# TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL MODELLING OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

Modern educational systems are organized around patterns of leadership, which is considered a crucial element for their existence and cope with future change. In the current study, the new roles of leadership in contemporary education organizations are being asserted. Nowadays, the demands for a transformational leadership inside a highly effective steering pattern are rising. At the same time, the need to incorporate ICT into the upper level functions of the hierarchy is obvious.

What are the specific traits a leader has to possess in order to manage successfully an educational organization? What is principle-centered leadership and why is it appropriate for school principals? How can a novel leadership scenario foster innovation and performance and at the same time liberate schools from the tyranny of formal learning? What is the role of ICT artifacts along that process?

The new generation of school leaders is called to answer these questions convincingly. To this aim, it has to redesign a cohesive vision based on student achievement and collaboration, to align all available resources (including curriculum, instruction and assessment). At the same time it should respect cooperate culture, sustain sub-systems, manage budgets, promote capacity learning and tune the whole structure towards excellence and high performance. This does sound, surely, as a challenging task.

## INTRODUCTION

In the last years an intriguing discussion between researchers, educators, action practitioners and academia has risen, regarding politics and practices of ICT integration in educational systems and especially PSEO's. The focus is on how certain nodes of these organizations could function under the demand of new skills and flexibilities. Especially management is a topic of increasing interest in the frame of pioneering new ways of thinking.

This discourse is not purely theoretic. Besides the academic rigor, a large number of programs have been implemented and a lot of initiatives have been undertaken in the action field. All these efforts, however, show that only in a few cases the traditional model of classroom operation has been affected (Shanker, 1990). Tutors usually handle ICT as a supplementary tool for creating classroom notes, exercises and spreadsheets, exams and tests, and sometimes for searching in the web – something that in the new jargon is known as "googling"). The use of educational software, distributed by the Ministry of Education, is rather low; it is safe to say that

we are still far from ICT integration in education. In fact we are experiencing the 1st phase of ICT introduction: expert use, digitalization of content, dare steps towards a conscious pedagogic use of this technology.

In this work, authors are trying to approximate the role of leadership inside the new realm of ICT pedagogy and the general educational policies. The diversity in school curricula, the depth of (possibly) assimilative knowledge, the demands posed from society upon the educational system, the tenacious pace of knowledge accumulation and the general throughput factor barriers are among the coefficients to be examined. The data at our disposal suggest that a few longitudinal interventions (in the form of short-term in-service teacher training) are not sufficient in order to trigger a qualitative change at a larger scale. They can, though, initiate transformation forces in lower scales. In any case, the driving force is the innate, moral and self-committed perception to achieving high – level goals and reflecting to inspiration.


## BACKGROUND THEORIES

At the international level, there are a lot of leadership models applied in organizations and enterprises, with an abundance of pros and cons. Those theories stem from the discipline of management and particularly from human resource sector and could be adapted to the needs of educational organizations. The most common, contemporary, wide-range approaches are compiled in the following list:

1. Great man theory and trait theory of leadership: this branch of theories share the belief that leaders are born with, or at least somehow display certain key personal traits, mostly inherited (McCall & Lombardo 1978, Covey, 1989).

2. Skills theory of leadership exhibits synoptically the ideal technical, personal and conceptual skills for managers and leaders (Yukl, 2002). Complementary to this theory is situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) according to which managers must display different styles depending on the situation.

3. Management-style theories of leadership which either deploy a cohesive area of actions (called leadership continuum), where the manager can swing from autocratic to democratic leader style (like model of Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1982) or behavioural models representing the constant engagement between concern for people and concern for production (like managerial grid of Blake and Mouton, 1981).

4. Transactional leadership theory, based on reciprocal exchange, that is people follow leaders based on transactions (a mix of rewards, incentives and punishments – a quid pro quo approach), pioneered by Burns (2003). It also includes the contingency theory that is based on the hypothesis that there no one-size-fits-all-model, so the leader must be chosen appropriately (Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

5. Transformational leadership theory is basically the antithesis of the previous one and involves moral rather than tangible rewards (e.g. leaders are gaining the

commitment of their employees by inspiring, encouraging and caring for them). It is attributed to Bennis (1984) and has since its formulation gained a profound impact among managers.

Those codified approximations of leadership are actually observed in modern educational area as general tendencies. Although a new fresh point of view is needed, in order to point out specific characteristics and attributes of the leaders, the approach of the scientific community for the last two decades remains rather conservative (Leithwood & Duke, 1999 taxonomy). The reason is that the impact of ICT on the style of top-executives is not yet fully understood. The authors try, in the following paragraphs, to deploy a conceptual model to incorporate the new property.

But what is the difference between a manager and a leader? Educational organizations need which exactly of the two, even not both? There is a long standing academic discussion on these topics (Turk, 2007). An aphorism that "manager administers while leader innovates through vision and ethos" seems to be a pithy observation, close enough to general truth. In the following section, we try to make a contour of basic leadership archetypes, immanent in educational systems.

The modern educational leader exhibits the following attributes per sector (six pillars), according to IPMA (2006) – competence baseline:

a) Sets & implements vision and goals for teaching and learning:
   1) analyzes multiple sources of information and data about current practice prior to developing/revising a vision and goals 2) implements consistently the vision and goals with high, measurable expectations for all students and educators and 3) assures alignment of vision and goals to school, local, state and federal policies.

b) Settles specific vision and objectives/goals:
   1) engages staff and community members with diverse perspectives to implement the vision and achieve the goals based on shared commitments 2) implements effective strategies to assess and monitor towards objectives and 3) communicates and disseminates the shared vision and goals in ways that facilitate stakeholders' ability to understand, support and act on them.

c) Seeks continuous improvement:
   1) conducts SWAT performance analysis of a given structure or problem 2) uses data-driven decision-making and best practice research to shape and monitor plans, programs and activities 3) identifies barriers to achieve vision and goals 4) engages staff and community stakeholders in planning and carrying out activities and 5) monitors evidence about progress systematically.

d) Constructs professional culture:
   1) develops shared understanding and commitment to high standards for all students and smoothens achievement gaps 2) guides and supports job-embedded, standards-based professional development that meets the learning needs for all students and staff and 3) models openness to change and collaborative processes skills and competences.

e)  Designs instructional curricula and standards-based instructional programs:
    1) favors teamwork, including teachers and other instructional staff, to analyze and monitor student progress 2) assures alignment of rigorous curriculum and instruction 3) assures teachers with different teaching strategies curricular materials and 4) ensures diverse needs for each student are addressed (applies personalized learning).

f)  Promotes assessment and accountability:
    1)  uses assessment and accountability criteria to improve the quality of teaching and learning 2) interprets and communicates data about progress towards vision and goals and 3) supports teachers in development of classroom assessments

One could merge pillars two and four (and perhaps six) in the large family of value distinction and ethos. This is one branch of a binary relationship, which characterizes a specific type of leadership (transformational). By all standards, the above description is rather vague sketch of the desired leader. Literature reveals many more on this topic. This image will be refined in the following paragraphs.

Meanwhile, the role of principal inside the greek system is twofold: at first, the position is duty – oriented, which means that he executes consciously and formally his high-level defined duties, applying equally distances to all personnel. Secondly, he coordinates top – down tasks for the implementations of cooperative-collaborative policies like encouraging educators to participate in the decision making process, advancing human relationships and communication, cultivates mutual interests and respects.

**THE CONTEMPORARY PRINCIPAL**

Modern school principals rely mostly on a vision to pull rather than push their followers on. Transformational leadership is a relatively new term (Bass, 1993) that refers to innovation, professional development and focus on people, inspiration and trust. The transformation leader exhibits high standards of moral and ethical conduct, has a strong vision for the future, can stimulate intellectually its divergent audience and succeeds in recognizing inside its environment, the unique developmental needs of its followers.

At international level, the educational leadership moves behind the point of "virtue", as displayed by Myers and Murphy (2009). Leaders are people who stand in front, are pioneers at their work and are generally devoted in deep change of themselves and the organizations they are at the top. Their leading principle is through building of new skills, attributes and perceptions. They can originate from any part of the organization (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). This type of leadership focuses on the commitments of the other members. The higher the degree of personal commitment, the bigger the efforts and active scope for efficiency. The source of power for those leaders stems usually from the other members themselves, rather than

the administrative position, as they transpose their own power in order to challenge common goals based on collective attributes.

There could be eight dimensions of transformational leadership in education, according to Leithwood (1994): creation of a common vision, target fixing, intellectual stimulation, customized support, pattern building for optimal practices and values, expectations cultivation, fruitful school cultures, development of structures appropriate for decision making. Each one of them is specialized in a particular everyday practice, while it defines the appropriate problem solving sequence. This type of leadership best fits educational organizations that seek innovation while at the same time exhibit the necessary level of autonomy. In the following lines this argument will be made more evident.

Inside greek administrative bureaucracy, the last decades have been developed two dominant models characterizing educational leadership (Typas & Katsaros, 2003): a) the work-oriented, where school administration focuses on completing all duties and tasks, defined explicitly by the uppers levels of hierarchy, while the relations with staff are kept in formal level and b) the employee-oriented, in which the principal takes over a more cooperative approach, encouraging staff to participate the decision-making process and creating a pleasant and creative atmosphere in the workplace. It is obvious that in the first approach the leader acts more authoritatively, while in the second is more democratic by delegating power to his/her subordinates.

What skills should a leader possess in order to be successful, under these different perspectives? According to Bourantas (2002), there are five axes of behavior, that sum up to the demands of a transformational leader: empowerment (manages changes, pressures and environment, outwards school orientation), educational (implements of the primordial objectives of education), cooperative (develops synergies, cares for sustainability), administrative (enhances structures, strategies and systems), accountable (establishes feelings of responsibility and collaborative personal development) and finally transformational (creates vision, traces it, promotes change in order to implement it).

The most important item, among these, is the idea of change management (Todnem, 2005). Nowadays, educational systems are becoming more complex and expensive. There is completely no vision for the needs of future generations, so there is no smooth transition to the next order of things. Inside this turbulence, transformational leadership exerts the following principles (Bass & Riggio, 2006):

- It creates and preserves 'transformational learning' (by this term, one means the deep need to adjust and assimilate knowledge into the predefined mental constructions that are already present, in order to annex them to the knowledge potential)

- It does not have detrimental effects over time

- It is highly contagious to other teaching personnel and staff

- It properly address the moral and ethical issues of education

- It deterministically leads to stable and effective systems by avoiding disruptive change

- It does not deplete human and material resource. It makes the best exploitation of them (capacity building)

- It actively engages ICT artifacts to the context.

In the following Table 1, we summarize all the available professional profiles for school principal inside a matrix, codifying the basic notions of the topic in three separate competency areas. It is obvious that no one expects to discover a person possessing all these. The construction of this table was based upon personal experience and extensive literature review (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). The reader should observe how often is the word 'transformation' mentioned and under which context.

Today, education constitutes the most important national issue and remains a high rank priority in the agenda of all administrations, merely because it is connected, directly or indirectly with all subsidiary policies and at the same time with the future investments of the nation as a whole. Inside this world of responsibility and duty, there is a great thirst for the definition and meaning of the term 'leadership'. As this world becomes more complex, educational programs for ordinary citizens and officials are becoming more popular and their appeal is increasingly changing. The different reasons for that leadership desire are power, complexity, change, justice, morality and personal interest.

Under these conditions, social activities require more and more dynamic participation. Even talented people soon realize that they come to a deadlock, because the vision of the organization or society to which they belong is profoundly inadequate for contemporary needs. Those who want to engage in effective leadership have to largely exert their imagination and confidence without becoming victims of necessity. They must continue to act against uncertainty and threats, while remaining creative and open to challenges. However, there are many examples of leaders from the past, which are considered classical patterns for the leaders of the next generation and their curricula should be carefully studied. This is an integral part of leadership training programs (Barling, et.al., 1996).

| Competence Area | Administration | Education | Human Resource | Finance | Organizational | Communication |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge, erudition** | principle-centered theories of leadership and tools | educational management theories | Motivation theories | school-unit economics | capacity building | communication theories |
| | concepts and trends in development of the national-regional system of education | mission of schools, ideology and ethics | legislation, rules and regulations | accounting, controlling, marketing, fiscal activities | school needs | psychology |
| | economic, social, legislative, demographic development of the region | stakeholders' demands and needs | pedagogy and andragogy (psychology of adults) | legislation on financial activities | curriculum details | basic concepts of public relations |
| | theories of learning, life-long learning affinities | tendencies in evolving of modern educational systems | recruitment, selection and assessment theories and tools | allocating resources | time-schedule, syllabus setting | rhetoric (public speaking) |
| **Skills, competences** | Forecasting | Defining instruction methods | Interacting with tutors | Budgeting | Project management techniques | team work |
| | Result-oriented | Designing scenaria and plans | Transforming theory into practice | Using appropriate software | Responsibility and accountability | reflective thinking |
| | Planning | Transforming general goals into concrete objectives | Duty assignment | Being convincing and trusty | Undertaking initiatives | Empathy |
| | Defining aims/objectives | Assess educational goals | Building partnerships and relationships | Concluding fiscal budgets | Methodical, has a businesslike tone | Cooperative |
| | Analyzing, adjusting, revising | Critically define models | Evaluate personnel needs | Operatable | Transforming change into opportunity | Pragmatic |
| **Attitudes, personal values** | Self-motivated | Analytical thinking | Stimulating | Entrepreneurial | Responsible | Communicative |
| | Creative | Innovative | Emotional intelligence | Economically prudent | Thriving and accurate | Tolerant |
| | Responsible, ethos | Demanding | Communicative | Integrity | Taking calculated risks | Energetic |
| | Striving for achieving goals | Showing objectivity | Collaborative | Morality and continence | Desposition for redesign/ rearrangement/ transformation | Looking for concensus |

**Table 1: conformal mapping of professional leadership attributes**

## THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Actions of leadership are actions of imagination and duty. Cohered leadership is necessarily the practice of creating new realities. Leadership is to care for people (Mintzberg, 1995). Leader takes care of their concerns: functions, procedures, laws, friendly for the public bureaucracy, security, health, education and a system that protects and connects people to each other. Moreover that system prevents them from alienating. So begins the true leadership and social leadership, with behaviors and actions tuned for it. If you ask subordinates what they want from a leader, they usually list three things: vision, responsibility or trustworthiness and care. These are the pillars that one distinguishes among the most important values a leader should possess. But he has first to ask his heart, then follow this mind.

The purpose now is to refine the strategy, in order to fully incorporate the quality advantages of the new leadership style inside a model. In other words, we need to show which elements of the previous matrix can be selected as milestones for a road map to a contemporary leader model. For this reason, a new model that combines MBO and MBV together, is proposed. MBO (already known as management by objectives) refers to the process of implementing specific targets and goals that have been conceived by upper administration and are diffusing towards the lower levels of organization hierarchy (Zaharis & Ipsilandis, 2014). MBV (management by values) is a relative new approach that calls for ethical and moral congruencies inside the frame of effectiveness and diligence work in modern systems (Chakraborty, 1991). Because this proposal looks like "squaring the circle" procedure, it is necessary to delineate its basic outline.

Nowadays, the organizational effectiveness has moved far from the traditional instrumental rationality and is connected with the rationalism of values. The connecting link of the authorities is no longer a mechanistic common affiliation or inclusion to behavioral patterns through fees and penalties, but a widely accepted common value system. The aim of this process is not only to act with efficacy towards certain goals, but to do what is right within a morality realm of values. So the distinction between management (or doing things right) and leadership (doing the right things) remains clear and cogent (Sterling, 2001). By this way, groups of teachers form communities that serve with values acting as automatic correction mechanisms, thereby increasing the organizational adaptability, which is linked directly to the effectiveness of the whole service.

Within this context, the constant pursuit and effort of the principal/leader is aiming at moving from bureaucracy to quality, at transforming the organization to a vivid learning institution, using cooperative skills, gentleness and anthropocentrism as tools. Therefore, before every step of the administration, there should be the appropriate pedagogical-educational affinity and this direction should be instructed to all members of this level.

The new introduced element is technology. ICT artifacts can act as catalysts to innovation inside an organization (Zaharis, et.al., 2013). These tools define how deep the farming (or change) inside the organization advances. As one can reaffirm (Kalas,

2010), innovation processes are going through three distinguished stages during their lifetime: at first, they are born (stimulation form), second they start to grow, creating a phenomenal alteration (incubate form) and finally they mature, transforming completely their environment (engineering form). This 3-tier approach generates the kind of innovation that can solve productively problems and/or reorganize thinking in the educational area.

In order to connect leadership to the picture, we created a graph (Figure 1) that depicts the two pillars MBO and MBV, together with transformation, when ICT tools are introduced to the scene. The picture shows how a contemporary leader should combine logic with intuition, determinism with ambiguity, values with results and descriptions with proofs in order to achieve the transformation of the organization operation in a higher dimension (combining ICT).
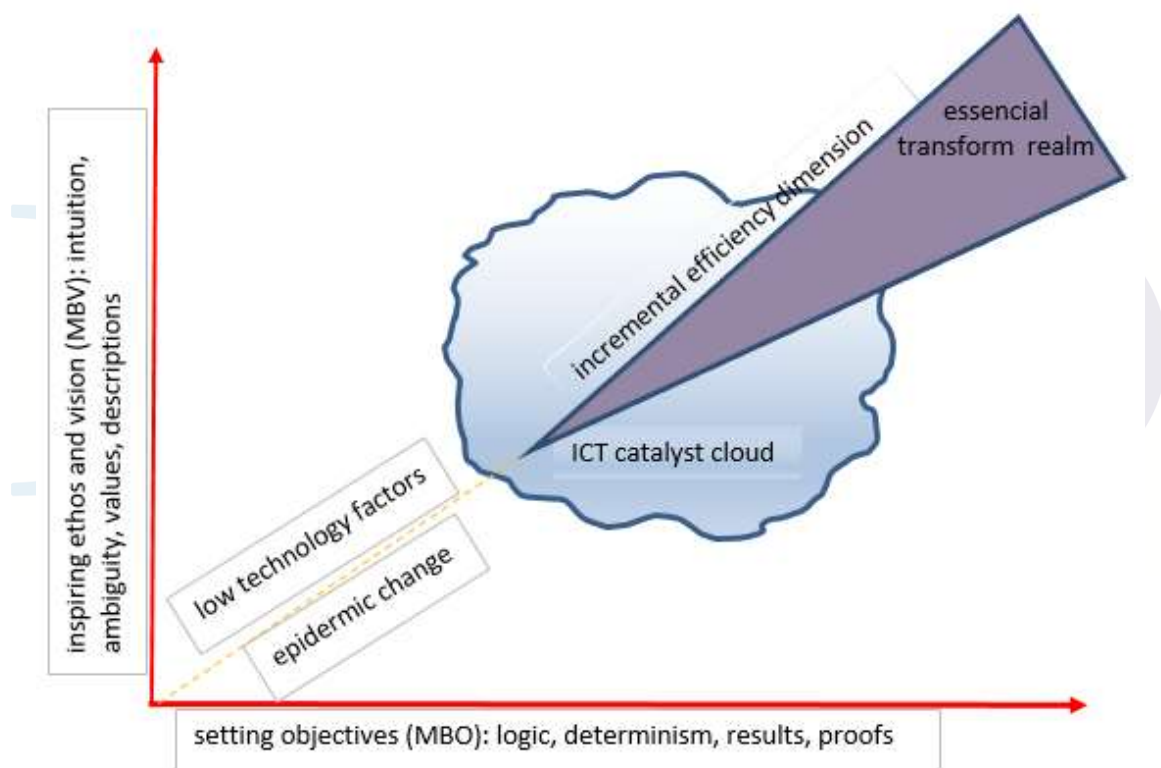


**Figure 1: Conceptual leadership model**

The question is under which circumstances is this model viable. Can it remove barriers that impede functional or adhere to a discouraging leader? The answer is that only its appliance in action can tell. The model contains all the necessary ingredients that can lead to success. But this is only the one side of the coin. The other is its adaptation to the real-life conditions. The degree by which this arrangement is made, will be the key for a favourable outcome.

## THE CHALLENGE

It is evident, nowadays, that public service design lacks the powerful tools that will boost its performance to the demanding levels of the society and fulfill its social

mission. This opinion is shared not only by the neo-liberal politicians, who aim at minimizing public expenses, but also by a large majority of people, who observe a large discrepancy between the actual requirements of our modern labor market and the sterile knowledge that todays' school offer to our young people.

So it is the management of educational systems that lacks a specific strategy map to cope with this problematic situation. The key element is the endorsement of ICT tools and the deployment of a detailed strategic plan, which takes them fully into account. This can be done with, in parallel, the cultivation of an ethos of high quality work among students and teachers. But when the discussion comes to technology, one must keep in mind that things here change at exponential rates (Kurzweil, 2000). This means that in the last two decades, the rate of growth of technology artifacts has become geometric, in actual size. The consequences of this fact are quite important: the whole society is shaken by waves of increasing power and performance, the new devices and their applications generate. Just think of the operations that mobile (or 'smart') phones or tablets are capable of, today (e.g. how easily they can convey geographic data, or share information through social media, or connect to search and computational engines on-line).

This ever growing power makes it possible for the young people to get the information they want and access vast knowledge databases wherever they are (either at home or at school or out for a walk with their friends). In the meantime, old-fashioned educational institutions distribute papers books written ten or more years earlier, ask their students to memorize a lot of pages and assess them using obsolete multiple-choice techniques.

But the needs of today are at completely different directions. Modern organizations are knowledge-intensive and demand high performance and sustainable skill repositories from their future employers. It is thus necessary that school provide those skills. To do that they have to change their operation in a drastic way (e.g. daily schedule, curricula, time management). This is actually the challenge that the EU Strategic Framework for Education 2020 is pursuing: "enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training" (EU, 2012).

## CONCLUSIONS

Today, leadership requires actions that push people into new behaviors in an unknown field of greater complexity and learning. Undoubtedly, such actions can cause stress, imply risk or conflict. So, true leadership is not the step from weakness to courage, but usually is defined through a matrix of complex ideas. Innovation is one of the challenges for today, but barriers remains inside people. Meanwhile, values such as trust, ethos, good relations without selfishness and insecurity have come to be scarce. So the challenge of each individual is change, breaking the barrier of prejudice, accepting the forthcoming of the new.

In the meantime, hopes for transforming schools through actions of individual leaders are rising. Strong leaders with exceptional vision and action (as prescribed) do

exist, but they do not come in big enough quantities to meet the demands and challenges of contemporary organizations. While transformational leadership actually captures the nature of changes ahead, the system needs something more of redesigning and realigning, with the goal of building capacity leadership suitable for the future challenges. The proposed conceptual model moves in this direction.

The innate human need for progress propels school principals to highlight students' potential and demonstrates how learning in a principle-center environment can empower relationships stable in the future. The education system should make the necessary shift from bureaucratic to personalized. This shift will not be easy. It requires natural talent and risk. It requires inspired leadership, equipped with all characteristics we mentioned. But it is worth taking. This will definitely require a new internal mindset (or school culture) that will tame external ICT forces and embed them as drivers of success.

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