Modernization without Demolishing Cultural Roots: The Role of Transformational Leadership

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Abstract. A general assumption is often made that modernization of a society or a group requires throwing away all their traditional beliefs and cultural artifacts and instead adopting those of the apparently advanced societies and groups. This paper argues that such an assumption is antithetical to the objectives of enduring and successful transformations. Transformational leadership—leadership that transforms societies and organizations—attempts to bring to the conscious what lies in the unconscious of followers. It is about expressing the true aspirations of people in a way that is better than how they themselves are able to express. Such a truly transforming leadership requires two distinct steps. The first step is to identify the core components of the culture and ensure that those cultural roots are not demolished in the name of modernization. The second step is to look at the various cultural artifacts that need to be modernized to keep in line with the changing environment. The radicals who strike at the roots and the conservatives who refuse to change artifacts are both not contributing to effective transformation. The paper concludes that knowing what is to be preserved and what is to be changed is the secret of effective transformational leadership. Transformational leaders bring about enduring change by presenting the cultural roots in an inspiring way and mobilizing followers' support to modernize existing practices.

The importance of modernization needs no elucidation. Modernization is something that every society or group has to definitely resort to, and no one would even ask for a reason to modernize. Modernization is after all using the modern or most advanced means for achieving one's goals. It is therefore but natural that transformational leadership or the leadership that brings about change would have everything to do with modernization. This paper discusses how transformational leaders can bring about authentic and enduring change through modernization.

Modernization

Modernization literally means adopting new or the latest ways of doing things. Black (1966: 7) defined modernization as the “process by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to the rapidly changing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man’s knowledge, permitting control over his environment.” According to modernization theory, societies could be classified as either modern or traditional, and modernization is the process

Transformational Leadership and Value System Congruence

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Abstract. This study looked at the relationship between transformational leadership and three types of value system congruence—leader-organization congruence, leader-follower congruence, and follower-organization congruence, separately for terminal and instrumental values. Findings indicate that follower’s terminal value system congruence with leader is positively related to transformational leadership, and this relationship remains significant even after controlling for leader-organization or follower-organization terminal value system congruence. Leader-organization congruence does not also moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and leader-follower congruence, in the case of both terminal and instrumental values. Leader-organization instrumental value system congruence is positively related to leader-follower instrumental value system congruence. No relationship is seen between transformational leadership and follower-organization congruence in the case of both terminal and instrumental values. Leader-follower congruence does not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and follower-organization congruence.

Keywords: congruence, leadership, transformational, values

1. Model overview

Burns (1978) considered transformational leadership to be a relationship wherein leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, become fused, leading to greater leader-follower congruence in value hierarchies. Thus, value system congruence between leader and follower is among the most important characteristics of transformational leadership. Organizations would however be more interested in knowing if transformational leadership also leads to greater congruence in value systems between employees and the organization. The extent to which leaders’ value systems are congruent with the organization’s would also affect the congruence of follower with leader and organization. This paper is an attempt to look at the relationship between transformational leadership and three types of value system congruence, i.e., leader-follower, follower-organization, and leader-organization value system congruence.

Burns (1978) defined leadership as a relationship that induces followers to pursue common or at least joint purposes that represent the values and motivations of both leaders and followers. Addressing the values of both leaders
and followers could be handled in two ways based on the nature of leader-follower interactions. Burns termed the first one as transactional leadership and the second as transforming or transformational leadership. Transactional leadership involves an exchange of benefits and is based on current values and motivations of both leaders and followers. Transformational leadership on the other hand, does not take the current values and motivations to be fixed, but rather seeks to change them.

1.1. Transformational leadership

According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership occurs when leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of values and motivations, and results in a transforming effect on both leaders and followers. The purposes of leaders and followers that might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Transactional leaders take the values, needs, motivations and purposes of followers as given and unchanging, but transformational leaders do not.

Bass (1985) defined a transformational leader as one who motivates followers to do more than they originally expected to do. Transformational leaders broaden and change the interests of their followers, and generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group. They stir their followers to look beyond their self-interest for the good of the group. Bass (1985) found that transformational leadership consisted of four factors – charismatic leadership or idealized influence, inspirational leadership or motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Followers have complete faith in charismatic leaders, feel proud to be associated with them, and trust their capacity to overcome any obstacle. Inspirational leadership involves the arousal and heightening of motivation among followers. Intellectual stimulation arouses in followers the awareness of problems and how they may be solved, and stirs the imagination and generates thoughts and insights. Individualized consideration involves giving personal attention to followers who seem neglected, treating each follower individually, and helping each follower get what he or she wants (Bass, 1998).

Superior performance is possible only by transforming followers’ values, attitudes and motives from a lower to a higher plane of arousal and maturity (Bass, 1985). Studies have found significant and positive relationships between transformational leadership and the amount of effort followers are willing to exert, satisfaction with the leader, ratings of job performance, and perceived effectiveness (Hater and Bass, 1988; Howell and Avolio, 1993; Ross and Offermann, 1997). Transformational leaders were judged to have better relations with higher-ups and to make more of a contribution to the organization than were those who were described only as trans-
actional. Transformational leadership contributes significantly to effective organizational policies and performance (Bass, 1998). The transformational leadership model adds to initiation and consideration in explaining the variance of subordinates’ satisfaction and ratings of leader effectiveness (Seltzer and Bass, 1990).

Leadership is a relationship between leaders and followers, and building this relationship requires an appreciation for the personal values of those who would be willing to give their energy and talents to accomplish shared objectives. Values form the very core of personality, and they influence the choices people make, the appeals they respond to, and the way they invest their time and energy (Posner and Schmidt, 1992). Values assume even more importance in the case of transformational leaders, since transformational leadership results in changing the needs and values of both leaders and followers.

1.2. Value system congruence

Rokeach (1973) defined a value as ‘an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.’ A belief concerning a desirable mode of conduct was called an instrumental value and a belief concerning a desirable end-state of existence was called a terminal value. Allport, Vernon and Lindzey (1960) considered a value to be a belief upon which human beings act by preference. In this vein, values may be thought of as internalized normative beliefs that can guide behavior. If a person values freedom as an end-state of existence, it means that he or she believes that freedom is preferable to slavery.

Values are enduring and it is important to understand values because values make a difference in terms of how people feel about themselves and their work (Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach, 1989). Several studies have demonstrated empirically how values affect personal and organizational effectiveness (Meglino, Ravlin and Adkins, 1989; O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991). Values can be conceptualized in two distinct ways – ipsative and non-ipsative. The ipsative design looks upon values as being hierarchical in nature, leading to the idea of a value system. Rokeach (1973, p. 5) defined a value system as ‘an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance.’ A set of rank-ordered values is called a value system. The second conceptualization of values does not necessarily look at values as hierarchically organized. It allows for variance in the importance of individual values, and in the importance of the full array of values held or the total importance of values to a person (Kabanoff and Holt, 1996; Kabanoff, Waldensee and Cohen, 1995; Ravlin and Meglino, 1987).
and stirs the imagination and generates thoughts and insights. Transformational leaders enable followers to think about old problems in new ways, and provide followers with new ways of looking at things that used to puzzle followers before. The last factor, namely individualized consideration, involves giving personal attention to followers who seem neglected, treating each follower individually, and helping each follower get what he or she wants (Bass, 1985).

Elevating Power of Leadership

According to Burns (1978: 4), “the result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.” Transformational leaders throw themselves into a dynamic relationship with followers who will feel elevated by it and become more active themselves, thereby creating new cadres of leaders. Transformational leadership alters and elevates the motives, values and goals of followers through the vital teaching role of leadership, enabling leaders and followers to be united in the pursuit of higher goals. Transformational leaders raise their followers up through levels of morality.

The issue of moral leadership concerned Burns (1978) the most. He considered moral leadership as emerging from, and always returning to, the fundamental wants, needs, aspirations, and values of the followers. Satisfaction of followers’ authentic needs is the primary objective of moral leadership. Burns held that transformational leadership “ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both” (page 20).

Mobilized and shaped by gifted leadership, sharpened and strengthened by conflict, values can be the source of vital change. At the highest stage of moral development persons are guided by near-universal ethical principles of justice such as equality of human rights and respect for individual dignity. This stage sets the opportunity for rare and creative leadership. Such leadership is transformational and it reaches into the need and value structures of followers, mobilizing and directing support for such values as justice and empathy. Such leadership has two characteristics. First, it is the kind of leadership that operates at need and value levels higher than those of the potential follower (but not so much higher as to lose contact). In its most effective form it appeals to the higher, more general and comprehensive values that express followers’ more fundamental and enduring needs. Second, it is the kind of leadership that can exploit conflict and tension within persons’ value structures. Contradictions can be expected among competing substantive values, such as liberty and equality, or between those values and moral values like honesty, or between terminal values and instrumental values (Burns, 1978).

The crux of moral leadership is taking followers to a higher level and not to a lower level. Followers are transformed irrespective of whether they are being taken upward or downward, but taking others downward cannot be really termed leadership. There is an implicit assumption that true leaders lead others to a better place, while taking others to a worse place is a form of manipulation or treating others as objects to be used. We could thus distinguish between two types of transformational leadership–authentic transformational leadership that takes followers upward, and pseudo-transformational leadership that takes followers downward. Pseudo-transformational leadership is in reality no leadership at all since it is a form of manipulation, and manipulation is at the opposite end of a continuum from leadership.

Cultural ideals provide a yardstick to distinguish between authentic and pseudo transformational leadership. Authentic transformational leadership brings to the conscious

Social values are phenomena that are highly socially desirable and tend to be strongly endorsed by all individuals. Simply recording the different things human beings value may not mean much, for that might not convey anything special about a particular individual; several individuals might have the same set of values. The relative importance of the different values – or the value systems – might however differ. That a person values happiness does not say much that is unique about that person, for most human beings value happiness. What matters most is how much a person values happiness in comparison with the other things that he or she values. If one knows that a person values happiness more than self-respect, one can have a more accurate picture of that person. It is only the ipsative (rank-ordering) measurement model that can capture the unique value configuration of an individual (Ravlin and Meglino, 1987).

Value system congruence between leader and follower could be defined as the extent of agreement between the leader’s value system and the follower’s value system. Value congruence between employees and their supervisors has been found to be significantly related to employee satisfaction and commitment (Meglino et al., 1989). Posner (1992) found that perceived value congruence was directly related to positive work attitudes. Weiss (1978) found that people aligned their values with the values of their leader if they perceived their leader to be competent and successful. Value congruence indicates a harmonious relationship between leader and subordinate, and should therefore result in greater satisfaction over time. Value congruence also indicates a strong identification of the subordinate with the leader.

Organizational values exist when the members of an organization share values (Wiener, 1988). Even though all members of an organization may not have the same values, a majority of active members would agree on them. Value system congruence between an individual and the organization could be defined as the extent of agreement between the person’s value system and the organization’s value system. Value congruence between employees and their organization has been found to indicate overall happiness and satisfaction with the organization (Feather, 1979). Socialization is the process through which an individual comes to understand the norms and values of an organization. The objective of socialization is to ensure that the value systems of individuals are in line with the value systems of the organization. Weak value system congruence between an organization and its member could result in either the member’s value system changing and becoming more similar to the organization’s, or the organization’s value system being changed, or the member leaving the organization (Chatman, 1989).
1.3. Leadership and value system congruence

1.3.1. Leader-follower value system congruence

Burns (1978) held that transformational leadership is based on the role of conscious purpose drawn from values. Transformational leadership involves the uncovering of contradictions among values and between values and practice, and the realigning of values in followers. Congruence between the value hierarchies of leaders and followers would produce a powerful potential for the exercise of purposeful leadership. The leader has an important role to play in transmitting values (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). The followers of transformational leaders experience a total and unqualified belief in and identification with the leaders and their mission. This identification would result in similarity of value systems between the transformational leaders and their followers since values are an important component of such identification. Transformational leadership focuses on the joint purposes of leader and follower, and often results in transforming those purposes. Only terminal values pertain to end-states of existence, and so the leadership that focuses on purposes will be related only to terminal values. Moreover, since the identification is total and unqualified, it would not depend on the extent to which the leader’s or the follower’s value system is congruent to the organization’s value system. Therefore, I have

*Hypothesis 1*: Transformational leadership will be positively related to terminal value system congruence between leader and follower.

*Hypothesis 2*: Transformational leadership will be positively related to terminal value system congruence between leader and follower irrespective of leader-organization terminal value system congruence and follower-organization terminal value system congruence.

1.3.2. Leader-organization value system congruence

When leaders have instrumental value systems similar to the organization’s, their followers are likely to feel more confident about achieving the leaders’ vision. They will be more inspired when leaders match the organizational environment concerning means to be used for achieving goals than when it is otherwise. The goals of leaders will appear more realistic and achievable when leaders and the organization assign relative priorities to means in similar ways. Leaders whose instrumental value systems match the organization’s will be seen as being more inspirational. This perception concerning inspirational leadership will also not depend on the extent to which followers’ instrumental value systems match their leaders’ or their organization’s.
and so forth. Accordingly, there are two sets of scriptures in Hinduism—primary and secondary. The first class of truths is chiefly embodied in the primary scriptures, and the second in the secondary scriptures. Throughout the evolution of the Indian worldview, it is found that for all periods, the primary scriptures are the final goal and authority, and if the secondary scriptures differ in any respect from the primary scriptures, that part of the secondary scriptures are to be rejected without mercy. It is found, then, that in all these secondary scriptures, the teachings are different. One secondary scripture says, this is the custom, and this should be the practice of this age. Another one says, this is the practice of this age, and so forth. Now this is one of the most glorious doctrines, that eternal truths, being based upon the nature of human being, will never change so long as human being lives; they are for all times, omnipresent, universal virtues. However, the secondary scriptures speak generally of local circumstances, of duties arising from different environments, and they change in the course of time. The existing customs and practices have been changed several times in the past. They will continue to be changed, and other secondary scriptures will come. This is one fact in the Indian Weltanschauung, that the primary scriptures being eternal will be the same throughout all ages, but the secondary scriptures will have an end. As time rolls on, more and more of the secondary scriptures will go, leaders will come, and they will change and direct society into better channels, into duties and into paths which accord with the necessity of the age, and without which it is impossible that society can live (Vivekananda, 1972). Mahatma Gandhi was a recent example of one such leader. He supported the caste or the class system in India (which is an essential, being based on the assumption that people are in different stages and hence have to be hierarchically ordered), but at the same condemned the practice of untouchability that had somehow been attached to the caste system.

Conclusion

Knowing what is essential and hence is to be preserved and what is non-essential and hence is to be changed is the secret of effective transformational leadership. Transformational leaders bring about enduring change by presenting the cultural roots, which are part of the collective unconscious, in an inspiring way. They also mobilize followers’ support to modernize existing practices that are non-essential or perhaps even detrimental. Modernization does not mean uprooting people from their culture and making them adopt the culture of some other society. On the other hand, transformational leadership would be authentic only if it takes followers to a better place without demolishing their cultural roots.

1.3.3. Follower-organization value system congruence
Transformational leaders relate the mission of their organization to the strongly held values that are part of their organization’s culture. The extent of identification of followers with the transformational leaders, or the extent to which their value systems are congruent with those of the leaders, would influence the ease with which the vision of the transformational leader can be shared by the followers. The more the followers identify themselves with their leader, the easier will it be for them to see the relevance of organizational values in fulfilling the mission of the organization as highlighted by the leader. Transformational leadership has a dyadic rather than a group effect on subordinates (Seltzer and Bass, 1990). It is the dyadic relationship between transformational leader and follower that results in converting followers into leaders (Burns, 1978). Therefore, any change in follower-organization value system congruence can only be a result of this dyadic relationship.

Hypothesis 7: Leader-follower value system congruence will be positively related to follower-organization value system congruence.
Hypothesis 8: Leader-follower value system congruence will mediate the
relationship between transformational leadership and follower-organization value system congruence.

2. Methods

I collected data for this study from a large, non-profit, national, human services organization in the United States. Blood services (collecting and distributing blood and blood products to hospitals) comprise a major portion of the organization’s domain of activity. Disaster relief, health services and armed forces services are the most important areas of operation after blood services. The organization has a total staff strength of 28,000, and operates on a $1.5 million annual budget.

2.1. Sample characteristics

Those whom I surveyed belonged to one of the 46 regional blood centers, spanning two northeastern states. Some of the respondents were handed over the surveys in person, generally at the beginning of routine departmental meetings, by an administrative official of the organization, and were requested to answer the surveys and return them immediately. Other respondents were sent the surveys through inter-departmental mail and completed surveys were returned through the same medium to the administrative official. All responses were anonymous, and this was made clear to every respondent.

2.1.1. Sample of leaders and followers

My sample of 100 leaders was drawn from nurse managers. The leaders were randomly chosen and were requested to fill in the Value Survey (Rokeach, 1973) to measure their value systems. A majority of leaders surveyed had been with the organization for at least 7 years. The median age of the leaders surveyed was 42 years. Of the 96 respondents who mentioned their gender, 71 were female and 25 were male. A subordinate of each of the leaders surveyed was then randomly chosen to answer the Value Survey (Rokeach, 1973) and the leadership questionnaire. An average leader had 10 subordinates from whom 1 subordinate was randomly chosen. Of the 99 subordinates who mentioned their gender, 73 were female and 26 were male. A majority of subordinates surveyed were at least 30 years old, and had been with the organization for at least 4 years. 78% of the respondents reported that they had been working with the leader they were rating, for not less than 1 year.