INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES
Vol 12, No 2, 2020 ISSN: 1309-8047 (Online)

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: ENABLING OTHERS TO ACT

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─Abstract─

Under South Africa's apartheid regime, black South Africans received a low-level education, which impeded their intellectual development and relegated them to the unskilled labour market. After apartheid was dismantled, the demand arose to overhaul the educational system. The efforts of the African National Congress to address transformation in education were formulated in the Higher Education Act of 1997. Though reforms were effected in the last two decades, the educational system still does not function optimally. It is postulated that transformation in learning institutions will occur if a transactional style of leadership is replaced with a transformational style that enables educators to act. To verify this hypothesis, the researchers surveyed educator opinions from schools and universities by means of a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed around one leadership practice or dimension associated with transformational leadership behaviour as listed in Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) of 2002. *The practice of Enabling others to act was tested using the header 'How often does the leadership in your institution …?', followed by a phrase specifying the behaviour in question. The perceived behaviour was measured using a 10-point interval scale. It was found that, although leaders were fairly often seen as treating others with dignity and respect, they only sometimes demonstrated the other five behavioural variables associated with Enabling to act. For this reason, the Department of Higher Education should specify what is required of current and future leaders, leaders need to be made aware of their deficiencies, and courses for development have to be provided to assist leaders in achieving the practice of Enabling others to act as an aspect of transformational leadership.*

Key Words: transformational leadership, Enabling others to act, Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory

JEL Classification: I23

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education in South Africa is rapidly undergoing transformation and requires effective new leadership. Retrospectively speaking, the catalyst for change was the dismantling of the oppressive apartheid regime of racial segregation in 1994. During the rule of the National Party (1948-94), the South African socio-political landscape was characterised by excessive injustices and racial inequalities. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 intended to impede the development of the majority by prescribing gutter education for blacks and equipping them for the unskilled labour market only. Students protested against the prescriptive injunctions imposed upon them and agitated for political change; this resulted in the Soweto Uprisings on 16 June 1976. After the first democratic elections, the entire educational system had to be overhauled.

The government's efforts to address transformation in education found expression in the Higher Education Act of 1997, the Education White Paper 4 on Further Education and Training (1998) and the National Strategy for Further Education and Training (1999-2001). The Higher Education Act makes provision for a planned and unified system of higher education and directly corresponds with higher education sector reforms, whereby university mergers in 2004 and 2005 resulted in 36 higher education institutions being collapsed into 22 (Sedgwick, 2004). Currently there are 26 universities. Though reforms were made, the educational system is still not functioning optimally. It is postulated that institutions that want to change and grow require a form of leadership to steer them in the right direction.

Bernard Bass, in *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (1985), distinguishes between two types of leadership, namely, transactional and transformational. Transactional leaders endeavour to maintain and improve performance, decrease resistance to change, replace one goal by another, and implement decisions (Elrehaila et al., 2018). They focus on the material rewards that their employees may bring to the company. Transformational leaders, in contrast, consider employees' self-concept and self-worth. They work in unison with subordinates to advance motivation and morale and create a shared vision and goals for the organisation (Anderson, 2018). Through mentoring and support,

transformational leaders challenge their subordinates to become innovative problem solvers and develop their leadership capacity (Berkovich, 2016). The transformational leadership style has a positive impact on employees' motivation and commitment, performance and job satisfaction (Anderson, 2018). In terms of Kouzes and Posner's model of transformational leadership (2002), the leadership practice of Enabling others to act encourages leaders to share their power with followers and so guide change to the culture of the organisation.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the light of the background information provided, the main research problem is: What are the perceptions of educators as to the extent to which the leadership in their institutions utilises the behaviours present in Enabling others to act as an aspect of transformational leadership? A secondary research question is: What are the implications of Enabling others to act for leadership in South African educational institutions?

3. RESEARCH AIM

The main research aim was to probe the perceptions of educators as to the extent that the leadership in their institutions displays the behaviours present in Enabling others to act as an aspect of transformational leadership. To realise this aim, the following objectives needed to be met:

- investigate the behaviours associated with the practice of Enabling others to act by using the literature;
- explore the perceptions of a sample of educators to determine the extent to which they believe that the leadership in their institutions makes use of the behaviours associated with Enabling others to act;
- provide some guidelines to leaders on how to implement Enabling others to act as an aspect of transformational leadership and an aid in transforming teaching and learning in educational institutions.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research method followed was a survey of lecturer and teacher opinions via a structured questionnaire designed around the various practices or dimensions associated with transformational leadership behaviour. The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) of Kouzes and Posner (2002) was utilised. As the LPI was

originally used in a different context, its reliability and validity had to be reaffirmed. To determine the construct validity, the researchers made use of factor analysis with Oblimin rotation. Internal consistency and reliability were ascertained with the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of reliability. The practice of Enabling others to act as an aspect of transformational leadership was tested using the header 'How often does the leadership in your institution …' followed by a question specifying the behaviour. The perceived behaviour was measured using a 10-point interval scale, with 1 indicating 'Almost never' and 10 indicating 'Almost always'.

4.1 Population and sample for the research

Because it was not possible to acquire a population of all educators in Gauteng, 25 schools and 5 universities were randomly selected. Each institution received 15 questionnaires to complete. Questionnaires were accompanied by an introductory letter. The researchers had briefing sessions with the head of each institution to request permission and briefly explain the aim of the research. Of the 450 questionnaires distributed, 331 (74%) were returned: 261 from schools and 70 from universities.

4.2 Ethical measures

Before the questionnaires were distributed, consent was obtained via email from the participants. The researchers briefly explained the purpose of the study at the beginning of the questionnaire. Anonymity was guaranteed as the participants were not required to provide any form of identification such as name, surname or ID number. If any of the participants were to request the findings of the study, the researchers could provide these as no direct connection could be made to specific participants (they were only treated as statistics).

4.3 Data analysis of Enabling Others to Act (FB1.4) as an aspect of transformational leadership

The data was captured using SPSS Statistics 24.0. The data was analysed by first conducting a descriptive analysis and then subjecting it to a factor analytic procedure (PAF) with Oblimin rotation to facilitate the naming of the five practices of exemplary leadership as used in the LPI of Kouzes and Posner: 1) Modelling the way; 2) Inspiring a shared vision; 3) Challenging the process; 4) Enabling others to act; and 5) Encouraging the heart. The reliability of the factors associated with the five practices of transactional leadership was analysed. Section B of the questionnaire contained 30 items or behavioural variables related to the various practices associated with transformational leadership. However, due to space

constraints, the research project focuses only on the fourth dimension of transformational leadership, namely, enabling others to act, and the items associated with it: B4, B9, B14, B19, B24 and B29.

As this project was based on the Leadership Practices Inventory model of Kouzes and Posner, the practice of Enabling others to act was tested for mean scores and loadings. Enabling others to act (abbreviated as FB1.4.) resulted in a Cronbach reliability coefficient of 0.900, which confirmed that the 10-point interval scale was internally consistent and reliable. The items in this factor, their mean scores and their factor loadings are provided in Table 1. The distribution of responses for Enabling others to act is found in Table 2.

Table 1: Items belonging to the factor Enabling others to act as an aspect of transformational leadership

FB1.4: Enabling others to act as aspect of TL (α = 0.900)			
Item	**Description: How often does the leadership in your institution …**	**Mean**	**Loading**
B4	develop collaborative relationships among people s/he works with	6.38	0.843
B9	actively listen to diverse points of view	6.17	0.871
B14	treat others with dignity and respect	6.80	0.835
B19	support decisions that people make on their own	5.97	0.852
B24	give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work	6.26	0.791
B29	ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves	6.50	0.841
Average		6.36	0.839

Table 2: Distribution of responses for Enabling others to act (FB1.4) as an aspect of transformational leadership

	Number of responses											
Item	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**Total**	**% selecting 8, 9 and 10**
B4	14	13	20	27	32	52	49	53	45	26	331	124/331 = 37.5%
B9	17	19	29	32	33	34	51	35	45	36	331	116/331 = 35.0%
B14	14	8	20	20	33	40	44	53	45	54	331	152/331 = 45.9%
B19	19	19	20	37	34	42	59	50	36	16	331	102/331 = 30.8%
B24	16	13	19	28	42	45	51	55	37	25	331	117/331 = 35.3%
B29	11	12	18	21	43	44	57	55	41	29	331	125/331 = 37.8%

The researchers will now discuss each of the behavioural variables connected with Enabling others to act according to the frequencies provided on the interval scale of the structured questionnaire.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 B4: How often does the leadership in your institution develop collaborative relationships among people s/he works with?

Item	**Total no of participants selecting 8,9,10 /331**	**Total no /331 = %**	**Mean score**
B4	124/331	37.5%	6.38

According to the respondents, collaboration involves well-developed and formalised roles for participants. It is characterised by trust, a give-and-take relationship, conflict-resolution and consensus-building mechanisms, as well as the sharing of information, responsibilities, monitoring, control and decision-making. Collaboration develops when a group understands that nobody can be successful without the other. Each has special skills that the others need. Chrislip and Larson's (1994) study on collaborative leadership reveals that collaborative leaders usually have no formal power or authority and tend to exercise leadership in what is perhaps the most difficult context: when all parties involved are peers. The focus of collaborative leaders is "promoting and safeguarding the collaborative process, acknowledging small successes along the way, helping stakeholders negotiate difficult points, and enforcing group norms and ground rules." (1994:103) The collaborative leadership style is transparent and adaptive to change. Collaborative leaders may be regarded as transformational because they enable others to act. Table 2 shows that the majority of participants gave this item 6 to 8 on the scale. This indicates that leadership is only perceived to be to some extent collaborative. Although collaboration does occur, it is possible that the wrong leadership style is used. Leaders tend to make use of a hierarchical style: they maintain authority and control and follow a top-down approach with little scope for participation. Such a leadership style has a negative effect on the practice of Enabling others to act, as well as on transformational leadership.

5.2 B9: How often does the leadership in your institution actively listen to diverse points of view?

Item	**Total no of participants selecting 8, 9, 10 /331**	**%**	**Mean score**
B9	116/331	35.0%	6.17

The respondents emphasise that good leaders listen to different points of view instead of just hearing what other people say. Whereas hearing involves perceiving sound waves with the ears, listening is a goal-oriented, active process of receiving and attending to aural stimuli. The multidimensional construct of listening consists of complicated a) cognitional processes of receiving and interpreting messages; b) affective processes, like motivating; and c) behavioural processes, such as responding by giving verbal or nonverbal feedback (Janusik, 2007). Good leaders open the floor and then listen with concentration and empathy to their employees'

opinions and concerns, communicating that, although they are in a leadership position, they are not the only ones with a say.

In higher education, various inter-level, inter-team and inter-personal challenges present themselves. When culture, religion, race, beliefs, gender, age, ability, generation, qualifications and historical experience are added to the mix, workplace conflict is inevitable. Listening to diverse points of view can reduce this conflict and will further the transformation process as it results in better leadership and management. Fasset (2013:6) posits that leaders of culturally diverse work-teams who achieve great success involve "each and every team member in the day-to-day processes of workplace diversity management." Because these leaders listen to their employees and inspire them to do the same, they are able to cope effectively with diversity.

Table 1 *(Items belonging to the factor Enabling others to act as an aspect of transformational leadership)* illustrates that B9 (Actively listen to diverse points of view) has the highest factor loading, which means that listening to others is a key step in becoming a transformational leader. Since factor loadings can be interpreted as standardised regression coefficients, one could also postulate that B9 has a correlation of 0.871 with the leadership dimension of Enabling others to act. This correlation is considered a strong association for a factor analysis in most research fields. However, when looking at the combined score of 8, 9 and 10 in Table 2 (*Distribution of responses for Enabling others to act (FB1.4) as an aspect of transformational leadership*), the percentage is very low (35.04%) and the mean score in Table 1 is barely on the positive side (6.17). This denotes that some heads of department are not active and empathic listeners. Because they do not accept diversity but enforce their own viewpoint and decisions, their employees get the impression that leaders are not interested in what they had to say. Because participants feel that they are not listened to but only heard, they are alienated from leadership and refrain from taking the initiative. Hence, they are not enabled to act.

5.3 B14: How often does the leadership in your institution treat others with dignity and respect?

Item	**Total no of participants selecting 8,9,10 /331**	**Total no /331 = %**	**Mean score**
B14	152/331	45.9%	6.8

Respect can be described as embracing the humanity of others, believing in their worth and treating them as you would like to be treated yourself. Treating others with respect creates common ground between leaders and their subordinates and enables subordinates to voice their opinions and recommendations as to the functioning of the institution. The outcome is a more functional and progressive institution that is focused on achieving results.

The respondents acknowledge that leaders do realise the importance of treating others with dignity and respect and making them feel that their value and efforts are recognised and appreciated. The researchers believe that this item had the highest score as showing others respect and treating them as you would like to be treated is instilled in us from our youth.

5.4 B19: How often does the leadership in your institution support decisions that people make on their own?

Item	**Total no of participants selecting 8,9,10 /331**	**Total no /331 = %**	**Mean score**
B19	102/331	30.8%	5.97

Educators' decisions can prove useful in helping learners understand what they are taught in class, and how to make sense of and apply the knowledge they have gained. Item B9, however, has the lowest mean score, signifying that lecturers and teachers have limited autonomy to make decisions. In essence, they have to do and teach what has been set out for them in the curriculum and syllabus. The high factor loading (0.871) of this item may be attributed to the fact that leadership in educational institutions fail educators by curtailing their decision-making abilities in the subjects they teach.

5.5 B24: How often does the leadership in your institution give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work?

Item	**Total no of participants selecting 8,9,10 /331**	**Total no /331 = %**	**Mean score**
B24	117/331	35.3%	6.26

Choice refers to the freedom for teachers and lecturers to decide on the methodology to perform their work. In the context of higher education, educators should be allowed to make their own choices in their pedagogical field, and not be restricted by a bureaucratic system. The data illustrates that educators are required to follow a fixed curriculum and syllabus that do not lend themselves too much to freedom. They either do what they are told or they are out.

5.6 B29: How often does the leadership in your institution ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves?

Item	**Total no of participants selecting 8,9,10 /331**	**Total no /331 = %**	**Mean score**
B29	125/331	37.8%	6.5

This question does not score high, with only 37.8% of respondents giving it 8, 9 or 10. We can deduce from the score that while leaders do allow people to grow, leaders do not *ensure* that educators develop themselves. Leaders only provide the opportunity, but the enforcing of development is split between the requirements of the Department of Education (teachers/lecturers *must* have or completed this) and the educators' own desire for personal development. For example, the Vaal University of Technology requires lecturers to attend a minimum of two workshops per year. Because attendance is compulsory, lecturers are to a certain extent enabled, as the workshops provide them with the skills and tools that they need to act. One could also contend that lecturers ensure their own development, with leadership just providing the opportunity for them to do so.

6. FINDINGS

The factor mean of 6.36 in Table 1 suggests that respondents perceived leaders as sometimes demonstrating the behavioural variables associated with Enabling others to act. For example, leadership is only to some extent collaborative. Although providing opportunities for growth, leaders do not ensure that educators develop themselves. The item with the highest mean score was B14 (6.80), which denotes that leaders in educational institutions were fairly often seen as treating others with dignity and respect and recognising their efforts and value. The two main concerns identified were B9 (Actively listen to diverse points of view) and B19 (Support decisions that people make on their own). Both had low mean scores (6.17 and 5.97 respectively). B9 and B19 are both vital behavioural variables related to the leadership practice of Enabling others to act. The low mean scores indicate that

leaders in education do not listen to the opinion of their employees and do not give them the freedom to make decisions for the subjects they teach. Educators have to comply with the bureaucracies of the system and follow the curriculum and syllabus.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Higher Education should make clear the difference between transactional and transformational leadership, and what is required of current and future leaders. Leaders need to be informed of the fields in which they have scored low marks and that prevent them from enabling others to act. An action plan and courses for development should be provided to assist leaders in achieving the leadership practice of Enabling others to act.

8. CONCLUSION

The article outlined and discussed the factors that influence Enabling others to act, an aspect of transformational leadership that is crucial in an educational context. As illustrated by the use of SPSS Statistics 24.0 and an analysis of the data obtained, leadership and management obtained slightly negative or between positive and negative scores in the practice of Enabling others to act. This means that obstacles to transformation exist in higher education.

The researchers are of the opinion that the practice of Enabling others to act will contribute towards transforming and improving current leadership and management. Although transformation in leadership within this practice has begun, the Department of Higher Education needs to focus still more on promoting transformational leadership and management, in order to accelerate the transformation process.

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