THE INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUALITY AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

As concerns about the skyrocketing costs of a college degree have converged with the increasing availability of open educational resources (OER), higher education administrators are asking faculty and curriculum designers to use OERs to design courses and programs. This case study explores the decision making process and outcomes of an online, for-profit university's attempt to build low-cost business degree programs using open educational resources. The paper concludes with a list of suggested criteria for evaluating open source content when designing similar programs.

Keywords: open educational resources, open source content, curriculum design, course development, decision making

INTRODUCTION

Workplace spirituality is a contemporary theory practice that refers to the new process of leadership in the workplace. The following integrative paper synthesizes the transformational leadership theory with the authors' definition of spirituality. Furthermore, it synthesizes the theoretical framework of transformational leadership within the classrooms of higher education in an attempt to solve the problem of how to effectively integrate faith and transformative teaching in the higher education classroom.

In the area of transformational leadership, we, the authors, will focus on three main dimensions that identify transformational leadership; the first is creating a vision for the students while supporting our definition of spirituality. The second element, which is role modeling, is pivotal in working to gain trust from followers (students) through the push for change that encourages followers to want to emulate the instructor as a transformational leader (Northouse, 2013). The final dimension involves the empowerment of followers by addressing their needs so that students will look beyond themselves. The intent of this component is to create an open, honest dialogue between the instructor and students, enabling them to remain receptive to new ideas and new ways of thinking.

Figure 1. Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

There are benefits to introducing theology in the workplace; this paper will reflect the interconnectedness of transformational leadership

and spirituality. Additionally, it will demonstrate how transformational instructors can blend both concepts, while strengthening student performances and enhancing their welfare and quality of life.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SPIRITUALITY

May (1988) asserts that every individual possesses an innate yearning for God. He continues that even those who do not think of themselves as religious have this deep longing; it is our greatest treasure. In order to address this hunger for God in our daily lives, it is prudent to carry it over into an area we spend much of our waking hours - our workplaces. As Miller (2003) posits, "Businesspeople and workers of all types are tired of living a bifurcated life," one in which we leave our faith at the doors on Monday mornings (p. 301). How do we express our faith in America, the melting pot of diverse religions and non-secular views, without the possibility of offending others who may think we are judging them or trying to change them? This is where spirituality comes into play. Some companies have found solutions to inclusivity; Greyston Family Support Services is one of them. Though the company was founded on the principles of Buddhism, "they do not seek to make everyone Buddhist" (Benefiel, 2005, p. 45). The former director of the company, Theresa McCoy, ensures that each employee discovers and follows his/her individual path. McCoy offers her view on spirituality: "Spirituality is an understanding that everything is transient and there is a more expansive relationship and responsibility that we have to ourselves and to others that we must ultimately respect" (p. 45). These ideas of relationship, responsibility, and respect are foundational to our definition of spirituality, which is, 'Made in the Image of God and purposed to serve all of humanity through acts of compassion, we are to use our gifts to serve with love, empathy, understanding and respect in order that our brethren may discover their true purpose and value. By empowering others to heal and reach inner peace, we may also enable them to reach their highest potential.'
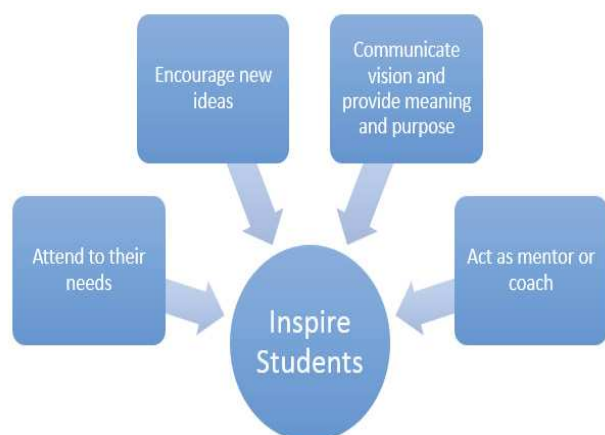
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The role of teachers in higher education has changed dramatically over the past twenty years. Growing diversity, changes in education, along with the increased use of technology and the market demand for knowledgeable employees has prompted teachers to take on more expanded roles in the classroom. Instructors are not only responsible for traditional classroom practices, but are now being encouraged to incorporate more holistic approaches in order to create new ways of thinking, provide new experiences, and to facilitate the development and transformation of the whole person.

Northouse (2013) asserts that transformational leaders are able to advance their followers to higher levels of morality and motivation through their vision, inspiration, and personality. They are able to challenge followers' perceptions, motivate them to take ownership for their work, and tie their efforts into a collective identity. Through the four I's, transformational leaders are able to inspire their followers through individual consideration (attends to follower needs); intellectual stimulation (encourages new ideas); inspirational motivation (communicates the vision and provides meaning and purpose) and idealized influence (act as mentors or coaches). Northouse also maintains that "transformational leaders are deeply respected by their followers, who usually place a great deal of trust in them" (pp. 191-193). As transformational leaders, teachers are now responsible to create the vision, communicate high expectations, increase self-efficacy, mentor students, and attend to the values and needs of our learners in order that they may reach their fullest potential.

Figure 2 . Transformational Strategies for Inspiring Students

SPIRITUALITY IN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In order to "reject the conventional notion that separates [our] spiritual identity from [our] work identity," we bring our souls to work with us (Miller, 2003, p. 301). Since transformational leadership allows us to bring out the best in our students, we aim for this type of leadership. The subsequent paragraphs demonstrate how to meld spirituality with important aspects of transformational leadership, maximizing the chances of our students, and us, reaching our highest potential.

Creating a Vision

Ray (2011) declares "God calls us to love and serve our neighbor and it is through our work that we respond to that call" (p. 123). The gifts we have received are not ours alone. God gave them to us for the purpose of serving Him and serving other people. As transformational leaders in higher education, it is pivotal to communicate and create a vision. According to Northouse (2013), "the vision emerges from the collective interests of various individuals and units in an organization" (p. 200). The vision for each student that enters the classroom is an abstract idea of what we hope to reinforce in their worldview versus an absolute definitive view of their future within the classroom and the program overall. The key element of a faith-friendly organization is service. Ray (2012) explains that "service is not something we just do on the side…but it should be our center activity" (p. 123). This is further supported by Paul "urging the Thessalonians to live their entire lives in a manner worthy of God's calling" (Whittington, Pitts, Kageler & Goodwin, 2005, p. 759).

Both Benefiel (2005) and Miller (2003) discuss the importance of treating people holistically, which will lead to happier, loyal, and more productive followers. Each author, through research and direct observation, discusses the importance of bridging unity for the creation of a faith-friendly organization. Our vision is to create passionate, lifelong learners, who will transform their communities through critical thinking while incorporating a holistic culture in partnership with the community as a whole. In the book Tuesdays with Morrie, Morrie declares, "the biggest defect we human beings have is our shortsightedness…we don't see what we could be" (Albom, 1997, p. 156). The vision is a community of student leaders who

see their potential and take advantage of new and exciting perspectives in the classroom and beyond.

Benefiel (2005) states, "Different leaders and different organizations manifest soul at work in different ways" (p. 152). As instructors in higher education, our strength is rooted in understanding that students come from all walks of life, so it is important to see that students learn by connecting new information with what they already know. Another way of integrating soul at work is through enrichment. As leaders, we are able to "nurture spiritually, focusing on prayer, mediation, daily devotionals, consciousness, healing, transformation, and self-actualization" (Miller, 2003, p. 307). This approach is geared toward a more constructivist viewpoint, which states that learning hinges upon the students' beliefs and attitudes. The vision the instructor has for the classroom is to motivate students to be intellectually and socially responsible for themselves and their communities (Terwel, 1999).

As transformational leaders in the classroom, we are able to incorporate our definition of spirituality by first considering what it means to be compassionate and selfless. Then we are able to challenge our students to respect each other, which in turn provides them with an inner peace. Benefiel (2005) suggests that focusing on passion, joy, and spirit with or without a connection to religion helps businesses and employees to be successful.

Antonakis (2012) suggests that transformational leaders communicate through imagery a vision for the future of the followers. The vision is for students to feel empowered and use their background and skills to grow from. As an educator, the vision rests with students feeling safe to communicate and connect with their instructor. This is extremely important for students to ensure they feel comfortable and are able to connect with faculty in times when they need support or need to voice a concern (Palloff & Pratt, 2003). The process of engaging students and allowing them to discuss their thoughts leads to the students feeling encouraged while continuing in their education; they feel as though someone has compassion for their journey.

Lastly, as college instructors who are transformational leaders, it is pivotal we communicate our high expectations for students through inspirational motivation. It is important

that we hold our students accountable with the required material (Palloff & Pratt, 2003). It is also important to recognize that each student will not learn and think the same way. However, it is important to set expectations for them and provide positive feedback regarding how they should handle themselves as well as build relationships with our students as a reminder that we see them as more than a number.

Mentorship in the Classroom

As teachers and transformational leaders, we are called to raise the levels of awareness and human consciousness in our students to the degree to which they are not just pursuing their education for the intended purpose of becoming relevant, powerful, heroic or spectacular (Nouwen, 2000), but are advancing their education with the central desire to serve humanity. Operating through this lens, we are to use our gifts to transform learners by serving with love, empathy, and understanding as we are developing practitioners who will model our behaviors and emulate our ethical decision making in, as well as outside, the classroom. Northouse (2013) asserts that the idealized influence factor of transformational leadership describes "leaders who act as strong role models for followers; followers identify with these leaders and want very much to emulate them" (p. 191). As such, it is important that teachers demonstrate high moral values and ethical behaviors. The expected outcome is that students will develop the appropriate intellect, attitudes, values, characteristics and behaviors that help to further their purpose, promote organizational readiness, career advancement and spirituality in the workplace. Benefiel (2005) defines spirituality as the "human spirit fully engaged" (p. 9). Spirituality in the classroom can inspire transformation, as it subscribes to "the intellectual, emotional and relational depth of the human character as well as the continuing capability and yearning for personal development" of the student (p. 9). Educators as transformational leaders should view their classrooms as communities and utilize them as opportunities to create cultural norms and collective identities that mirror organizational activities. Teachers should deploy idealized influence to provide a sense of purpose and vision for taking the course and also to inspire and excite their students to put forth their best efforts in the classroom. Antonakis (2013) posits that leaders who are able to use this method "create intense emotional attachments with their followers" (p. 265), and through inspirational motivation, "raise the expectation that the students are able to achieve ambitious goals" (p. 266).

As transformational leaders and role models, instructors should inspire and challenge their students to begin to think broadly, as well as look and act like professionals. Leading by example, they should demonstrate the appropriate attitudes, behaviors and values they expect their students to emulate. Establishing ground rules that emphasize respect, fair treatment, and integrity is a great way to begin to embed these ideologies into the culture of the classroom.

Antonakis (2012) maintains that "through intellectual stimulation the leader appeals to followers' intellect by creating problem awareness and problem solving. He also maintains that "because the followers are included in the problem solving process they are motivated and committed to achieving the goals at hand" (p. 266). Teaching and demonstrating ethical decision making though spiritual discernment can be a powerful tool that will help the learner to discover ways of working through problems utilizing deeper analysis. Benefiel (2005) asserts that "spiritual discernment aids a person to draw on one's whole self and helps him or her to include and transcend intellectual analysis and emotional intelligence" (p. 51). Spiritual discernment can be practiced corporately or independently. The teacher should coach the student through the process and demonstrate effective listening, reflective processes and ways in which to develop alternative solutions to problems. Coaching students through various challenges will also help to encourage appropriate behaviors and foster healthy ways of handling conflict.

Bass (1985, as cited in Antonakis, 2012) maintains that "leaders who utilize individual consideration provide emotional support to their followers and are concerned with developing them to their highest potential" (p. 267). Antonakis (2012) asserts that followers are influenced by leader behaviors and are motivated by increased levels of empowerment, self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy, collective efficacy, identification with the leader, social identification and value internalization" (p. 270). By modeling respect and teaching tolerance of others' perspectives, the

transformational leader invites students to honor the cultures of others creating a climate of diversity and inclusion. House and Shamir (1993, as cited in Antonakis, 2012) propose that "leaders help to define for the followers just what kinds of values, beliefs and behaviors are good and legitimate to develop " (p. 271). As such, the transformational teacher should model the appropriate attitude and values and also demonstrate self-management, effective communication, interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence. They should seek opportunities to share their knowledge and personal and professional experiences to promote understanding and synthesis of the concepts.

NEEDS, VALUES, AND MORALS

Transformational leaders focus on "followers' needs, values, and morals" through intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Northouse, 2013, p. 201). As instructors of higher education, the needs of our student followers are varied. By forming professional relationships with our students we can get to know their requirements, addressing them while concurrently integrating our definition of spirituality in our responses. By doing so, we live out our definition of spirituality and we understand that "our work is both God's gift to us and our gift to others" (Ray, 2011, p. 66). For example, one undergraduate student submitted a paper that demonstrated lack of English grammar skills. Referring this student to the college's Writing Center is a solution that many instructors would deem adequate and quite appropriate. However, as our intentions are to be transformational leaders, we can arrange a meeting with the student to review some essentials of essay writing in addition to the Writing Center referral. By doing so, the student understands our level of commitment and care. This act of compassion and selflessness aligns with the authors' definition of spirituality. It is one way of "do[ing] what is right, even when it does not seem to be profitable, expedient, or conventional" (Benefiel, 2005, p. 22).

Greenhalgh (2012) reveals that transformational leaders' focus on followers' needs involves giving "newcomers a lot of help" (p. 11). This is accomplished in the realm of undergraduate higher education by giving more leeway to those who are enrolled in their early general education classes than those who are, for example, in later courses, such as a major-specific or a capstone course. When instructing in the first semester of a student's college career, empathy, compassion, and understanding can be integrated by making ourselves available by allotting more time for office hours, giving very clear and specific expectations, and listening to students' frustrations concerning the adjustment to an entirely different lifestyle from which they are accustomed.

As transformational leaders in the classroom, we also need to "answer followers with minimum delay" and make ourselves "available as needed" (Greenhalgh, 2012, p. 11). For those of us who teach in the distant learning format, this availability requires great attention. As we recognize the possibility of our online students feeling isolated, we make sure that they know that they have someone who cares about their education. Answering emails expediently and making the extra effort to encourage phone calls if the students have questions shows the students that we truly want them to succeed.

When one thinks of teaching values, thoughts come to mind of raising children, as in the following Biblical quote.

> *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deut. 6: 6-7, NIV)*

However, as the authors' spirituality definition suggests, selflessness on our part means a responsibility to care about our students, both academically and spiritually. Many of this generation's instructors are selfishly withholding the teaching of values because it takes more of their time and attention. Former Harvard professor and leader of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, James Billington bemoans this current trend, saying, "American universities have fallen down on the job of transmitting values to students" (Linton, 1985, p. 78). He stresses the importance of teaching values to higher education learners because it prepares them to be the leaders of the future. Billington continues, "There has also been a decline in faculty with a commitment to traditional values" (p. 78). By living our faith, "we will be able to exercise the responsible care

for our world and its creatures that God desires" (Marshall, 2001, p. 71).

How can we instill values in undergraduate students? There are many ways to accomplish this in the classroom. Group projects allow the pupils to learn the value of teamwork. Initiating debates in the course discussions, with clear directions for respect for others, helps them build understanding, respect for diversity, and sensitivity. Advising students is an effective measure in positively influencing them to strive for better values. By encouraging students to listen to each other, they can learn communication skills that will benefit them for life.

Our lectures, too, can be powerful instruments of instilling values. For example, a health care course that is taught by one of the authors discusses professionalism within the health field. Upon completion of the course, one student summed up her learning experience by saying, "I now look at things from a patient's view. I never did that before. I just cared about the work I needed to get done." This comment was evidence of transformational leadership in action in the higher education classroom. The changes in a student viewpoint do not occur because we spend the class time outwardly proselytizing, or even reading Bible passages. Rather, it involves an inclusive spirituality. "Spirituality in its broadest meaning [is] sometimes connected to religion, sometimes not" (Benefiel, 2005, p. 9). By subtly interspersing spirituality into our curriculum, we have the capability of affecting the future leaders of our nation.

CONCLUSION

We attempt to lead in both a transformational and spiritual manner. Our own definition of spirituality to, 'Made in the Image of God and purposed to serve all of humanity through acts of compassion, we are to use our gifts to serve with love, empathy, understanding and respect in order that our brethren may discover their true purpose and value. By empowering others to heal and reach inner peace, we may also enable them to reach their highest potential.' As instructors of higher education, we wish to be transformational leaders in our classrooms. We achieve this by creating a vision for our learners, mentoring, and attending to students' needs, values, and morals. Additionally,

our goal is to interpose spirituality in our work so as to lead a holistic life and positively affect the leaders of tomorrow.

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