

# If Building Commitment for Knowledge-Based Decision to Create Quality Management : The Role of Transformational Leadership in Higher Education Governance Good in Developing Countries: A Literature Review

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## Abstract

This paper explores, especially through a systematic literature review, the role of transformational leadership in universities in developing countries in relation to university governance. This paper argues that this role needs to be explored because transformative leadership of tertiary institutions in developing countries is still little researched and provides debate with local cultural perspectives. This paper reviews the Google Scholar database, SAGE journals, Taylor and Francis journals, and Emerald journals with the keywords "Transformational leadership" AND "higher education". Articles selected by inclusion criteria are carried out in developing countries, conducted between 2016-2020, and are limited to only the 27 most relevant articles. In this article, as many as 27 research results were analyzed qualitatively. Three main themes specifically emerge as the role of transformational leadership in universities in developing countries. This role includes: as a driver and provider of infrastructure for participatory knowledge-based decision making, a drive for stakeholder commitment to carry it out, and a guarantor of quality-based higher education governance.

**Keywords:** transformational leadership, universities, developing countries, decision making, organizational commitment, quality management

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## 1. Introduction

Universities in developing countries are often left behind in efforts to improve the quality of education governance (Hadullo, Oboko, & Omwenga, 2017). Higher education in developing countries is generally faced with limited technology and infrastructure to manage tertiary institutions (Elnasr, Sobaih, Moustafa, & Ghandforoush, 2016). As a result, they have difficulty fulfilling the role of providing new human resources and technology to the industry to support the improvement of their status from developing countries to developed countries (Nakano, 2019). This is quite alarming considering the large number of educators in developing country universities obtaining their bachelor's degrees in developed countries (Al-Youbi, Zahed, & Tierney, 2020). Although there has been a trend of increasing prevalence of higher education and changes in economic structure in a number of developing countries (Sanchez & Singh, 2016), this has been contributed more by contributions from developed countries, for example in terms of communication and information technology (Kanwal & Rehman, 2017).

A number of efforts have been made to overcome this problem, for example by running an accreditation program (Nguyen & Ta, 2018) or leadership training programs with reference to the standard provided by developed countries (Bisaso & Hölttä, 2017). Critics state that programs driven by developed countries are not in accordance with the cultural characteristics of developing countries and can damage the cultural integrity which is an important identity of developing countries (Samier, 2019).

Western academics suggest a transformational leadership style as a solution for good university governance (Hallinger & Hammad, 2019), including for the needs of universities in developing countries (Gordon, 2016; Shah, Shah, & Pathan, 2017). Transformational leadership styles bring subordinates toward change with a number of strategies (Judge & Piccol, 2004). Transformational leadership styles have been found to play a large role in the setting of developed countries (Lauer & Wilkesmann, 2017). On the other hand, there are mixed findings regarding the role of transformational leadership in developing countries (Gaus, Basri, Thamrin, & Ritonga, 2020; Tajuddin, 2015; Tsheola & Nembambula, 2015). For example, Kondakci & Zayim-Kurtay (2019) argues that leadership in

tertiary institutions in developing countries must have a transformational leadership component but also retain the traditional academic leadership perspective. Even so, studies of university leadership in developing countries are still rare compared to developed countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia (Esen, Bellibas, & Gumus, 2018) .

Therefore, a better understanding of the role of transformational leadership in the governance of universities in developing countries will enable universities in developing countries to develop leadership training programs that are most useful for their needs. In addition, more universities in developing countries will be able to apply certain leadership styles as a result of observing the visible benefits. Based on this understanding, we seek to identify the role of transformational leadership in developing countries. The purpose of this literature review is to assess the role that leadership style has raised in the universities of developing countries. We hypothesize that there will be some positive roles that can be obtained by universities managed by transformational leaders.

## **2. Conceptual framework**

### **a. Transformational leadership**

The concept of transformational leadership was first put forward by Burns in 1978 as leadership that motivates subordinates to achieve goals higher than individual goals, which he considers are organizational goals, and elevates his morality to be more principled (Judge & Piccol, 2004) . In the first decade of its development, this concept was interpreted as a leader who inspired and motivated his subordinates to perform at a level that exceeded expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995) . Transformative leaders have a systematic strategy to achieve this goal. One strategy used is to value each individual for his contribution because he has taken part in the achievement of organizational goals. In this way, superiors make subordinates feel that their work is important and has motivation to achieve goals in the short and long term (Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012) . In its development, transformational leadership consists of four dimensions, namely (Phaneuf, Boudrias, Rousseau, & Brunelle, 2016) :

1. The ideal influence is the charisma and attitudes that leaders have that make them role models that motivate and influence subordinates.
2. Inspirational motivation, is the ability of leaders to be able to motivate subordinates to perform by increasing their expectations using an interesting vision of the future.
3. Intellectual stimulation, is the tendency of superiors to innovate, challenge the status quo, and be open to change and new ideas.
4. Individual consideration, is the attention, respect, and concern of the boss to himself and the development of subordinates.

Research using the transformational leadership construct reveals that this leadership style is able to achieve corporate quality improvement programs and sustainability performance (Burawat, 2019) , innovation achievements (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Matzler, Schwarz, Dautinger, & Harms, 2008; Samad, 2012) , corporate social responsibility (Alrowwad, Obeidat, Tarhini, & Aqqad, 2017) , and team development and project success (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016) . Researchers have also found that transformational leaders can improve performance at the individual and group level (Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011) , and the safety climate at work (Shen, Ju, Koh, Rowlinson, & Bridge, 2017) . In the education sector, transformative teachers make students more motivated to learn and engage in learning which in turn leads to achievements both socially and cognitively (Jovanovic & Ciric, 2016) .

One brief instrument that measures transformational leadership is the Global Transformational Leadership Scale (GTLS) from Carless, Wearing, & Mann ( 2000) . More recent studies generally choose to use GTLS to measure transformational leadership (Morrison, 2018) . Even so, the researchers suggest using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire ( MLQ ) if you want to draw conclusions based on the individual dimensions of transformational leadership (Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) .

### **b. Higher Education Governance**

Higher education governance is basically the application of good governance, namely participation, consensus, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equality and inclusiveness, and law enforcement / supremacy (Munawir et al., 2019) . Good university governance is the application of the basic principles of the concept of good governance in the systems and processes of governance in higher education institutions through various adjustments made based on the values that must be held in the management of higher education specifically and education in general (Munawir et al, 2019). In higher education, this can be demonstrated by the ability in vision, facilitating student self-development, human resource management, curriculum development, governance that supports the development of science and technology, representation, periodic evaluations, community service, academic guidance, student assistance, quality assurance systems , graduate tracking mechanisms, dissemination of research and service results, and robust database and information.

Leadership has a role both in good governance in general (Abdulrab, Zumrah, Almaamari, & Al-Tahitah, 2020) , and in good university governance (Munawir et al, 2019). Transformational leadership can even influence

good governance in a general context (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019) . Much research has been done on transformational leadership in universities (Balwant, 2016; Grossman & Sharf, 2018; Purwana, 2015) . However, there is no research that directly addresses the influence of transformational leadership on good university governance , especially in developing countries. This seems to be related to the complexity of the research process and the accompanying factors involved. Even so, we can understand this influence by referring to the impact of transformational leadership on variables that correlate with transformational leadership and good university governance. For example, learning organization capacity is an important factor for good university governance (Belle, 2016) . If transformational leadership influences learning organization capacity (Imran, Ilyas, Aslam, & Ubaid-ur-Rahman, 2016) , it can also be concluded that transformational leadership influences good university governance. On this basis, research now gathers the consequent variables of transformational leadership in tertiary institutions.

### c. Alternative Leadership Styles in Developing Countries

Transformational leadership styles in developing countries stumble on the leadership styles of universities that have been there before. In Africa, especially the West African region , many universities are dominated by the 'big man' (oga) leadership style where decision making over resources, power, and authority is in the hands of very few people who are at the top (Gordon, 2016; Kurasha, 2016 ) . In Middle Eastern and Islamic-based countries, the leadership style of higher education is based on spiritual welfare, ethics, and the unity of the ummah (Fry, Egel, & Fry, 2020) but it is still difficult to escape from nepotism (Mattar, 2016) . In many southern African countries, leadership is replaced by over-bureaucracy and managerialism (Tsheola & Nembambula, 2015) . In Indonesia, the college is managed by the neo-transactional stree t amakan recognition, tenderness, affection, and compassion (Gaus et al., 2020) . In South Asia, the consequential leadership style (charismatic popular) is the preferred leadership style (Yousaf, 2017) . It is clear that each leadership style has its advantages and disadvantages (Kondakci & Zayim-Kurtay, 2019) . Transformational leadership style does not appear to replace the old leadership style but appears as an option to achieve a certain goal that might not be achieved by the traditional leadership style that had already existed in developing countries. On this basis, this research needs to review what benefits transformational leadership can offer in the governance of tertiary institutions in developing countries.

### 3. Method

This paper uses the literature review method by reviewing Google Scholar databases, SAGE journals, Taylor and Francis journals, and Emerald journals with the keywords "Transformational leadership" AND "higher education". Articles selected by inclusion criteria are carried out in developing countries, conducted between 2016-2020, and are limited to only 27 of the most relevant articles.

The results of data collection are shown in Table 1. A total of 73 developing countries were represented in this study. Even so, 47 of them were contributed by one study (Papanthymou & Darra, 2017) that examined the factors of quality management in tertiary institutions in developing and developed countries. The variables that are the consequence of transformational leadership are collected and grouped into themes that have a qualitative conceptual similarity. The emerging themes are then discussed as research findings.

Table 1 Research Characteristics Reviewed

Countries	First Author	Consequences
Bahrain	Al-Khalifa	Organizational Performance
Bangladesh	Sarowardy	Descriptive study
Brazil, South Africa, and Syria	Filho	Innovation
China	Xiao	Knowledge Sharing, Task performance
Egypt	Dajani	Organizational Learning Capacity
India	Jyoti	Satisfaction with leader and relational identification
Indonesia	Sriwidadi	Knowledge Management, Sustainable competitive advantage,
Iraq	Al-Husseinii	Knowledge Sharing, Innovation
Libya	Mansur	Job satisfaction
Malaysia	Supermane	Knowledge Management
Malaysia	Yeap	Readiness for change, commitment to teach entrepreneurship
Nigeria	Okere	Descriptive study
Oman	Al-Balushi	Enabling environment
Pakistan	Zulfqar	Decision making
Pakistan	Farrukh	Intrapreneurial behavior
Pakistan	Khattak	Continuous Improvement
Qatar	Sharif	Descriptive study

Countries	First Author	Consequences
South Africa	Ndlovu	Organizational commitment
Syria	Khalifa	Organizational learning
Syria	Alamir	Organizational commitment
Turkey	Tasci	Lifelong Learning
UAE	Hijazi	Job satisfaction
UAE, Turkey, Sub-Saharan Africa (46 countries), Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Oman, Malaysia, Libya, Jordan, Iran, Brunei	Papanthymou	Quality Management
Uganda	Lubega	Job performance, but not employee engagement
Vietnamese	Phung	Knowledge Sharing
Vietnamese	Pham-Thai	Contextual performance
Yemen	Aldholay	IS Success

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### a. Decision Making (n = 9)

Decision making based on the legitimacy of policy makers is an important part of good university governance in order to achieve the vision, mission, and goals of higher education (Munawir et al, 2019). Transformational leadership is a leader who supports participatory decision making because it transfers decision-making authority to subordinates (Zulfqar, Valcke, Devos, Tuytens, & Shahzad, 2016) . Even so, not all university policy makers are parties who have the knowledge and basic material to contribute in deliberations to make decisions. Without sufficient initial knowledge, uninformed stakeholders such as students or the public will sit and listen to experts in an autocratic rather than democratic style. For this reason, transformative leaders need to supply stakeholders with knowledge and learning abilities on an ongoing basis.

Nine studies reviewed touched on the relationship between transformational leadership and this decision-making infrastructure (Al-Husseini, Beltagi, & Moizer, 2019; Dajani & Mohamad, 2016; Filho et al., 2018; Khalifa & Ayoubi, 2015; Phung, Hawryszkiewicz, & Chandran, 2019; Sriwidadi, Arief, Prabowo, & Muqarrabin, 2016; Supermane, 2019; Tasci & Titrek, 2020; Xiao, Zhang, & Pablos, 2017) According to the results of Dajani and Mohamad ( 2016 ) research in 298 academics in a number of universities high in Egypt , transformational leadership increases the capacity of learning organizations. Sriwidadi et al ( 2016 ) from Indonesia and Supermane ( 2019 ) report that transformational leadership leads to good knowledge management in universities . Filho et al ( 2018 ) found that transformational leadership is important to drive innovation in tertiary institutions . In addition, Khalifa and Ayoubi ( 2015 ) in the study of leadership styles in universities in Syria shows that transformative leadership helps organizational learning . Tasci and Titrek ( 2020 ) found that transformative leadership also helped in creating lifelong learning in higher education . Al-Husseini et al ( 2019 ) based on data from 250 academic staff in a number of universities in Iraq, Phung et al ( 2019 ) in Vietnam and Xiao et al ( 2017 ) who studied 163 graduate students in China, also found that transformative leadership encourages in knowledge sharing which in turn increases innovation .

Studies over the theme of the capabilities of organizational learning, knowledge sharing, innovation, organizational learning, lifelong learning, and knowledge management. All of them are important cognitive elements to equip all stakeholders with knowledge to make good and right decisions. In this realm, the dimensions of intellectual stimulation from transformative leadership become prominent.

It is interesting to note why the element of intellectual stimulation became prominent in transformative leadership in universities in developing countries. Developing countries are generally a collective culture that prefers charismatic leaders or community leaders to make decisions for the common good. The dimension that is more suited to this cultural tendency is the idealized influence which contains the superiors' emphasis on having a shared sense of mission (Yuan, Nguyen, & Vu, 2018) , rather than intellectual stimulation. Participatory decision making, on the other hand, is an individualistic approach because everyone can give their opinions in deliberations. Although deliberation is often highlighted as a characteristic of a collective state, it is at the level of representation where representatives are charismatic people from certain groups of people.

There are two explanations that can be raised. First, that universities in developing countries are driven to catch up with those from developed countries. For this reason, they use a more individualistic approach so as to produce substantial progress. Moreover, developing countries are characterized by difficulties in creating a climate for producing, using, and exploiting knowledge (Muyiwa, 2019) so that the ability to produce knowledge can reflect an advanced tertiary institution even in a developing country. The existence of accurate data and knowledge to support decision making avoids deliberation to get caught up in a general consensus aimed at satisfying all parties, rather than aiming at finding appropriate and good solutions. Second, it has become the nature of tertiary

institutions to rely on scientific facts to make decisions. Therefore, these facts must be supplied by leaders in order to produce learned but still participatory decisions.

#### **b. Quality Management (n = 6)**

Quality management is another important part of good university governance. Quality management enables more democratic and efficient governance (Beerli, Uster, & Vigoda-Gadot, 2019). Instead, it can be said that indicators of good governance are basically indicators of good quality in general (Elg, Wihlborg, & Örnnerheim, 2017). Even so, in the context of higher education, this is a difficult thing to do. The quality management process often only focuses on aspects of education and teaching but is lacking on the focus on students, involvement, relationships with suppliers, and on the process and system as a whole (Manatos, Rosa, & Sarrico, 2018). In this case, the role of transformational leadership becomes important.

The role of transformative leadership in improving the quality of higher education is explored in five studies (Al-Balushi, 2017; Al-Khalifa, 2019; Aldholay, Isaac, Abdullah, & Ramayah, 2018; Khattak, Zolin, & Muhammad, 2020; Papanthymou & Darra, 2017; Sriwidadi et al., 2016). Sriwidadi et al (2016) found that transformational leadership leads to sustainable competitiveness of tertiary institutions. Furthermore, Al-Khalifa (2019) identified that transformational leadership improves organizational performance. Papanthymou and Darra (2017) found that transformational leadership encourages quality management. Meanwhile, Aldholay et al (2018) emphasize that transformational leadership is responsible for the success of information systems. Al-Balushi (2017) found that transformational leadership creates an enabling environment for higher education quality management. Research Khattak et al (2020) using one sample of tertiary institutions, found that transformational leadership influences continuous improvement.

The themes mentioned above relate to each other at the organizational level. Quality management is continuously improving itself and is a source for organizational performance, which in turn will encourage sustainable competitiveness for universities (Kasemsap, 2018; Yu, Zhang, Lin, & Wu, 2017). Quality management needs to develop in a supportive environment and information systems are important aspects of the environment that can guarantee quality management (Jahmani, Fadiya, Abubakar, & Elrehail, 2018).

Higher education in developing countries indeed needs to foster a supportive environment for quality management in order to produce human resources and technology output that can support the country's economic development to become more advanced. In fact, good quality is often identified with developed countries. Therefore, it is very natural for transformational leaders in developing countries to direct universities to achieve in the field of quality management.

The role of transformational leadership in quality management is also found in developed countries. In fact, Papanthymou and Darra's research (2017) not only looked at developing countries, but also developed countries like the United Kingdom and European Union countries. They concluded that transformational leadership was one of the critical success factors for quality management of tertiary institutions in these countries.

#### **Organizational Commitment (n = 11)**

Any change program organized by an organization requires members who are committed to making the change. Organizational commitment ensures that members who feel attached to the organization and want to continue to be with the organization can participate in change activities. Transformational leadership is widely known to have an impact on the commitment of subordinate organizations. This is no different from what happens in universities in developing countries.

Organizational commitment is related to many variables such as intrapreneurial behavior, job satisfaction, relational identification, satisfaction with leadership, readiness for change, commitment to performance, contextual performance, task performance, trust, procedural justice, job engagement, and psychological empowerment. Eleven studies found the effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment and the variables associated with it (Alamir, Ayoubi, Massoud, & Hallak, 2019; Farrukh, Lee, & Shahzad, 2019; Hijazi & Kasim, 2016; Jyoti & Bhau, 2016; Khattak et al., 2020; Lubega, 2019; Mansur & Guozhu, 2019; Ndlovu, Ngirande, Setati, & Zhuwao, 2018; Pham-Thai, McMurray, Muenjohn, & Muchiri, 2018; Xiao et al., 2017; Yeap, Abdullah, & Thien, 2020). All of these variables can be related to each other because they work at an individual level. We see that organizational commitment best represents this variable group because it reflects the direct willingness of a subordinate to carry out organizational interests in the long run, a vital thing in the quality management process. The role of transformational leadership in encouraging organizational commitment and variables at the individual level has also been well documented in higher education in developed countries (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Grossman & Sharf, 2018; Jyoti & Bhau, 2015a, 2015b).

### **5. Closing**

The above review shows that there are several aspects that can be contributed by transformational leadership in terms of developing good university governance. Our review found evidence to support the benefits of transformational leadership in encouraging participatory and knowledge-based decision making. Our research found a tendency for transformational leadership of tertiary institutions in developing countries to be directed

towards sustainable quality improvement. A strong relationship was also found between transformational leadership and subordinates' commitment to support participatory decision making based on knowledge and quality management. Transformational-led subordinates in developing countries are driven to succeed in quality development programs in various ways, including by engaging in knowledge sharing and decision making. If this continues, a number of universities in developing countries can gain competitive advantage through good university governance. The transformational leadership style adopted can also complement, insofar as it is not in conflict, with other leadership styles that have developed earlier in developing countries.

This review has several limitations. We found that all studies reported good results on the role of charismatic leadership. This may contain a publication bias where researchers who find negative or insignificant results do not want to report their research results either because they are not confident or because they have been rejected by the journal (Banks et al, 2016) . In addition, restrictions on the number of studies might result in many other studies finding relationships with other variables not included in this study. Finally, the quality of research in a number of countries remains to be questioned. They are included mainly because they are reviewing a developing country, although perhaps the research standards used are still limited.

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