographically varied student

population would mainly benefit from this leadership style, promoting an inclusive and innovative culture. This would be instrumental in bridging the educational disparities often found across diverse socio-economic contexts within the country. Higher education institutions, including universities and colleges, stand to benefit from the adaptive and forward-thinking nature of transformative leadership, which can spur research excellence and curriculum development that align with global educational trends.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions are pivotal in equipping students with market-relevant skills. They would find transformative leadership beneficial in dynamically updating their offerings in response to technological advancements and labor market shifts. Private educational providers can distinguish themselves by adopting this leadership approach to foster a learning environment that meets and anticipates student needs and industry trends.

For government agencies and educational policymakers such as DepEd and CHED, applying transformative leadership principles could result in policies and educational programs that are more responsive and attuned to the needs of a 21st-century learning environment. By doing so, they can enhance the quality and effectiveness of education nationwide. Teacher training and professional development centers should also be encouraged to embrace these principles, preparing educators to create classroom experiences that are both engaging and conducive to developing future-ready students.

Community learning centers, often critical in providing access to education in less developed areas, would find that transformative leadership aids in customizing learning initiatives to serve community-specific educational needs better. Overall, adopting transformative leadership across various educational platforms in the Philippines can improve the quality of education and ensure that it is equitable, resilient, and adaptable to the ever-changing global landscape.

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