

Leadership and Creativity

Mojgan Afshari, Saedah Siraj, Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani & Marjan Afshari

Department of Educational Management, Planning and Policy, Faculty of Education Building, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Abstract: This article reports on the literature associated with the role of transformational leadership on followers' creativity. Reviewing the literature indicated that transformational leadership behaviors closely match the determinants of innovation and creativity at the workplace, some of which are vision, support for innovation, autonomy, encouragement, recognition, and challenge. In fact, transformational leaders can encourage creativity through intrinsic motivation, empowerment of followers, and climate supportive of innovation at work environment. It is suggested that leaders should develop their style of leadership and learn the transformational leadership components of charisma (idealized influence), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration in order to enhance the creative performance of their employees.

Key words: Leadership, Creativity, Transformational leadership, Generative thinking.

INTRODUCTION

Innovation and creativity are the key factors to the success and competitive advantage of organizations (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). Innovation and global competition has motivated organizations to exert creativity to improve the quality of their products and increase efficiency and effectiveness of their organizations (Andriopoulos and Lowe, 2000). According to (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009) "creativity is the production of novel and useful ideas, and innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization" (p. 461). Many researchers believed that leadership is the significant factor in creating creativity in organization (Mumford, *et al.*, 2002; Shin and Zhou, 2003). Recently, researchers have given increased attention to the influence of transformational leadership on creativity and innovation (Jung, Chow, and Wu, 2003; Shin and Zhou, 2003).

In fact, "one of the best styles of leadership that can change and transform individuals is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Kent, *et al.*, 2001; Afshari *et al.*, 2010). According to (Northouse, 2009), transformational leaders create changes within organizations. "This type of leadership is becoming more and more important to organizations, as workforces become more diverse, technology improves and international competition heightens" (Afshari, *et al.*, 2010). Numerous studies have reported that transformational leadership has a significant effect on the performance of followers and organizations (Dvir, *et al.*, 2002; Lowe, *et al.*, 1996) but there are limited research on the effects of this type of leadership on followers' creativity. The current study is based on this pressing need and seeks to identify the effect of transformational leadership on students' creativity..

Transformational leadership and creativity:

According to (Elkins and Keller, 2003; Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009), "transformational leadership behaviors closely match the determinants of innovation and creativity at the workplace, some of which are vision, support for innovation, autonomy, encouragement, recognition, and challenge" (P.462). In fact, these behaviors are as instrumental for promoting creativity (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998). In a systematic review of the literature about the nature of creativity, Torrance (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998) found that "teachers who encourage initial disagreement, consideration of a wide range of alternatives, introduction of unusual solutions, and appreciation of ideas from all students promote creativity" (p. 112). These behaviors correspond to two component of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998).

Leaders who display intellectual stimulation behaviors, can develop generative and exploratory thinking of their followers (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998). "Generative thinking consists of divergent thinking, including remote association and pattern switching; exploratory thinking refines ideas through elaboration and successive improvement of ideas into creative responses" (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998). In order to enhance generative thinking, such

Corresponding Author: Dr. Mojgan Afshari, Department of Educational Management, Planning and Policy, Faculty of Education Building, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: +603-79675116
E-mail: mojganafshari@um.edu.com

leaders encourage their followers to apply nontraditional thinking, to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate problems. Moreover, they are most likely to enhance exploratory thinking by “encouraging critical thinking, rationality and rethinking of ideas by group members” (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, intellectual stimulation teachers can “introduce the creativity-enhancing force of stimulation into the idea generation process” (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998).

Also, leaders who display individualized consideration behaviors respect and value each group member’s viewpoint and ideas (Taggar, 2002). They help their students to expand their knowledge and information to utilize in solving problems (Taggar, 2002). “These networks of expanded knowledge may introduce the creativity-enhancing force of stimulation into the idea generation process” (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, transformational leaders who act as inspirational motivation can enhance followers’ creativity. These leaders can “encourage and inspire their followers to link their self-concept to the collective interest of the group and its mission, which increases followers’ intrinsic motivation to work collectively” (Sosik, *et al.*, 1998).

Transformational Leadership And Intrinsic Motivation:

Intrinsic motivation is the single most important characteristics of creative people. Numerous studies have shown that there is significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and creativity (Amabile, *et al.*, 2004; Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). “Intrinsic motivation refers to the motivational state in which employees are interested in a task for its own sake, rather than for the external outcomes or rewards related to the task” (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). According to (Oldham and Cummings, 1996), the supportive leader plays an important role in encouraging creativity through intrinsic motivation at work environment. Transformational leaders, who value and respect their employees’ feelings, develop their self-confidence, help them to improve as individuals and show them ways to get the goals; can increase employees’ interest in their tasks (Bass and Riggio, 2006). It is clear that “followers under this kind of supportive leadership will be intrinsically motivated and ultimately more creative” (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009).

In fact, inspirational leaders can inspire their followers through motivation to become committed to and a part of the shared vision in the organization (Northouse, 2009). Moreover, transformational leaders who display individual consideration provide a supportive climate, listen carefully to the individual needs of followers, increase employees’ motivation to focus more and do better their tasks (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). Also, intellectual stimulation leaders stimulate followers to be creative and be enthusiastic in accomplishing their task effectively. This is supported by (Shin and Zhou, 2003) who conducted a study about transformational leadership and creativity among Korean students. They found that intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and students’ creativity. In other words, transformational leadership can affect students’ creativity through intrinsic motivation. The teaching strategies that they use to develop the knowledge can increase students’ attitudes towards learning and motivate them to carry out the tasks.

Transformational Leadership And Psychological Empowerment:

According to (Deci, Connell, and Ryan, 1988), empowerment is another source of creativity. People who are empowered can show creative behavior (Jung, *et al.*, 2003). In line with this idea, (Sheldon, 1995) stated that creative people have personal autonomy. Transformational leadership may increase the empowerment of followers. “Transformational leaders, by individualized consideration, can enhance self-confidence of their followers and heighten personal development that leads to follower empowerment” (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). Moreover, transformational leaders increase follower empowerment by providing challenge and meaning to their work (Avolio, *et al.*, 2004). (Dvir and his colleagues, 2002) conducted a study on impact of transformational leadership on follower development and found that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership role of teachers and students development and students performance in schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that students under transformational leadership are encouraged to seek creative approaches in completing their tasks and feel empowered.

Transformational Leadership And Perception Of Support For Innovation:

Organizational climate is one of the most important dimensions of creativity (Maimone and Sinclair, 2010). (Maimone and Sinclair (2010) found that organizational climate (cooperative climate and innovative climate) influence creativity at the workplace. Also, they added that the relationship between leader and follower and the diffusion of a positive climate are positively correlated with the level of emphasis on creativity. Transformational leader can establish a pleasant environment and stimulate followers to be creative and innovative. “They support followers as they try new approaches and develop innovative ways of dealing with organizational issues” (Northouse, 2009).

In fact, these leaders by “intellectually stimulating their followers, championing innovation, and articulating a compelling vision throughout their organizations, help establish an organizational climate where employees feel challenged and energized to seek innovative approaches in their jobs” (Koene, *et al.*, 2002; Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). Therefore, teachers who act as transformational leaders can create an open, flexible, unconventional, and student-centered environment (Andiliou and Murphy, 2010). In such environment, personality characteristics, thinking styles, knowledge, and skills needed for creative thinking will be developed (Andiliou and Murphy, 2010).

Conclusion:

Education has a crucial role in fostering students' creative and innovative thinking (Andiliou and Murphy, 2010). Teachers as transformational leaders should raise each child's creative potential by developing of knowledge, skills and attributes related with creativity. Research studies showed the important role of transformational leadership on creativity. Also, literature indicated that the supportive leader plays an important role in encouraging creativity through intrinsic motivation, empowerment of followers, and climate supportive of innovation in the work environment. It is suggested that school principals and teachers should engage in transformational leadership behaviors (charisma, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration) in order to enhance the creative performance of their students.

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