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Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is seen as a promising form of leadership for advancing educational institutions because it can cause essential change, resolve major concerns, and create new paradigms (Banerji & Krishnan, 2000). Such a leader supports open communication which creates team motivation. S/he also helps build the confidence of her/his team members by providing necessary training and encouraging team building. Dimmock and Walker (2000) too affirm the link between team motivation and goal- setting and visioning. Teamwork then, calls for participatory leadership and proactive support for change (Walker & Dimmock, 2000). To this end, a transformational leader possesses the necessary drive to initiate and maintain transformational processes within the organisation. S/he must be capable of articulating a convincing and realistic vision and focus others towards a new critical path. If required, the organisation may need to be redesigned to support the transformation (Banerji & Krishnan, 2000).

Charbonneau (2004) noted that the popularity and attractiveness of this leadership style stems at least in part, from its consistent association with superior performance in a range of organisations. Transformational leaders facilitate the thinking of old problems in new ways. They are often capable of communicating a vision and mobilising the energy necessary for change. Their behaviours and traits include empathy, the need for power, good rhetorical skill, intelligence, and the consideration for others. The effect of this leadership style is that it inspires or motivates followers, gains commitment from followers, changes attitudes and supports the goals of the individual and organisation.

Burns (1978) sees the transformational leader as reflecting the traits and behaviours that are necessary for initiating change. These leaders identify themselves as change agents and take responsibility for change. They are courageous and take risks, believe in and trust people, have clear values and are value driven. They are lifelong learners and visionaries who can deal with complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty and share their vision with others (Burns, 1978).

According to Schein (1992), the most intriguing leadership role in culture management is one in which the leader tries to develop a learning organisation that will be able to make its own continuous diagnosis and self-manage whatever transformations are

needed as the environment changes. The learning leader must exhibit the self-confidence that active problem solving leads to learning and thereby set a suitable example for other members of the organisation. The process of learning must eventually be made part of the culture and not seen as any given solution to any given problem (Schien, 1992).

Despite its limitations, there are certain elements of transformational leadership which do lend themselves to educational and ethical consideration. It appears to be very important for leaders and educators to have a clear vision of what they want to achieve and how they want to achieve it. Moreover, when its heroic implications are reduced or eliminated, transformational leadership can advocate for processes that involve the contributions of all parties, rather than being a matter of one person “doing leadership” to others (Bottery, 2004, p. 19). Future leaders will be their ability to instil a learning mindset into their organisation. The upcoming generation of leaders will have to be a generation of learning evangelists by highlighting the importance of learning and establishing a context where employees want to and are able to learn. Corporate leaders will have to be more capable of strengthening their organisations for future challenges and increasing competitive and innovative abilities (Brown & Posner, 2001).

Educational professionals are being objectified and stratified into leaders and followers according to neo-liberal versions of the performing school. Leadership is being defined as particular tasks and behaviours that enable those who are responsible and accountable for learning outcomes and measures of school improvement. However, this objective definition of leadership does not float free of organisational and personal histories that also shape and enable agency, and how real people with real lives struggle within and through the contradictions that challenge their values (Gunter, 2001).

Fullan (2005) argues that new directions call for sophisticated leadership at the school level. The principal of the future must lead a complex learning organisation by helping to establish new cultures in schools that have deep capacities in continuous problem solving and improvement. What lever is going to be powerful enough to usher in the new era? That lever involves a radical revisit to the moral purpose of public schools. Walker and Kwong (2006, cited in MacBeath, 2007) argue that learning is more likely to result if school leaders are members of learning and support networks. They point out that most school principals belong to many different kinds of network but these may not necessarily further either the cause of their own professional learning or that of their staff or that of students. It is important, therefore, write Walker and Kwong, that their key networks are shaped or expanded to incorporate a stronger emphasis on learning and the conditions which make learning more

likely to happen. As they suggest, networks can develop at different levels, from neighbourhood to international, from educative to industrial, from principal colleagues to other leaders and educators. These must, however, have organic roots rather than being tightly structured or imposed.

A willingness to learn together does not come about without structural as well as cultural change. Successful school leaders understand that the profound changes in professional identity bring losses as well as opportunities, but they find creative ways of helping educators to acknowledge, articulate, and deal with the loss (Bridges, 1997 cited in MacBeath, 2007). Leithwood's (1994) model of transformational leadership (especially in relation to education) is conceptualised along seven dimensions. **These dimensions are building school vision, establishing schools goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualised support, modelling best practice and important organisational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture, and developing a structure to foster participation in school decisions.** Moreover the four 'I's used to define leadership within transformative education are **idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration** (Jantzi, Leithwood, & Steinbach, 1999). A description of the four 'I's of transformational leadership approach clearly indicates that they correspond with a particular learning orientation. Harris (2002) suggests that **what is required in education is a leadership approach that transforms the feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of others.** Effective leaders are constantly and consistently managing a number of competing tensions and dilemmas. This form of leadership is not based on power and control but on the ability to work with others and to enable others to work independently (Day, 2002). Schein (1992) described such a leader as supporting a learning culture, identifying dysfunctionality, and encouraging change; the organisation focuses on the process of learning.

Transformational practices show a shift from a type of leadership based on power and control to one centered on the capability to work with others and to facilitate others to act. The reshaping of a school's structure depends significantly on the principal's role and specifically on the shaping of a school as a Learning Organization (Leithwood, 1994; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Silins, Mulford, Zarins & Bishop, 2000; Silins, Zarins & Mulford, 2002). Schools that make sincere efforts to widen the base of leadership so as to include teachers and administrators, define a shared vision based on student learning, and provide a culture of continual support are a lot more likely to make great strides in becoming learning organisations and addressing important student needs (Stoll & Louis, 2007).

Transformational leadership empowers individuals in an organisation to create a collaborative culture that encourages teacher development and problem solving (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Transformational leadership also encourages open dialogue, clear lines of communication and collaborative decision-making. It invests heavily in continued professional development that is congruent with organisational needs. Transformational leadership promotes learning that challenges and keeps under constant review those organisational norms and values that are apt to be taken for granted, especially in times of rapid change (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). Michael Knapp and his associates explain that leadership for learning means “creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals and the system” in which leaders “persistently and publicly focus their own attention and that of others on learning and teaching” (cited in Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 27). Principals of professional learning communities lead through a shared vision and values rather than through rules. They involve staff members in the school decision-making processes and empower individuals to act by providing staff with the information, training and parameters they need to make good decisions (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). According to Beattie (2002), the focus for school leaders is to co-create a learning environment which enables authentic self-expression, development of relationships and the development of individual’s personality as a whole within the organisation. The process of leading and learning simultaneously facilitates the growth of others, the search for new insights and the adaptation and re-construction of prior knowledge in the light of new knowledge.

MacBeath (2007) argues that learning is after all, what schools are for and ultimately what school leadership is about. In this way, leadership for learning involves a focus on learning in which it is assumed that everyone within the school and the system itself are learners. Learning is enhanced then when people have leadership opportunities. Begley and Stefkovich (2004) say that educational leadership is now more multi-faceted, much less predictable, less structured, and more conflict-laden. There is a need for school administrators to acquire new skills in how to lead and manage outside the immediate and traditional professional context of the school. Leaders of future schools must become both reflective practitioners and life-long learners who understand the importance of the intellectual aspects of leadership and are authentic in their leadership practices. The traditional parameters of managerial and efficiency focused responses to administrative situations must now be improved by introducing more creative, sophisticated and morally defensible approaches to leadership (Begley & Stefkovich, 2004). In addition, leaders face the responsibility of

making organisational learning a high priority, creating an environment that is both psychologically and culturally conducive for collective learning, and designing structures that facilitate the transfer of learning from the individual through the organisational level (Amy, 2008). A complex environment calls for a form of leadership that stimulates transformation in contrast to a command and control type of leadership. Such leaders motivate others by empowering and developing them by acting as their coaches and mentors (Amy, 2008).

Lambert (2000) argues that leadership has to be embedded in the school community as a whole because leadership is about the collective and collaborative construction of knowledge and meaning by learning together (cited in Hayes, et al., 2004). Educational leaders of the future have to be a catalyst of cultural change who have the bigger picture in mind and are capable of conceptualising complex thoughts (Fullan, 2001). Leading the learning community is about taking the lead to build the confidence of all the members who make up the learning community and it is not merely about formal school leadership. In this way, adaptive leaders involve the whole learning community in an exchange of transformative knowledge and authentic learning which they are able to do with a confidence that is quite contagious (Walker, 2006). Dinham's (2005) study explored the role of principals in producing outstanding educational outcomes in New South Wales' government schools. They were found to be informed risk takers who were prepared to experiment and to offer support to those taking the initiatives. They possess and utilise high-level interpersonal skills and their motives and actions are trusted by others. Students, staff and community members speak positively of principals who are open, honest, fair, friendly and approachable. The principals greatly value teacher learning and therefore fund staff development inside and outside the school. They release staff to engage in professional development activities and bring others into the school to provide assistance. Staff development days and meetings are often utilised to provide teachers with new skills and knowledge and the confidence to try different teaching approaches (Dinham, 2005).

Leadership in learning organisations

The learning organisation (LO) requires a fundamental rethinking of leadership. Leaders become designers, teachers, and stewards of the collective vision (Senge, 1990). Leadership in a Learning Organization involves the ability to coach and teach. It is not exclusive, authoritative, or assumed, but learned and earned (Kerka, 1995). In this way,

“effective leadership may emerge anywhere true learning is taking place” (Gratton, 1993, p.100).

Senge (1996) defined leaders in learning organisations as people who are genuinely committed to deep change in themselves and their organisations. They value learning and become experts at learning in the context of the organisation. A leader has to learn how to learn and must assume the role of a teacher in learning organisations. The ability to create a collective vision of the future with other members of the organisation appears to be a critical action for leaders in learning organisations. Communicating the common vision to the organisation seems to be of collateral importance.

According to Deal and Peterson (1999) the “paradox of leading leadership must come from the principal, but he or she cannot be the only source of leadership to sustain strong, positive cultures, leadership must come from everyone” (p. 81). The school development literature contains similar messages about the types of leadership that accompany positive change in schools. It has consistently underlined the importance of teacher involvement in decision-making processes, and the contribution of strong collegial relationships to positive school improvement and change (Townsend, 2007, cited in Harris, 2008). Within the growing number of school-to-school networks, it has been argued that distributed leadership may provide greater opportunities for members to learn from one another (Harris, 2008). This form of leadership is the preferred option as far as the literature on networked learning communities and professional learning communities are concerned and also an important component in securing improved learning (Harris, 2008).

Most of the literature on schools as learning organisations refer to learning as a team and highlight the importance of individual learning which characterises organisational learning. On the other hand, a Learning Organization creates a learning culture where everyone is a learner and the organisation as a whole supports learning. Professional learning communities (PLC) are in some ways similar to learning organisations. Hence a consideration of PLCs will help understand the learning culture that prevails in some educational institutions. This principle of shared leadership reflects the value of the centrality of leadership to any successful learning community (MacBeath & Moller, 2009).

The expected leadership in the Programme of School Improvement (PSI) in Sri Lanka is rather like the leadership in a learning organization. Sri Lankan version of School Based Management (SBM) is titled as Programme of School Improvement (PSI). According to the circulars issued by the Ministry of Education in 2005 and 2008, it is expected to implement

shared leadership in PSI schools. Moreover, schools must have a participatory decision making process, collective school culture, and staffs is anticipated to work as a supportive group to reach expected goals of the school. In the PSI school principal is the chairperson of the main decision making body named School Development Committee (SDC). Therefore principals have to perform very significant role as a leader and a top manager in the PSI schools. Hence, it may be needed to develop a learning environment in the PSI school to perform their role effectively.

What are the distinguishing characteristics of an organisation that is learning?

What do people mean by a “learning organisation”? What does a learning organisation look like? How is this different from other organisational development initiatives? Many writers, authors, researchers and scholars have tried to describe the concept and characteristics of a learning organisation. Some of the literature in the area suggests that a learning organisation. The definitions which were given by the authors, researchers and scholars help to get a better understanding on the said concept. Senge (1990) defines learning organization as: “...Organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results that truly desire, where new and expensive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together” Senge P., (p:30)

According to Senge’s definition, people in the learning organization collectively make an effort to develop their organization, and in order to that they continue their learning from each of others. Dixon and Hyland also provides a definition for learning organization as: “The essence of organisational learning is the organisations ability to use the amazing mental capacity of all its members to create the kind of process that will improve its own”

(Nancy Dixon, 1994)

“The defining characteristic of the modern learning organisation is the readiness to recreate itself through a close understanding of its environment and the opportunities provided by that environment for both adaptive and novel ways of growing and developing”

(Hyland, 2004)

According to the definitions given by Silins & Mulford and Leithwood and Aitken; learning organization can be identified as an organization where the group of people collectively committed to accomplish the targets and goals of it. Following definitions also provides opportunities to get a better understanding about the concept of learning organization.

“People are learning how to learn together”

(H. C. Silins & Mulford, 2002, p. 425 In But Louis et al)

“A group of people pursuing common purpose (individual purpose as well) with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continually developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes”

(Leithwood and Aitken (1995, P.63)

Learning Organization is continually expanding its capacity to create its future through applying a range of learning disciplines

(Senge, 1990)

Facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself

(Pedler et al., 1992)

Forms the strategy, structure and culture of the enterprise itself into a learning system (Stahl et al., 1992)

Makes many mistakes, but learns from them ... it sees learning not as a confession of ignorance, but as the only way to live.

(Handy, 1992).

Some of these definitions have been very influential in shaping approaches to learning in organisations.

Learning disciplines

Senge (1994) suggests that there are five basic disciplines within the learning organisation approach, they are:

- ***Systems thinking***: Senge’s whole approach to organisations is a ‘systems’ approach that views the organisation as a living entity, with its own behaviour and learning patterns.

- **Personal mastery:** Senge recognises the importance of developing skills and competences in individuals, and stresses the importance of personal growth in the learning organisation.
- **Mental models:** This discipline requires managers to construct mental models for the driving forces behind the organisation's values and principles.
- **Shared vision:** according to Senge, true creativity and innovation are based on group creativity and the shared vision of the group can only be built on the personal vision of its members.
- **Team learning:** effective team learning involves alternating processes for dialogue and discussion. Dialogue is exploratory and widens possibilities, whereas discussion narrows down the options to find the best alternatives for the future decisions.

Following features assists to understand the real picture of the concept of learning organization.

Nature of learning in organisations:

- Knowledge, and therefore learning, is best produced in service of, and in the midst of action.
- Learning is complex and various, and it includes knowledge, skills, insights, beliefs, values, attitudes and habits.
- Learning is individual and can also be collectively generated in groups and organisations.
- Learning is both a process and an outcome.
- Learning may be incremental or it can be transformational.
- Learning can be both the cause and the consequence of change.
- Learning can help people and organisations to see their current reality more clearly.
- Learning for the future can give organisations options for sustainable development, clarity of vision and the values and the behaviour needed to achieve their purposes.

Benefits that learning produces at three levels:

For organisations:

- Learning increases everyone's capacity to contribute to the success of organisations.
- Learning enables an organisation to be more effective in meeting its business goals.

- Learning emancipates the organisation through clarification of purpose, vision, values and behaviour.
- A systematic focus on learning produces a wider range of solutions to organisational issues.
- Learning helps to achieve a better balance between long-term organisational effectiveness and short-term organisational efficiency.

For individuals:

- Learning is the key to developing a person's potential.
- Learning to learn is the key to effective learning.
- Learning enables the individual to meet the demands of change.
- The capacity to learn is an asset that never becomes obsolete.
- Embracing learning in the workplace helps the individual to acknowledge that learning is more than formal education and training.

For society:

- Society survives and thrives through learning.
- A focus on capturing, sharing and recognising learning contributes to a more cohesive society.
- Individual and collective learning reinforces the informed, conscious and discriminating choices that underpin democracy.
- Learning helps to enhance the capacity of individuals to create a more fulfilled and inclusive society.

Characteristics of Learning Organisation

1. Learning Organisations have an incentive structure that encourages adaptive behaviour.
2. Learning Organisations have challenging but achievable shared goals.
3. Learning Organisations have members who can accurately identify the organisation's stages of development
4. Learning organisations gather, process, and act upon information in ways best suited to their purposes.
5. Learning organisations have an institutional knowledge base and process for creating new ideas.
6. Learning organisations exchange information frequently with relevant external sources

7. Learning organisations get feedback on products and services
8. Learning organisations continuously refine their basic process
9. Learning organisations have supportive organizational culture
10. Learning organisations are “open systems” sensitive to the external environment, including social , political , and economic conditions

(Ron, 2003)

Honey explains the need to create a leaning organization as follows. In addition, it is mentioned the reasons for transforming the organization as a learning organization.

Reasons for creating a learning organisation

- for superior performance and competitive advantage
- to improve customer relations
- to avoid decline
- to improve quality
- to understand risks and diversity more deeply
- to promote innovation
- for personal and spiritual well-being
- to manage change
- for true understanding
- to create an energised and committed workforce
- to expand our boundaries
- to engage in community
- for independence and liberty
- because the times demand it
- to make it more fun to work in organisations
- to give people hope that things can be better
- to provide a playground for creative ideas
- to provide people with a safe place to take risks with new ideas and behaviours
- to stretch beyond perceived limits
- to improve our environment
- to help people become active actors not passive recipients
- to embrace and implement the vision of sustainable communities and organisations

- to be free
- to contribute to human revolution
- to stretch the fabric of our soul
- because it is only natural, that is, in keeping with human nature
- to increase joy in work
- to raise the overall quality of life
- to provide people with more satisfying lives so they are happier, do more interesting things with their lives, and are more fun to have lunch with
- to channel support and enhance the basic human passion to learn
- to provide a rational explanation of the necessity of caring about each other
- to provide an invitation and rationale for building communities

(Honey, 2009, p. 13)

Learning organisations and professional learning communities are ways of framing relationships in schools in which ongoing teacher learning is complementary to student learning (Hayes et al., 2004). How else can children learn if there are no models of inquiry, reflection, risk taking, empathy and moral courage to be emulated? From the literature, knowledge acquisition is very much associated with organisational learning.

According to Levine (2001), we have scant understanding of the work and learning of others. It is clear that our understanding of organisations, learning and work is still unclear, changing, and likely to keep changing. We have yet to envision the future of organisations as adaptive, virtual networks of activities. If we accept this challenge and the shift that it represents, we will begin to achieve solutions that reflect this vision and foster communication, coordination and collaboration. Fauske (2005) who mentions that the lack of opportunities for educators to interact and develop shared understandings is a big obstacle to organisational learning in schools. However it is not a major issue at the moment.

The concept of a learning organisation is being acknowledged in educational institutions around the world. In most countries, it is relatively new to schools and educational institutions.