

Justification and criticism of transformational leadership



Leadership can be described as an important quality of a person, a vital attribute for an organisation or a key source for an effective team towards attaining success. In these ways, leadership occupies its space in different fields and proves to be important in several aspects. The role of a leader is very important in a management field in terms of taking the organisation towards success or failure, as Drucker (1985) defines “ Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things”.

According to Cox (2001), the leadership has been classified into two types: Transformational and Transactional. This differentiation was initially made by Downtown (1973, as cited in Barnett, McCormick and Connors, 2001).

Transformational leader to be briefly explained is the one who possess a good vision and commitment towards success and motivates his followers and encourage them to increase their work potential. Whereas a transactional leader works in a task oriented manner and behave rigid with no place for personal emotions. In this modern world, business culture changes more rapidly prior to time and it is mandatory that skill and custom of the leadership has to adapt these changes. Heiftz and Laurie (1997) claim that: Instead of maintaining standard, leaders have to challenge the style of doing business and facilitate others in order to distinguish immutable values from historical practices that must go. In this essay, certain counter arguments for transformational leadership are critically analysed and a position has been adopted that transformational leadership is better in the current business atmosphere. The reasons are articulated with characteristic feature of transformational leadership. This is further justified with the

explanation of some successful facts about notable transformational leaders and their success in their business.

Criticisms of Transformational leadership:

Transformational leadership being one of the best leadership models has some criticisms regarding several factors like personality, complication, clarity and other factors. Johnson and Kepner (2002) explain the key criticism within transformational leadership is that, it possesses high probability for the abuse of power. This is concerned with morality of leadership, as in terms of emotional perspective a transformational leader influence his follower. If the direction or the path tends to be in wrong track, then it would result in bad consequences. Further Bass (1997) notifies that, transformational leadership lacks the quality of ensuring and balancing the respective interests and influences that might facilitate to avoid dictatorship and minority suppression. Some notable examples of this model are Adolf Hitler, Osama bin Laden and Rev Jim Jones who was the main role in massive Jonestown suicide. These are the people considered to be the negative side of transformational leadership.

The second critic is that, transformational leadership is more often concentrated in developing an individual personality trait rather than a conduct through which people may be instructed (Bryman, 1992). This result in a difficult situation to train people in this approach, as most of the people will find complicated to adopt this quality. Since transformational leadership is a combination of several leadership models, it is more complicated to understand the concept and teach. In a transformational leadership, the leader is considered as a visionary idol and the leader involve in the business

<https://assignbuster.com/justification-and-criticism-of-transformational-leadership/>

process along with his followers. This creates a dilemma in viewing the leadership in a trait perspective. The third critic provided by Avolio (1999) is that, the transformational leadership is discriminatory and autocratic. This further brings to another critic, the lack of conceptual clarity. The transformational leadership covers a wide range of activities like motivation, inspiration, building trust and furthermore, this creates confusion in terms of concept when compared to other leadership model, as Bryman (1992) pointed out that transformational and charismatic leadership are often considered to be identical with respect to their qualities. The fourth argument is about dimensions of transformational leadership as not clearly mentioned. A scientific research by Tracey and Hinkin (1998) has shown considerable intersections among the dimensions of transformational leadership; it notifies that the dimensions are not clearly defined and complicated to measure. The final critic deals with regards to ethics, describing that transformational leadership suppresses the minorities of an organisation. Keeley (2001) believes that the only way to prevent harm done to the followers by the managers is to avoid the managers from uniting towards a common interest or goal. This ethical statement put forwards an action which is contradictory of what transformational leaders are supposed to do.

These are some of the critical arguments by various researchers in the business field. The upcoming statements provide a justification for transformational leadership and some counter arguments for the above given critical statements.

Justification for transformational leadership:

Reviewing the critic's arguments, a question arises whether the transformational leadership could be followed by an organisation to run efficiently. A position has been adopted for transformational leadership in this essay and the facts are described and clearly articulated. The first point of criticism reviews the morality and misleading of power by transformational leadership. Bass (2006) explains the classification in transformational leadership as socialised and personalized characteristics in the book "Transformational leadership". The leaders using their abilities to inspire and lead their followers to a wrong path are termed to be pseudo transformational leaders. They possess similar elements as that of transformational leaders, but the motive would be personal and exploitative. It depends upon the individual characteristics in determining or choosing their motive and path, the concept of transformational leadership cannot be blamed. People regarding pseudo transformational model were discussed in the previous section; some examples of leaders who led a constructive path of transformational leadership are Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela etc.

Transformational leadership concentrates in developing individual personality trait and it is difficult to understand and teach the concept was another critic. The significant feature of transformational leadership is that, it concentrates the development of follower and tries to enrich their personality. It encourages and involves inspiring followers to commit to a shared vision and goal of the organisation. A transformational leader encourages others to become leaders; as a result the entire organisation will be filled with people possessing effective leadership qualities, Kelly (2003).

Furthermore, transformational leader motivates his followers to be innovative in problem solving and develop follower's leadership qualities by coaching, mentoring and providing both challenge and support. According to (Leithwood, as cited in Cashin et al, 2000, p. 1) Transformational leadership is that which: helps to redefine an individual mission and vision, thereby renewing their commitment and restructure the system for accomplishing the goal. This result in a mutual co-ordination within a leader and follower, where the follower grooms his qualities of leadership and the leader transform himself as a moral agent. Hence transformational leadership must be grounded in moral foundations.

Regarding the issue about conceptual clarity, transformational leadership has much in similar characteristic features as that of charismatic leadership. The charisma is a part of transformational leader, it is considered to be a factor which correlates with idealized influence (one of transformational leadership 4I's). It is generally classified as socialized and personalized categories. For an organisation to perform better, Howell and Avolio (1993), authentic charismatic or transformational leaders must be socialised leaders. Under transformational leadership, there are four vital organisational activities performed. Making a compelling case for change in order to heighten follower's sensitivity towards organisational change, inspire shared vision in order to attain new and better future, leading new changes and embedding the same. Certain critics notice transformational leadership as discriminatory and autocratic and a questionnaire whether it is directive or participative. Weber (1947) emphasized that during the period of crises transformational leader directed dependent followers with essential solutions

towards the problem; high inspirational leaders were extremely directive in terms of their process and approach. This clearly illustrates that, depending upon the situation a leader has to be either directive or participative in order to perform the task efficiently.

The issues concerned to dimensions of transformational leadership, the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) by Bass and Avolio (2000) provides a solution for this critic. The MLQ is used in measurement or determination of the dimensions for this leadership, which are Idealised influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. The ethical issue about the transformational leadership is about suppressing minorities. Being researched for over 25 years, in transformational leadership the objective is to convert individual attention towards larger cause. It results in transformation from selfishness to cooperative concern. The significant feature of this leadership model is that, it focuses on common goal (Ethics, 133). An effective team work is concentrated where majorities and minorities are in the same platform to attain an objective.

Successful Transformational leaders:

Transformational leadership model proves to be efficient not only in business, but in all other sectors where it is implemented. In order to strengthen the position of transformational leadership, so examples from the past and present are portrayed in this essay. In a historical perspective, Yates (2002) describes about Genghis khan. During the late 12th and 13th century, this man struggled for the unification of the Mongol tribes, which was one of the largest land empires. The mode of leadership used was <https://assignbuster.com/justification-and-criticism-of-transformational-leadership/>

transformational at that period of time. In terms of business field, Lou Gerstner- the former chairman and CEO of IBM is one of the best examples for transformational leadership. One of the notable events at IBM under Gerstner leadership is: recovery from the company's loss of \$1.8 billion in 1993 and making IBM as one of the largest private corporation in IT sector during that period of time. Sheppard (2002) describes that, Gerstner completely rectified the organisational culture and took IBM to certain heights. Regarding the field of government and military contexts, General Colin Powell overcame the notorious racism in United States military and amidst low expectations became the United States chiefs of staff in 1989. He is the first Afro-American to become the U. S Secretary of State in 1991. Chekwa (2001) notifies that with the vision and qualities of transformational leader, Powell attained this position.

Conclusion:

The image and the research concerned to transformational leadership might be relatively recent, but demonstration and research of its characteristics and features has been done years back. It is proved that transformational leaders have great capability to increase the performance beyond expectations and thereby able to make massive changes among individuals and organizations. In this essay, analysing most of the critic's statement it has been justified that transformational leadership is stated to be better in a business perspective.

When compared with other leadership styles like transactional or autocratic, transformational leadership addresses an individual needs, while the

transactional leadership addresses the organisational process and the <https://assignbuster.com/justification-and-criticism-of-transformational-leadership/>

functioning is more often considered to be monopoly in nature. The decisions made are concerned only with the leader, success and failure occurs in an equal probability. While transformational leadership indulges effective team work, the leader motivates his follower and provides constructive feedback. The significant feature is that, feedback is expected from the follower too thus creating a two way communication. In the current world, transformational leadership is highly recognised and practised by executives in modern organisation. The current business scenario is influenced by insecurity, global commotion and organisational volatility, for which transformational leadership would be a better solution to deal these factors efficiently.