Do teachers have access to adequate training on transformative leadership in schools for effective change management?

Paul Walton MSc
Nadeen International School, Bahrain
Email: p.walton78@icloud.com

Abstract – This study was created to take a closer look at transformative leadership and the way in which it could be used to effectively transform schools. The term transformational leadership was used by Bass as he used the term "transformational" instead of "transforming." Bass (1985). He included four elements of this transformational leadership including individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. It looks further into the current training available for school leaders and how to implement a change management process in an educational setting. According to Yukl, there are tips for transformational leadership (five in total), many of these relating to the 8-step model from Kotter (2002). Active Listening is key and as Covey states "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." Stephen R. Covey (2004). Interacting with staff demands a balance as this is an opportunity to listen and learn but this shouldn't come at a cost of compromising what you will refer to later on when you meet your team and start the journey together. I refer to Collins as he refers to 3 approaches including "Disciplined people: means getting the right people and keeping them focused on excellence. Disciplined thought: means being honest about the facts and avoid getting side-tracked. Disciplined action: means understanding what is important to achieve and what isn't." Jim Collins (2001).

Index Terms – transformational leadership, leadership, change management, strategic plan

Contents –

1. Introduction
2. What is Transformative Leadership?
3. Current training offered for Leaders in Education?
4. Change Management in schools
5. How to start a Change Management process?
6. How to create a Strategic Plan?
7. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Over the past 30-50 years, transformational leadership has been considered through a series of studies on its impact to a change management process in various companies and the effect on employees. Many schools now publish a strategic plan that has been created using the structure and research-based approach of change management to all stakeholders in the community.

In this article, I wish to argue that the greater the variety and quality of leadership programmes available, the better equipped schools are to implement a change process and a longer-term focus on improving the quality of education for all.

I will investigate transformational leadership, the current training available for staff in school and starting a strategic plan. I will research the impact of the current educational training in schools that helps to prepare leaders for this change management process and if this is sufficient to give enough support and knowledge to school leaders when they are delivering a school improvement process that requires all staff to be involved and actively promote the vision, mission, and values of the school during this improvement cycle. I will look into the views from Kotter, Collins and Bass in connection with change management and building institutes of lasting change.

2. What is Transformational Leadership?

The term transformational leadership was used by Bass as he used the term "transformational" instead of "transforming." Bass (1985). He included four elements of this transformational leadership including individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.

Bass (1985) added further on how this measure could be tracked in terms of motivation and outcomes from employees. This concept developed from employees working for something more than self-gain, to follow an inspiring cause, mission and belief that creates a new identity. The efforts and hard work of the leader create further admiration and belief in the change. This in turn encouragers the followers to challenge the status quo and to create and implement new ideas and ways to be successful as a business.

According to Yukl, there are tips for transformational leadership (five in total), many of these relating to the 8-step model from Kotter (2002). He too includes setting a vision, turning that vision into small steps, and signposting the successes along the way.

3. Current training offered for Leaders in Education?

The department of education in the UK (2014) has 40 accredited providers of the current NPQs (National Professional Qualifications) for leaders and aspiring leaders to enroll onto. For each of these courses, candidates will lead a school change program over two terms to improve student outcomes. The courses offered range from Executive Leadership, Headship, Senior Leadership and Middle Leadership.

Before 2012, all headteachers were required to have the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) from its introduction in 1997. Since then, this is no longer compulsory. Although, as mentioned, in these qualifications, you have an opportunity to apply the theory of research-based study in the school setting.

School workforce in England (2021), mentioned there are over 22,000 headteachers in the UK.

According to Explore-education (2022), 24,895 mentors have been trained as part of the training programme in the academic year 2021 to 2022 for ECF (Early Career framework) and NPQs. This is

source to show a long-term investment in the training of all school leaders in the UK. 29,425 staff members have now started on one of the NPQ courses with funding provided.

Further training including school-based application of knowledge can be found in a range of postgraduate courses. In 2017, 58% of educators had a masters, education specialist or doctors' degree. According to PISA, this number varied from 39% to over 80% in Europe and Asia, mainly depending on the country and region which teachers were studying.

This shows a variance in the number of professionals in educational settings with similar degrees and qualifications.

4. Change Management in schools

The change management strategies mentioned previously have been translated into the education domain using strategic plans, annual improvement, and development plans by schools. These form the fundamentals for inspection and accreditation criteria along with being defined as good practice.

Creating guidelines for managing change accordingly to *Teachthought* (2021), is essential as we don't spend enough time planning for or thinking about how to manage change in schools. From this research it mentioned how to manage the perception, making change a part of the school culture and being aware of preconceived notions.

Evidence of referring to change management and the strategies used can be found in Chalk (2021), as it refers to 'defining your vision', building a team and creating a model based on a reflective, iterative process. Managing people is an important part of managing the change and this is highted in the sections of the study with regards to asking for input, listening, and identifying risks.

In any school change process, collecting data is fundamental before you start the first 90 days Watkins (2013). Walking around the school, feeling the atmosphere and culture is extremely important, being visible, approachable, and positive are all good messages to send out on the first week.

5. How to start a Change Management progress?

Active Listening is key and as Covey states "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." Stephen R. Covey (2004). Interacting with staff demands a balance as this is an opportunity to listen and learn but this shouldn't come at a cost of compromising what you will refer to later on when you meet your team and start the journey together. I refer to Collins as he refers to 3 approaches including "Disciplined people: means getting the right people and keeping them focused on excellence. Disciplined thought: means being honest about the facts and avoid getting side-tracked. Disciplined action: means understanding what is important to achieve and what isn't." Jim Collins (2001).

The data collection period starts in the first 90 days and this is crucial to gathering quantitative and qualitative data regarding the current state of the school. Gathering facts to show where the school currently is in a measurable way. This lends itself perfectly to a future discussion about fairness and

consistency using a data-driven approach Kampen (2005) to collecting feedback as well as the informal conversations. I think this is a great platform to start from.

Simple changes are made to create momentum. The 'quick wins' to be completed in the first few weeks, adding traction to change, *Collins' fly wheel*, Collins (2001). This helps set up the third part of separating what is important to achieve not just in the short term but also in the medium and long. It's a great way to really start in a proactive sense.

After this first phase of 'data collection', this is normally collated by the (SLT) school leadership team and then shared with staff. The outcome is the feeling of being listen to and being a part of the upcoming change. This gives the SLT a broad range of different types of feedback and is an exciting way to see part of the picture that is the 'challenge' moving the school forward.

Employees may question 'why do we need to change?', schools will have the facts listed, representing the whole staff. This then creates a sense of urgency as mentioned in the 8-Step Process for Leading Change by Kotter (2002). The sense of urgency can be clearly communicated to all staff together.

6. How to create an effective Strategic Plan?

The school strategic plan Ong (2016) is the next phase to share after revisiting the 'purpose' of the school through the Vision, Mission, and Values. These are core to your strategic plan. During the process of creating and implementing the strategic plan, Vision, Mission, and Values may be revisited and updated. Key questions could be:

- Are they current? When were they reviewed?
- Do they represent the school?
- Do they provide guidelines, purpose and tangible outcomes that represent the intended journey of the school?
- Do they excite, give a real focus and cause for embracing the challenges ahead?
- Are they understood, visible and do the community have ownership over these?
- Are they embedded?

The purpose of the plan is to give the school a direction to aim for, relating to the educational decisions, ideas and improvements planned. To make sure that all resources are used efficiently, purposefully and in a logical manner including priorities of goals created.

There is no standard layout, no right or wrong way to format the plan but it should include many of the helpful areas below: Once the plan is complete, this should be shared with all stakeholders and published on the school website. Yearly improvement plans will feed into this and show the progress made but overall, the document will produce projects culminating in a 3-5 year period of improvement to work towards the vision of the school. At this point, the school have made a clear decision in which direction to head.

If this process has invited everyone to contribute, to have an opinion and it's been an open project, enabling all to input, this is an incredibly positive step forward. Listening, formulating ideas, and then

implementing these in a meaningful way. Flander states "You cannot be everything to everyone. If you decide to go north, you cannot go south at the same time." —Jeroen De Flander (2019). Updates on the strategic plan are shared in a clear and transparent way to unite the community, including Annual School Improvement Plans, Strategic Plan uploaded to the School Website, progress of areas shared visually through infographics, pictorially etc. Staff Meetings, SLT Meetings.

A starting point for a Strategic plan can include many of the elements listed below:

- Theory behind what a Strategic Plan is?
- Why it is needed?
- Vision, Mission, and Values
- Long term/Strategic goals
- SWOT Analysis
- Yearly Objectives
- Action Plans
- Process used to create the plan and those involved

Conclusion

From the research in this study, it makes it clear that those schools that have implemented the change management techniques either by referencing these in the development of strategic plans or by referring to these in the process of creating such plans are better equipped for change management and improving the educational outcomes in their schools. Many of the schools have directly referenced the successes and academic outcomes of students, staff highlights and other KPI measures showing a successful cycle of improvement.

I believe from the evidence from this research shows that change management strategies are used in education as part of a regular cycle to improve the outcomes for students. There is an abundance of training opportunities from formal qualifications to online courses available for educators to take, there is a high number of current qualified teachers across various regions of the world and this number has increased in the last 20 years with the number of formal qualifications that teachers hold going into education. Although now not compulsory, the NPQH or similar school-based applications of research-based change management study are being more common for teachers to pursue, these include direct models used by Kotter (2002) and Collins (2001), built on the background research of Bass (1985).

Training referenced is adequate and when this is applied, schools have a clear focus on the steps to change, milepost that they have celebrated and are aligned to a single vision.

References

Bass (1985) model of transformational leadership. In T. Mech & G. B. McCabe (Eds.), *Leadership and academic librarians* (pp. 66–82). West-port: Greenwood Press.

Chalk (2021) *4 lessons on how to do Change Management at your School* available from: https://www.chalk.com/resources/change-management-at-school/

Department for Education (2014) *National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) available from:*
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-headship-npqh
18/03/2014

Expolore Education (2022) Teacher and Leader development: ECF and NPQs available from: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/teacher-and-leader-development-ecf-and-npqs/2021-22

Flander (2019) *The art of performance* available from: https://jeroen-de-flander.com/books/

Jim Collins (2001) *Good to Great* available from: *https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2018/05/good-to-great-collins-summary/* 01/05/2018

Kotter (2002) *Kotter's 8-step change model* available from: https://www.mindtools.com/a8nu5v5/kotters-8-step-change-model

Kotter (2002) *Kotter's 8-step change model* available from: https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/

Maria Kampen (2005) *Data Driven Instruction: Definition and 11 Strategies* available from: https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/data-driven-instruction/ 01/03/2015

Ong (2016) *7 reasons why schools need strategic planning* available from: https://envisio.com/blog/7-reasons-schools-need-strategic-planning/

Stephen R. Covey (2004) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.*

School workforce in England (2021) *School Workforce Census 2010-2020* available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1071794/School_leadership_in_England_2010_to_2020_characteristics_and_trends_-_report.pdf

Teachthought (2021) What are the best strategies for managing change in schools? Available from: https://www.teachthought.com/the-future-of-learning/change-in-schools/

Watkins, M (2013) *The First 90 Days* available from : https://www.mudamasters.com/en/change-management-leadership/first-90-days-mwatkins-summary 25/02/2019

Yukl, G.(1999). *An evaluation of conceptual weaknesses in transformational and charismatic leadership theories. Leadership Quarterly,* 10, 285-305; available from: https://www.langston.edu/sites/default/files/basic-content-files/TransformationalLeadership.pdf