

# Chapter 31

## Transformational Teacher Leadership: A Global Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*Transformational leadership along with change theory have become increasingly popular concepts within the field of educational leadership and administration during the last 20 years. This chapter examines the growth and popularity of transformational leadership, its relationship to organizational change, and the practical and theoretical justifications for its use as a relevant form of teacher leadership from a global and cross-cultural perspective. Emphasis is placed on discussing transformational teacher leadership practices as core strategies for modern educators in the process of overseeing teaching and learning objectives, contributing to school improvement and students' educational attainment, and managing essential change processes within globalized educational environments.*

### INTRODUCTION

Examining leadership theory from a global perspective facilitates discovering how reliable transformational leadership has been within educational environments, especially pertaining to how such environments define and handle change. It also illuminates the extent to which transformational leadership, in conjunction with change theory, can be a powerful tool for educators and the educational system (Black, 2015). Being unaware of key conceptual aspects of change as it relates to education means that specific tools and resources may be unapplied or unsupported for students who need them (Quin, Deris, Bischoff, & Johnson, 2015). There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership practices and accepting change that should be included in strategies for classroom educators (Quin et al., 2015). School systems that create strategies for change also show higher achievement and success and produce attractive schools for parents (Pounder, 2014).

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This chapter focuses on two intersecting concepts that together form a means of identifying connections between leadership choices and the environment in which leadership choices are made. When linked, transformational leadership and change theory provide insight into how educators cope with classroom change through teaching strategies. It is important to understand how leadership can affect change and, from a global perspective, offer robust evidence demonstrating the powerful link between change and leadership for today's educators.

It may be accepted that transformational leadership offers educators many ways to provide a clear vision of school strategies, classroom expectations regarding teacher leadership, and a curriculum promoting student excellence (Fang, Zakaria, & Shokory, 2016). Nonetheless, questions concerning what transformational leadership is and why it has become so popular remain. The emergence of transformational leadership in education and its connection to change theory also raises the question of what makes someone a worthwhile leader. This chapter seeks to address these questions.

## **BACKGROUND**

Transformational leadership was initially conceived as a process whereby leaders strategically transform the system or organization by increasing their followers' achievement and motivation. In this way, transformational leadership is often defined as a leadership style in which a leader works with teams to identify needed change, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes change with committed group members (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2016). Researchers have noted that four characteristics—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation—differentiate transformational leadership from other leadership styles (Bass, 2000; Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015). Related to transformational leadership is change theory, which involves systematically examining patterns in how organizational processes occur, determining how to remove barriers to make those processes more efficient and effective, and creating a culture of continual improvement (Burke, 2017).

Within the educational environment, it has been argued that how teachers perceive their work environments significantly impacts their engagement in instructional activities (Allen, Grisby, & Peters, 2015). In this regard, transformational leadership can be well suited to education as it empowers individuals and provides them with hope, optimism, and energy as it defines a vision of productivity as they accomplish goals. Additionally, transformational leadership is often considered instrumental in establishing shared beliefs and values that help create comprehensive levels of change and innovation, and it nurtures a school culture that is oriented towards a learning ethos whereby individuals seek to enhance their capacities, ways of thinking, and individual ambition. Learning and growth become a shared responsibility, and teachers feel empowered to be a part of the change process. Consequently, empowered teachers may focus more on actions and behaviors that will improve learning and students' educational outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; McCarley, Peters, & Decman, 2016; Mulford, Silins, & Leithwood, 2004). The question that must be asked, however, is how transformational leadership might be applied in actual pedagogic practices and educational contexts.

This chapter will trace transformational leadership's emergence as pivotal to educational environments through an analysis specific to the global view of the K-12 learner experience. Researchers and educators have argued that educational performance and outcomes cannot be improved without effective educational leadership (Fox, Gong, & Attoh, 2015). In an era in which educational reform and the need

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