TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ON STATE UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the governance style of state university presidents in terms of transformational leadership and ascertain its beneficial influence on the schools. A qualitative case study was conducted in five state universities belonging to the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC) in the Central Luzon Region. The key findings in this study established that transformational leadership has an evident positive impact on universities. The study distinctly illustrated how university presidents utilized transformational leadership practices to engage the hearts, minds and skills of officials, faculty and personnel to excellently achieve the goals of their respective universities, particularly the ultimate objective of holistically developing students. Educational leaders must therefore make use of the best practices in transformational leadership which emerged in this study in order to excellently effect developmental change and optimally attain the objectives of their institutions. The outcome of this study is expected to provide state university presidents with best practices in transformational leadership which will contribute in effecting developmental change in their organizations. Furthermore, it may serve to enlighten potential presidents and educational leaders in other institutions about vital transformational leadership methods which can positively influence their educational institutions.

Keywords: Governance style, Transformational leadership, State universities, Leadership impact

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership challenges on organizations across the world have become progressively multifaceted and complicated. The need for effective leadership to generate and sustain social progress in a global and rapidly changing society is more indispensible now than ever.

Karamat (2013, p.30) noted that "leaders, as the key decision-makers, determine the acquisition, development, and deployment of organizational resources, the conversion of these resources into valuable products and services, and the delivery of value to organizational stakeholders". For an organization to function commendably, there must be top-notch leadership which shall steer organizational systems to attain and uphold high levels of achievement.

Educational institutions need to find new ways of functioning to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Schools function in a complex and vibrant environment, hence, they need powerful leadership to attain multifarious objectives and goals (Cheng et al., cited in Rehman et al. 2012).

Given the recognized importance of leadership in the effectiveness of schools, Horn-Turpin (2009) avowed that the "current demands for educational reform have forced many school leaders to re-evaluate and adapt their leadership style to meet current demands. Many educational leaders are now beginning to embrace and put into practice a school model of transformational leadership" (p.18).

James Macgregor Burns described transformational leadership not as a set of specific behaviours, but rather as an on-going process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Covey 2007, p.4).

Smirl (2018) declared that transformational leaders abundantly influence the potential of their workforces because of their authentic vision for their organizations, their aptitude to inspire people and their devotion to their work. Transformational leadership is seen when leaders develop colleagues and followers to higher levels of ability and potential, and motivate them to look beyond their own interests toward those that will benefit the group (Bass, cited in Hoy & Miskel 2001).

Transformational leadership is particularly appropriate for educational institutions because Hallinger (cited in Stewart 2006) stated that starting in 1990, attention has shifted to leadership models that were coherent with changing trends in educational reform such as empowerment, shared leadership, and organizational learning. Leadership theorists have stated that in the academe, transformational leadership is the most effective style (Bass and Avolio cited in Levine 2000).

In the Philippines, higher education institutions need to be globally-competitive so that they can prosper in a knowledge-based economy. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (cited in Naeem, 2013) upheld this by maintaining that higher education is one of the main catalysts for personal, social and economic growth in today's globalised economy.

At the vanguard of providing accessible, affordable and good quality education in the country are state universities which are "public higher education institutions (HEIs) created and established by law which constitutes their charter and which have independent and separate governing boards" (Rule II, Section 3.b, CMO No.3, s. 2001).

Each university must have a leader who can offer innovative solutions to various challenges in delivering quality education and similarly be responsive to emerging platforms in the higher education system.

Transformational leadership is most suitable since it can stimulate positive changes among state universities. This was confirmed by Lulee (2011) who concluded that transformational leadership is the paramount approach for heads of academic institutions.

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1. What are the actions of university presidents which are expressive of transformational leadership?

RQ2. How did these actions beneficially influence their respective universities?

RQ3. What framework of transformational leadership and its beneficial influence on state universities may be presented?

The findings of this study are intended to impart transformational leadership practices to university presidents and other school heads so that they can attain developmental change in their organizations. This study may be an inspiration for additional studies on the subject of transformational leadership in other school settings, thereby presenting beneficial understandings to educational leaders.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research design

A qualitative case study was utilized to facilitate the exploration of an experience within its context using a variety of data sources. This will offer a deeper understanding of the research findings and a higher level of confidence in their accuracy since Baxter and Jack (2008) stated that this method ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood

Simons (cited in Starman 2013, p.32) defined a case study as an "in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness" of a particular institution or system. A case study is fittingly applicable for this research undertaking because it involves a description of a setting and its participants, followed by an analysis of the data for themes (Bloomberg &Volpe cited in Barnes 2011).

2.2. Sampling and data collection

State universities were selected because they are mandated to provide affordable and good quality education while at the same time serve as vehicles of regional and national development (Higher Education Reform Agenda 2011). The study was conducted in five purposively selected state universities in the Central Luzon Region. Each university was selected because its thrusts and priorities focus on the major objectives of the

Roadmap for Public Higher Education Reform which are to improve quality and standards of higher education, raise the level of educational outcomes and increase the social relevance of its developmental functions, and to expand access to quality higher education among lower income and disadvantaged groups.

The Interview Schedule was developed by the researcher based on Leithwood and Jantzi's (2006) Three Broad Categories of Transformational Leadership. It was validated by three seasoned educators with Doctorate Degrees in Educational Management and one English Professor. To assess the interviewing skills of the researcher, a dry-run of the interview was conducted with a top state university official who was not a participant in this study.

The researcher acted as the principal instrument while the semi-structured interview was the primary means of data generation. Doyle (2018) maintained that in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a broad plan of questioning in the form of an interview schedule. The interviewer does not inevitably ask all questions or follow their particular order, instead they are used to guide the conversation.

Five state university presidents were interviewed as they are information-rich individuals deemed experienced and conversant about the subject of interest (Schumacher & McMillan cited in Essink 2013). Each one is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who has general powers of administration and supervision, and acts as the ex-officio head of all officers, members of the teaching staff, administrative and all other employees of the institution (DHVTSU Code 2009).

2.3. Data analysis

Initially, the transcribed data from the interviews was divided into meaningful analytical units and coding was used to apply labels or key terms after a careful examination of passages of text. Yi (2018) specified that codes represent the smallest unit of text that alludes to the same meaning. Coding is essential since it is an effective way to organize data without perusing the entire interview transcript all over again.

Codes with similarities were then organized and grouped into concepts because they share certain qualities that signify a pattern (Saldaña 2009). Classification reasoning plus insight and perception was applied to discern which data are alike when grouping them together (Lincoln & Guba, cited in Saldaña).

Finally, thematic analysis was applied to identify themes. A theme is an intangible unit whose function is to categorize a set of data into a subject that covers a group of recurring ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) described themes as patterns in the data which are important because they are utilized to address the research objectives.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings in this study are presented according to the sequence of the research questions.

3.1. Actions of the university presidents which are expressive of transformational leadership

The interview with the presidents revealed their experiences in applying transformational leadership practices in their universities. They utilized transformational leadership actions in carrying out the main functions of a university which are instruction, research, extension and production. After a thorough evaluation of their impressions, six themes emerged: vision through collaboration, consultation and delegation, life-long learning, collective efforts, inspirational leadership and recognition of exemplary work.

Vision through collaboration

The presidents concurred that importance must be accorded to the energetic participation of all interested parties, including industry partners and experts in diverse disciplines, in the crafting of the vision of the university. These are some accounts from the presidents:

The crafting of the university vision is a product of the convergence among stakeholders, but of course, the primary or direct stakeholders are the students, faculty, non-teaching staff, the administrative council, the alumni and the parents. (PRES3)

The vision was developed through a consensus. The academic community articulated its aspirations and from there a long-term vision of the university was formulated. It is therefore the embodiment of shared dreams of the stakeholders of the university. (PRES5)

The vigorous engagement of all stakeholders was perceived by the presidents as essential in the development of an organizational vision. They shared the conviction that opportunities must be offered to allow others to help in formulating the vision because Wadhwa and Parimoo (2016) described it as similar to a road map which portrays a picture of an organization's destination for the future and provides the direction and means for going there.

Consultation and delegation

The presidents consistently invited inputs in the form of consultation before decisions were reached. University personnel appreciate being part of the university decision-making process because delegation of responsibilities was widely observed to intensify involvement and empowerment. Here are excerpts from the participants:

I never fail to conduct consultation with my subordinates especially when an issue is at hand and a major decision is to be made. (PRES2)

I delegate responsibilities and closely follow-up on the progress of delegated tasks. At the same time, I am training people as good leaders who can analyze a situation, and develop and implement prudent decisions. (PRES3)

Employees and other stakeholders were empowered by the presidents through consultation and delegation of responsibilities. This is in harmony with Northouse's (2010) affirmation that participative leadership allows subordinates to share in decision making. Delegation is important since it is a signal to the employee that he or she is considered by the supervisor to be capable, task competent, and organizationally important (Ghumro, Mangi & Soomro 2011).

Life-long learning

The presidents advocated continuous education, sponsored professional advancement and mentored high-potential employees. This has been their method of ceaselessly training people to promote the career development of deserving faculty and staff with the aim of producing a new class of leaders. Selected statements are the following:

The faculty and administrative staff are eligible for faculty and personnel training, development, and scholarship grants for the pursuits of professional development or advanced degrees. (PRES4)

You should be a good mentor or teacher first and foremost so that you can have the credibility to lead. I have trained university officials who can continue with my programs when I retire. (PRES1)

In view of the personnel's essential role in attaining the strategic goals of the university, the presidents advocated life-long learning by encouraging faculty members and staff to upgrade their academic qualifications. Jacob, Xiong and Ye (2015) asserted that effective professional development requires support from the university's top-level administration. The presidents accepted their responsibility to develop future leaders by mentoring high-potential employees. The mentoring duty of leaders was emphasized by Kets de Vries (2011) who conveyed that coaching helps employees develop the qualities that have been proven to be associated with success.

Collective efforts

The presidents acknowledged their responsibility for supporting teamwork among university personnel in order to accomplish objectives. They encouraged personnel to work with colleagues since everyone is reliant on others in putting into action the plans and policies of the university. The following statements illustrate this idea:

I encourage my personnel and faculty to work collaboratively in the university. I always subscribed to the idea that working together precedes winning together. (PRES2)

I encourage collaborative work among my followers by providing them with structures and resources to enable them to work together. (PRES5)

One significant approach ascertained by the presidents to strengthen the position of universities to realize their objectives is by way of collaboration. Kelly and Schaefer (2014) advocated this by voicing that collaboration maximizes individual contribution through the combined effect of the collective intelligence of everyone involved. Kouzes and Posner (2002) pointed out that outstanding leaders are effective at working with people by building trust in others, valuing teamwork and promoting collaboration.

Inspirational leadership

The presidents were aware that inspiration can motivate people to perform optimally. They made use of various forms of encouragement such as exhibiting a positive outlook and modelling ideal attributes to fill the workforce with enthusiasm. The following answers support this finding:

Enthusiasm and positive energy are manifestations of the continuing interest in achieving the organization's vision, mission, and goals and objectives. (PRES4)

One way of motivating people to embrace the work they are doing is to serve as a model. (PRES3)

Connecting with others and sincerely caring for them have allowed the presidents to be inspirational. Kousez and Posner (2003) espoused this by pronouncing that genuine acts of caring uplift the spirits of people. The presidents also earned the trust and respect of the people because of their optimistic standpoints. Arakawa and Greenberg (cited in Nel, Stander & Latif 2015) surmised that optimistic leaders influence their followers positively and therefore increase their engagement and well-being.

Recognition of exemplary work

Praise and commendation were used by the presidents to let faculty and staff know that their exceptional efforts are genuinely appreciated. Through monetary and non-monetary incentives, all personnel were made aware that they are viewed as valuable members of the university. The following are consistent with this point:

The performance-based incentive bonus provides additional monetary benefits to high performing offices and personnel. (PRES4)

Oftentimes faculty and personnel are recognized for their achievements in programs, in the school paper, website, tarpaulins. (PRES1)

Recognition was generously presented by the presidents since monetary incentives, praises, awards and citations were seen to bolster excellent performance of designated responsibilities. Heathfield (2018) pointed out that the essential results that people create for the organization are reinforced by employee recognition. Through recognition, employees gain a better understanding of how they can significantly contribute in the attainment of organizational goals. Kouzes and Posner (cited in Northouse 2010) portrayed effective leaders as attentive to the need for recognition and are willing to give praise to workers for jobs well done.

3.2. Beneficial influence of transformational leadership actions to universities

A range of beneficial effects were attained on account of the transformational leadership actions of the university presidents. The exhaustive assessment of the presidents' notions regarding the influence of their transformational leadership practices revealed four themes: first-rate education, congenial environment, culture of excellence and competent personnel.

First-rate education

The Higher Education Reform Agenda of the government mandates state universities to provide good quality education. An important favorable effect of the transformational leadership deeds of the presidents is the improvement of the learning process which yielded globally-competitive graduates. Stated below are some of the presidents' accounts:

acknowledged in the country and in the Asia-Pacific region for world-class graduates (PRES1)

This is translated into excellence in the quality of learning provided to students. Student development has improved significantly. (PRES4)

The valuable influence of transformational leadership on student outcomes was confirmed in a number of relevant literature. Jovanovic and Ciric (2016, p.500) opined that the "practice of transformational leadership style convince, inspire and motivate students towards the achievement of excellent results". In a study, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) expounded that the links between transformational leadership and student outcomes suggest that "the closer educational leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to have a positive impact on students' outcomes" (p.664).

Congenial environment

The efforts of the presidents to encourage teamwork among all personnel brought about well-established congenial environments in the universities. The atmosphere of cooperation gave rise to a sense of collective responsibility and accountability in all components of university work. Quoted are some of the participants' explanations:

I can say that we have an active culture of collaboration and complementation. I believe that through collaboration, we have a collegial or interconnected body. (PRES3)

Most beneficial is building a friendly environment which led to harmonious relationships in the university. (PRES1)

A culture of collaboration is now well-established as a result of the dedicated endeavours of presidents to foster cooperation and solidarity among all personnel. Collaboration paved the way for university personnel to accept and support progressive changes initiated by the presidents. Hauserman, Ivankova and Stick (2013) aptly endorsed this by construing that the creation of a collaborative environment is important in implementing school change, and the components of transformational leadership provide a conduit for achieving this goal.

Culture of excellence

Being catalysts of distinct performance, the presidents were successful in making excellence as the norm in their universities. They set high performance standards for followers by conveying their expectations for excellent work and by promoting innovative practices. The following answers support this finding:

Conveyance of expectations concerning excellence, quality and high performance was accomplished through regular meetings and general assemblies. (PRES4)

They can use their creativeness and innovativeness to have the job done. Full support is given to research projects as these serve as avenues for innovation and creativity. (PRES2)

The presidents' transformational leadership actions influenced followers to achieve more than what is usually expected of them. They fixed lofty norms for performance outcomes and implored people to function at the ultimate level in order to create a culture of excellence. Mintrom (2014) shared that a culture of excellence must permeate every aspect in an educational institution. The greatest challenge organizations face today is to get the best out of people and have them work collectively toward common goals.

Competent personnel

A number of transformational leadership practices of the presidents gainfully stimulated personnel to embrace positive mind-sets. Their advocacy for continuous education resulted in faculty and staff empowerment. Following are remarks from presidents:

The faculty development program has empowered people to improve their competence. (PRES4)

Major positive effects of transformational leadership practices are first, people are competent own the goals and objectives of the university. (PRES5)

The enhanced competency of personnel is another valuable product of the leadership actions of the presidents. This was attained by means of providing meaningful experiences for the professional growth of personnel thereby uplifting their morale, elevating their commitment and increasing their collective efficacy. Holland (cited in McDonald 2009) confirmed this by saying that the improvement of teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge is one of the most important investments a government can make in education.

3.3. Framework of transformational leadership and its beneficial influence

The framework which emerged is a structure which outlines a set of broad concepts which may be utilized by heads of educational institutions in enhancing their leadership practices.

It is an evidence-based confirmation of Gunn's (2018) contention that transformational school leaders direct, trust and motivate teachers and students to unceasingly improve, thereby creating the finest environment for learning.
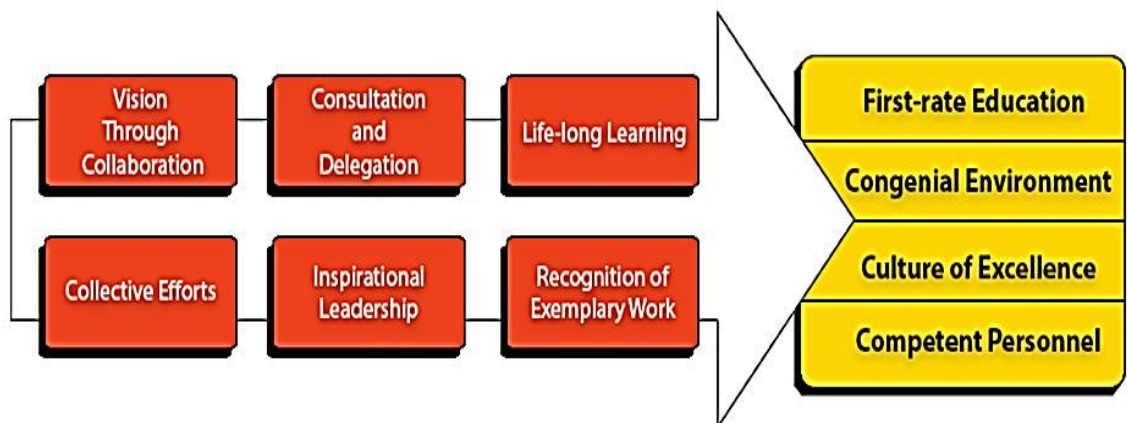

FIGURE 1 - NICDAO'S FRAMEWORK OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ON STATE UNIVERSITIES.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key findings in this study ascertained that transformational leadership has an evident positive effect on universities.

The wide-ranging actions of the presidents covered the crafting of the vision through collaboration, consultation and delegation, life-long learning, collective efforts, inspirational leadership and recognition of exemplary work.

Valuable outcomes in the universities stemmed from the presidents' transformational leadership practices. The advantageous effects were made up of first-rate education, congenial environment, culture of excellence and competent personnel which allowed the universities to suitably respond to fast changing platforms in the higher education system.

The study distinctly illustrated how the presidents utilized transformational leadership practices to engage the hearts, minds and skills of officials, faculty and personnel to excellently achieve the goals of their respective universities particularly the ultimate objective of educational institutions which is to holistically develop students.

Educational leaders in higher education institutions must make use of the best practices in transformational leadership which emerged in order to excellently effect developmental change and optimally attain the objectives of their institutions. To upgrade their leadership proficiencies, university presidents and other school heads must reflect on their existing practices by equating these with transformational leadership practices since this study confirmed the assertion of leadership theorists that in the academe, transformational leadership is most effective.

Transformational leadership should be made as an essential component of leadership courses and programs in the field of education to heighten the consciousness and enrich the appreciation of future educational leaders about essential transformational leadership characteristics which are best suited to surmount various challenges.

Further studies should be conducted on the subject of transformational leadership which shall encompass different levels of education. These must be carried out in other school contexts to offer valuable insight for educational leaders and enhance their vital aptitudes in a systematic and progressive manner.

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