

The Use of Transformational Leadership Characteristics in Higher Education Administrative Leadership

Emir Moore¹ and John Zeanchock[#]

¹Robert Morris University, USA

[#]Advisor

ABSTRACT

HEI leaders are challenged by adapting to the ever-changing world. This paper examines how administrative leaders can use Transformational Leadership (TL) to benefit higher education institutions (HEI) in terms of employee satisfaction, engagement, and commitment. A transformational leader inspires and motivates all employees through change management to enhance innovation. A higher education institution's long-term success depends upon faculty and staff satisfaction. An organization's productivity, effectiveness, and student performance are enhanced when employees are satisfied.

Introduction

Higher Education Institution (HEI) leaders are challenged by adapting to the ever-changing world. This paper examines how administrative leaders can use Transformational Leadership (TL) to benefit employee satisfaction, engagement, and commitment. A transformational leader influences followers to reach their full potential by motivating them to understand a higher vision and assist with elevated performance (Bass, 1985). A higher education institution's long-term success depends upon faculty and staff satisfaction. An organization's productivity, effectiveness, and student performance are enhanced when employees are satisfied. This section will provide a historical viewpoint of HEI challenges and introduce leadership theories such as TL to assist administrative leaders.

Over the past few decades, leadership has become increasingly important in higher education. Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016 state that Several factors have changed the concept of leadership, including demographics, globalization, technology, and work practices. According to Alonderiene and Klimaviciene (2013), university reputation, interactive learning methods, and faculty competence are the significant factors that influence student enrollment. Thus, administrative job satisfaction is critical for employees and universities. This paper examines the impact of leadership style on job satisfaction in higher education. Therefore, faculty job satisfaction in higher education institutions may be impacted by leadership style. Leadership skills are essential for college administrators and department heads to meet the growing demand. It is important to note that, as well as stressing work environments, information overload, technological advances, the battle for analytical and managerial skills, and ethical dilemmas (Dalati, 2016), leaders must possess leadership qualities and behaviors that transcend cultural, racial, political, and geographical barriers.

Transformational Leadership Explained

Since James McGregor Burns defined TL in 1978, it has become the focus of many studies and applications of leadership theory (Meng, 2022). TL may have effects on achieving organizational goals and inspiring followers. A

transformational leader (Burns, 1978, as cited in Sujchaphong et al., 2020) engages followers and builds a connection that enhances motivation and morale for both parties. In addition, the behaviors of administrative leaders may influence how lower-level leaders translate and disseminate information within the organization (Asmawi et al., 2013). A focus on the university's administrative senior and middle management team is essential, including the vice chancellor/president and the managers responsible for the university's strategic decision-making processes, which include the deputy vice chancellor/vice president, directors, and faculty deans.

Studies show that when a TL influence highlights a task's significance, it leads to more robust job engagement, which enhances innovative job behavior (Al-Mansoori & Koç, 2019). According to the authors, TLs possess four traits, including Idealized Influence (II), which describes leaders who are exemplary role models for their followers through their charisma, values, and high moral standards. Inspirational Motivation (IM) is the leader's ability to motivate, inspire, and communicate high expectations to followers, giving them the confidence to meet them. The third characteristic of TLs is Intellectual Stimulation (IS), which occurs when the leader encourages followers to think creatively, challenges them in problem-solving, and stimulates their creativity to develop new and original solutions. The fourth characteristic of TLs is individualized consideration (IC), which refers to leaders who pay attention to their followers' performance, care about their development, and possess high emotional intelligence. A transactional leader influences their followers' sense of significance, job engagement, and meaning, which eventually can improve their performance. Such leaders involve motivating followers by communicating leaders' emotions, attitudes, values, and beliefs (Wang et al., 2020). According to Ioannou and Menon (2016), leadership that displays transformational characteristics has been linked to employee commitment to the organization, trust in the leader, job satisfaction, and motivation to learn. Additionally, it affects teachers' attitudes toward their schools and their commitment to change and learning (Eliophotou et al., 2021). Several studies indicate that TL positively impacts employee job performance, enhancing their motivation (Yu & Jang, 2024).

Benefits

This section articulated the specific benefits of HEI administrative leaders and employees utilizing transactional leadership. Burns (2012), as cited in Gaur et al., 2022 defines *organizational leadership* as a process in which one person exerts power over another to achieve predetermined goals. According to Alsaeedi and Male (2013), workers and executives can build additional assets and capabilities. The leadership capacity of a leader to enable their followers to become better versions of themselves facilitates this process. As this research paper highlights, a variety of benefits can be derived from TL, including facilitating conversations between leaders and subordinates that aim to improve employees' work habits and attitudes to increase their commitment to the company's mission and vision.

Builds Trust

TL behaviors will increase employees' trust in their leaders, leading to organizational oneness and continuous improvement (Khattak et al., 2020). Trust, therefore, plays an essential role in TL, employees' recognition of the organization, and continuous improvement. Trust plays a vital role in employees' decision-making during knowledge exchange processes. A lack of technology, infrastructure, and management prevents the flow of communication, which is necessary to maximize employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities (Levin & Cross, 2004). Trust, respect for others, and a commitment to truthfulness are essential predictors of open communication, according to Khattak et al. 2020. The absence of dialogue and follow-up conversations between managers and colleagues and ignorance and undervaluing of new knowledge hinder collective learning and knowledge sharing (Ohlsson, 2023). In organizations, the absence of communication demonstrates restraining conditions for knowledge creation (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016). Moreover, Masa'deh et al. (2016) states that counterproductive behaviors are associated with negative job

performance. Defying organizational and interpersonal objectives is one example of counterproductive behavior negatively impacting organizational effectiveness.

Through the TL's four characteristics, organizations can positively impact employee commitment by increasing feedback, task variety, and autonomy in decision-making (Islam et al., 2018). A leader who uses idealized influence displays charismatic behaviors that are characterized by faith in the organization's vision, sharing risks with followers, demonstrating a sense of purpose, maintaining a high level of ethical conduct, highlighting accomplishments, and avoiding abuse of power (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2016). A leader of this type can instill faith in organizational members and foster cooperation. Moreover, these leaders demonstrate high standards of ethical principles and moral conduct, sacrifice their interests for the benefit of others, prioritize followers' needs over their own, and share successes and failures with followers. Inspirational motivation refers to how a leader inspires followers with enthusiasm and optimism. In addition to challenging followers with high standards, leaders with inspirational motivation communicate optimism about future goals and provide meaning to their work (Bacha, 2014). Thus, transformational leaders foster employee collaboration and dedication to achieve the organization's goals. According to Muthimi et al., 2021, leaders' roles in implementing inspirational motivation include building followers' confidence, connecting them with the organization's vision, and establishing work teams dedicated to achieving it. As a result, inspirational motivation entails articulating a compelling vision, establishing an image of what is essential to consider, and fostering a sense of team spirit and enthusiasm. According to (Siswanto Yuliana, 2022), there is a meaningful relationship between inspirational motivation, job satisfaction and team cohesiveness. Leaders inspire and stimulate a sense of belief and challenge to achieve organizational goals and targets. Leadership with high inspirational motivation can motivate followers beyond their expectations (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Together with idealized influence, inspirational leaders are influenced by emotions (Fauzi et al., 2021).

Instills a Sense of Purpose

Leaders can use intellectual stimulation to challenge the status quo, innovate, and solve problems to achieve their goals (Sims et al., 2021). Leaders encourage followers to challenge old assumptions and think in a new and alternative way about problems to stimulate followers. Pham-Thai et al., 2018 described behaviors that stimulate followers' innovative and creative efforts, such as rethinking problems, challenging assumptions, and readdressing old situations. In addition to providing a future vision, transformational leaders listen to employee complaints and demands and push staff to develop new problem-solving strategies. The leader with these characteristics will function as a trainer, advisor or consultant by creating a positive working environment for employees as they are not restricted or compelled to follow rules or guidelines.

A transformational leader transforms followers' values and self-concepts to reach a higher level of demand and aspiration, as per Tawas (2019), cited by Teoh et al. 2022. Transformational leaders encourage employees to focus on the output, prioritize group needs, and maintain employee expectations to achieve work performance that exceeds the company's expectations. A positive correlation between employee performance and intellectual stimulation suggests that leaders will be more productive when they inspire their followers. Additionally, there is a connection between employee performance and the culture of creativity. Hankir et al., 2020, cited by Teoh et al., 2022 recommend that managers provide employees with a supportive atmosphere and freedom regarding time and space.

Employees tend to value the opinions of their colleagues and express their own opinions freely when they are allowed to view things from different perspectives and solve problems without worrying about making mistakes (Becker et al., 2022). Thus, they are more likely to interact with coworkers and share their knowledge. Psychological safety and team efficacy are impacted by intellectual stimulation. Intellectual stimulation signals followers that they are safe in a different working environment. Individuals are allowed and encouraged to express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas without fear of rejection, despise, embarrassment, or losing competitiveness. In this way, such leaders influence their employees' perception of psychological safety. Furthermore, a safe working environment promotes employee interaction and communication, which increases the likelihood that employees view their colleagues as capable and,

therefore, are more likely to share knowledge with them (Becker et al., 2022). The relationship between intellectual stimulation and employee knowledge sharing is expected to be mediated by psychological safety and team efficacy.

Motivates Followers

Individualized consideration involves the leader caring, nurturing, and supporting each follower's personal development (Zacher et al., 2014). Individualized consideration dimensions of TL are positively correlated with personal wisdom. A wise leader possesses superior knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of life and human nature and a permanent need to understand oneself, relationships, and the environment (Ardelt, 2004). Leaders demonstrate that they can also self-examine, self-understand, and take perspective. Thus, individualized consideration refers to leaders acting as coaches or mentors who pay particular attention to their followers' needs for growth and achievement. Leaders can accomplish this by enthusiastically listening to their members and accommodating their needs for growth, learning, and recognition (Puni et al., 2020). As a result, subordinates are encouraged to work on their strengths (He & Len, 2021). The best way to motivate followers may be to put them in positions they are good at or to give them jobs they enjoy.

In higher education institutions, continuous improvements and innovation have become essential for survival (Asiedu et al., 2020). A transformational leader encourages employees to develop above-average creative, critical thinking skills. According to Bass & Riggio, 2006, cited by Asiedu et al., 2020, TL facilitates innovation by motivating and facilitating organizational learning. TL promotes knowledge sharing, experimentation, understanding the impact of knowledge, and developing new educational programs, all within the HEI environment.

Staff, faculty, and administrative staff may improve collaboration and knowledge sharing by utilizing the four characteristics of TL. Therefore, HEI leaders must utilize these capabilities to enhance innovation performance and gain the necessary competitive advantage for sustainability and growth in today's complex and competitive environment. However, HEI administrators must be aware of barriers and challenges that may hinder the implementation of TL, such as facilitating innovation, enhancing commitment and wellbeing, developing knowledge capabilities, recognizing employees, and creating a safe work environment. The success of any transformation effort relies upon the people tasked with implementing the changes (Hechanova & Cementina-olpoc, 2013). Unfortunately, organizational transformation can be a challenging experience for its members. As a result, they may feel lost, have doubts about the future, or need help managing new tasks. Moreover, researchers have stressed the importance of obtaining employee commitment to the change. Commitment to change is defined by Herold et al. (2007) as proactive and positive behavior. Individuals may exhibit these behaviors by aligning themselves with the change, demonstrating intentional support for the change, or assisting in the implementation of the change. According to Nurtjahjani et al., 2022, this effect is irrelevant to employees with low psychological ownership of the organization. As a result, they would be less likely to engage in their work regardless of their level of belief.

Transformational Strategies to Consider

HEI administrative leaders can use strategies to implement TL to enhance employee satisfaction, engagement, innovation, and commitment. According to Asmawi et al. (2013), HEIs should use risk-taking, autonomy, tolerance of mistakes, employee participation, and knowledge-sharing strategies. In an organization, culture is a set of values, beliefs, and norms that determine how things should be done. First, encouraging risk-taking assumes risks can be taken as long as they do not harm the organization. Universities must encourage and accept failures in their efforts while encouraging their people to take risks. Teamwork is the second value (Judge et al., 1997), enhanced when members respect and understand one another, share common goals, and communicate effectively.

The third value is autonomy, which is enhanced when researchers can pursue innovative ideas and have the necessary resources. Fourth is tolerance of mistakes and celebrating success (Asmawi et al., 2013). How mistakes are

managed determines whether personnel are free to act perceived as learning opportunities. Mistakes that are allowed based on analysis provide continuous learning. Those who attempt and fail should be continuously supported. Successful organizations acknowledge failures and reward success by facilitating open discussion and learning from mistakes. An organization's fifth value is employee participation. Employee participation entails pushing authority, decision-making responsibility, and information to the lowest possible level. Ayers and others recommended pushing decision-making authority to the project level whenever possible to enable better coordination among team members. Knowledge sharing is the sixth value. Employees should be encouraged to share their knowledge. The values highlighted in this section can assist HEI administrators in promoting TL strategies.

Conclusion

An organization's success or failure may be related to its leadership. Leadership can motivate and inspire employees, create a positive working environment, and promote collaboration and innovation (Khan et al., 2022). In contrast, poor leadership can result in communication breakdowns, low morale, and a lack of direction and purpose (Tigre et al., 2022).

The leader determines organizational success. A variety of leadership styles based on varying concepts and meanings can contribute to the success of an organization. However, this paper aims to investigate how administrative leaders can use transformational leadership (TL) to benefit higher education institutions (HEI) in terms of employee satisfaction, engagement, and commitment. A transformational leader inspires and motivates all employees through change management to enhance innovation. A higher education institution's long-term success depends upon faculty and staff satisfaction. Thus, administrative leaders can positively affect followers' outcomes through the TL leadership style, such as the organization's productivity, effectiveness, and student performance. However, administrators of HEIs or department heads must learn TL strategies to overcome significant barriers within their institution.

References

- Al-Husseini, S., & Elbeltagi, I. (2016). Transformational leadership and innovation: A comparison study between Iraq's public and private higher education. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, 41(1), 159-181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.927848>
- Al-Mansoori, R. S., & Koç, M. (2019). Transformational leadership, systems, and intrinsic motivation impacts on innovation in higher education institutes: Faculty perspectives in engineering colleges. *Sustainability (Basel, Switzerland)*, 11(15), 4072. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11154072>
- Alonderiene, R., & Klimaviciene, A. (2013). Insights into Lithuanian students' choice of university and study program in management and economics. *Management (Split, Croatia)*, 18(1), 1-22.
- Alonderiene, R., & Majauskaite, M. (2016). Leadership style and job satisfaction in higher education institutions. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 30(1), 140-164. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-08-2014-0106>
- Alsaeedi, F., & Male, T. (2013). Transformational leadership and globalization. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(5), 640-657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213488588>
- Ardelt, M. (2004). Wisdom as expert knowledge system: A critical review of a contemporary operationalization of an ancient concept. *Human Development*, 47(5), 257-285. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000079154>

- Asiedu, M. A., Anyigba, H., Ofori, K. S., Ampong, G. O. A., & Addae, J. A. (2020). Factors influencing innovation performance in higher education institutions. *The Learning Organization*, 27(4), 365-378. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TLO-12-2018-0205>
- Asmawi, A., Zakaria, S., & Chin Wei, C. (2013). Understanding transformational leadership and R&D culture in Malaysian universities. *Innovation (North Sydney)*, 15(3), 287-304. <https://doi.org/10.5172/impp.2013.15.3.287>
- Asrar-ul-Haq, M., & Anwar, S. (2016). A systematic review of knowledge management and knowledge sharing: Trends, issues, and challenges. *Cogent Business & Management*, 3(1), 1127744. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2015.1127744>
- Bacha, E. (2014). The relationship between transformational leadership, task performance and job characteristics. *The Journal of Management Development*, 33(4), 410-420. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-02-2013-0025>
- Bass, M., Bernard (1985). Leadership and performance beyond expectations, New York: The Free Press
- Becker, L., Coussement, K., Büttgen, M., & Weber, E. (2022). Leadership in innovation communities: The impact of transformational leadership language on member participation. *The Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 39(3), 371-393. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpim.12588>
- Dalati, S. (2016). The impact of servant leadership on leadership sustainability: Empirical evidence from higher education in syrian universities. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 3(3), 269-281. [https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2016.3.3\(4\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2016.3.3(4))
- Eliophotou Menon, M., & Lefteri, A. (2021). The link between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy. *Education (Chula Vista)*, 142(1), 42-52.
- Fauzi, M. A., Martin, T., & Ravesangar, K. (2021). The influence of transformational leadership on malaysian students' entrepreneurial behaviour. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review*, 9(1), 89-103. <https://doi.org/10.15678/EBER.2021.090106>
- Gaur, V., Kapoor, A., & Gupta, A. (2022). A study on effect of transformational leadership, self-efficacy on job performance. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, 26(6)
- Hechanova, R. M., & Cementina-olpoc, R. (2013). Transformational Leadership, Change Management, and Commitment to Change: A Comparison of Academic and Business Organizations. *The Asia - Pacific Education Researcher*, 22(1), 11-19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-012-0019-z>
- Herold, D. M., Fedor, D. B., & Caldwell, S. D. (2007). Beyond change management: A multilevel investigation of contextual and personal influences on employees' commitment to change. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(4), 942-951. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.4.942>
- Islam, T., Tariq, J., & Usman, B. (2018). Transformational leadership and four-dimensional commitment: Mediating role of job characteristics and moderating role of participative and directive leadership styles. *The Journal of Management Development*, 37(9/10), 666-683. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-06-2017-0197>

- Judge, W. Q., Fryxell, G. E., & Dooley, R. S. (1997). The new task of R&D management: Creating goal-directed communities for innovation. *California Management Review*, 39(3), 72-85. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41165899>
- Khan, J., Zada, S., Zada, M., Saeed, I., & Zhang, J. (2023). Does Servant Leadership Enhance Employee Creativity and Performance?: Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing and Moderating the Role of Self-Efficacy. *Journal of Organizational and End User Computing*, 35(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.4018/JOEUC.321656>
- Khattak, M. N., Zolin, R., & Muhammad, N. (2020). Linking transformational leadership and continuous improvement: The mediating role of trust. *Management Research News*, 43(8), 931-950. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-06-2019-0268>
- Levin, D. Z., & Cross, R. (2004). The strength of weak ties you can trust: The mediating role of trust in effective knowledge transfer. *Management Science*, 50(11), 1477-1490. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.1030.0136>
- Masa'deh, R., Obeidat, B. Y., & Tarhini, A. (2016). A jordanian empirical study of the associations among transformational leadership, transactional leadership, knowledge sharing, job performance, and firm performance: A structural equation modelling approach. *The Journal of Management Development*, 35(5), 681-705. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-09-2015-0134>
- Meng, H. (2022). Analysis of the relationship between transformational leadership and educational management in higher education based on deep learning. *Computational Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/5287922>
- Mittal, S., & Dhar, R.L. (2015). Transformational leadership and employee creativity: mediating role of creative self-efficacy and moderating role of knowledge sharing. *Management Decision*, 53(5), 894-910. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-07-2014-0464>
- Muthimi, J., Kilika, J., & Kinyua, G. (2021). Exploring the role of inspirational motivation to institutions of higher learning. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147-4478), 10(4), 455-466. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i4.1234>
- Nurtjahjani, F., Batilmurik, R. W., Puspita, A. F., & Fanggidae, J. P. (2021). The relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. Moderated mediation roles of psychological ownership and belief in just world. *Organization Management Journal*, 19(2), 47-59. <https://doi.org/10.1108/omj-03-2021-1169>
- Ohlsson, J. (2023). Knowledge transfer as transformative dialogue: A pedagogical view on learning and meta-knowledge transfer in a leadership development program. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 36(8), 117-128. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-03-2023-0100>
- Pham-Thai, N. T., McMurray, A. J., Muenjohn, N., & Muchiri, M. (2018). Job engagement in higher education. *Personnel Review*, 47(4), 951-967. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-07-2017-0221>
- Puni, A., Hilton, S. K., & Quao, B. (2021). The interaction effect of transactional-transformational leadership on employee commitment in a developing country. *Management Research News*, 44(3), 399-417. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-03-2020-0153>

- Sims, C., Carter, A., & Moore De Peralta, A. (2021). Do servant, transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant leadership styles influence mentoring competencies for faculty? A study of a gender equity leadership development program. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 32(1), 55-75. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21408>
- Siswanto, & Yuliana, I. (2022). Linking transformational leadership with job satisfaction: The mediating roles of trust and team cohesiveness. *The Journal of Management Development*, 41(2), 94-117. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-09-2020-0293>
- Sujchaphong, N., Nguyen, B., Melewar, T. C., Sujchaphong, P., & Chen, J. (2020). A framework of brand-centred training and development activities, transformational leadership and employee brand support in higher education. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 27(2), 143-159. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-019-00171-9>
- Teoh, B. E. W., Wider, W., Saad, A., Sam, T. H., Vasudevan, A., & Lajuma, S. (2022). The effects of transformational leadership dimensions on employee performance in the hospitality industry in malaysia. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 913773-913773. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.913773>
- Tigre, F. B., Curado, C., & Henriques, P. L. (2023). Digital leadership: A bibliometric analysis. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 30(1), 40-70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15480518221123132>
- Wang, S., Peng, M. Y., Xu, Y., Simbi, V. T., Lin, K., & Teng, T. (2020). Teachers' transformational leadership and students' employability development: A social cognitive career perspective. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 48(5), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.8594>
- Zacher, H., Pearce, L. K., Rooney, D., & McKenna, B. (2014). Leaders' Personal Wisdom and Leader-Member Exchange Quality: The Role of Individualized Consideration: JBE. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 121(2), 171-187. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1692-4>
- Yu, X., & Jang, G. (2024). A framework for transformational leadership to enhance teacher's work performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1331597>