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Transformational leadership: A case for innovation in Iraqi public universities

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Abstract

Higher education sector of any country acts as a backbone for that country as it provides skilled human resource as well as helps in developing the socio-economic and cultural environment of a country. In today's world the role of leadership in controlling the organizational factors varies. The higher education institutions in Iraq has shown a deterioration in their performance, which is evident from, the widening gap between labor market and the capabilities of graduates and brain drain phenomena and issues facing technology higher education with regard to implementing organizational change and innovation. The aim of this paper is to explore the effect of transformational leadership on both administrative innovation and marketing innovation in Iraqi public universities. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence of transformational leadership on both administrative innovation and marketing innovation. The quantitative data was collected through survey instrument. The population for this study consisted of academic staff in 10 public universities distributed throughout Iraq. The sample consists of 280 academic staff members in public universities located in Iraq. The results found that transformational leadership play a pivotal role in enhancing both administrative innovation and marketing innovation within higher education environment.

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Introduction

In today's world the role of leadership in controlling the organizational factors varies. This is mainly because the humans possess abilities that differ across humans. These abilities are either acquired through experience or through intellectual training. These abilities help some individuals to influence others. Similarly, leaders have the abilities based on experience, traits and characteristics to influence other people within an organization. Organizations of all sizes need leadership that could provide direction as well as create an environment where organizational and cultural factors are at congruence with each other, thus helping the organization to succeed in its strategic environment (Garrison and Vaughan, 2013; Sotirofski, 2011; Birasnav et al., 2013; Wang, 2006) are of the opinion that transformational leadership understands that organizations can only be transformed into innovative organizations only when human capital is created within the organizations. To develop human capital transformational leaders exercise empowerment among employees so that employees can make quicker decisions regarding innovations. Thomson (2007) has highlighted that the success of an organization depends on a number of factors like human capital, availability of technological and financial resources etc. All these elements are interrelated and are integrated to achieve organizational objectives. For achievement of objectives and integration of resources, organizations are always on the lookout for a suitable person, who could help the organization in its achievement of objectives. Thus, leaders are expected to have certain characteristics that would distinguish them from other employees. Burns (1978) has highlighted certain characteristics like charisma, morality, vision and values that make a leader. In his opinion these characteristics are the essential ingredients for transformational leader and the most important of the element is morality (Burns, 1978). This difference is vital in understanding transformational

leadership. According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), the transformational leader is committed to leading with an ethical philosophy, which states that an organization worth is measured by the extent to which it satisfies the needs and targets of its constituents. Higher education sector of any country acts as a backbone for that country as it provides skilled human resource as well as helps in developing the socio-economic and cultural environment of a country. The leadership of a higher education institution is responsible for the change in demographic of a university along with the research and development. Role of leadership in an academic context has become more important as there is lack of innovation from the universities (Hoff , 1999; Diament , 2005; Greenberg , 2006 To achieve this end, higher education plays a vital role in training and developing human resources that are much needed in the market place. From 1950 till 1990 Iraq had one of the most advanced higher educational systems in the Arab world (Al-Janabi and Urban, 2011). In 1991, economic sanctions were imposed by the United Nations Security Council on Iraq after its occupation and subsequent release of Kuwait. These sanctions lasted from 1991 till middle of 2003. These decade long economic sanctions had hurt the Iraqi higher education sector badly leading to destruction of infrastructure, information technology and reduced support for the higher education academic community.

Literature Review

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership theory was developed by Burns (1978) and as highlighted by Nahavandi (2006), the transformational leaders not only helps in the achievement of goals but also helps in the welfare of the employees by instilling moral and ideological values in their subordinates (Bass , 1985; Burns , 1978; Conger and Kanungo, 1987). Transformational leadership is a process that helps employees to achieve goals and objectives beyond the expectation (B. J. Avolio et al., 1999). Howell (1997) has pointed out that the transformational leaders with their high moral values, idealistic thinking and charismatic personality exert more influence on their subordinates than their counterpart transactional leaders. Previous research has confirmed that transformational leadership style is applicable across cultures and has the same influence on employees across the countries (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Bass , 1997; Bass and Avolio, 1990; Bass and Avolio, 1993). The principles of transformational leadership are embedded in the charismatic leadership work of Weber (as cited in Ergeneli , Gohar and Tamirbekova, 2007) . According to Bryman (1992), the 80s decade saw pessimistic approach of scholars regarding the development of leadership theories and little came out that could help in the transformation of organizations to cope with the changing business environment. Same views were expressed by Bass and Avolio (1997) when they stated that transactional leadership style would plainly fail in the face of changing circumstances confronted by the organizations.

Innovation

Innovation is often a difficult phenomenon to define and study. However, there is a general agreement among researchers and academics that innovation in organizations includes creating something new and having this 'new' applied and adopted by others (Fuglsang, 2010). The core concept of innovation appears to center on the newness (Vander Steen, 2009). This 'new' can be a concept, idea, amenity, procedure, policy, process, structure, product, system, and much more (West & Farr, 1989; Windrum , 2008; Fuglsang , 2010). Such broad meanings have allowed innovation to be both incremental and radical. It can be modified or adopted from another source and it just has to be new to an organization at a given instant (Vander Steen, 2009). Walker (2006) identified three broad groups to scientifically organize the kinds of organizational innovations: "product, process, and ancillary". Proposing existing or new products and facilities to existing and new 'clients' is measured as a kind of product innovation under Walker's (2006) outline. Process innovations include variations in organization's rules, procedures, and constructions, and communications as well as variations in relationships and relations amongst members and between members and outside environment (Walker, 2006). Ancillary innovations are concerned with employees across boundaries with other service earners, users or other public activities, and, thus, their successful application is dependent upon others" (Walker , 2006). Additionally, (Walker, 2008) and Damanpour and Wichnevsky (2006), Kimberly and Evanisko (1981), and Daft (1978) made a distinction between two phases of the innovation: group of innovation and approval of innovation. They considered the group of innovation as a process that outcomes in a 'new' to an organization while acceptance of innovation is a process of the integration According to Van de Ven (1986), innovation in organizations is more than creativity or invention. However, vision is a significant building block for innovation (Amabile and Gryskiewicz, 1989). An invention or creative idea does not become an innovation until it is accepted organization wide (Van de Ven, 1986). Fuglsang (2010) measured the term "innovation" to be comprehensive of actions such as implementation, diffusion, replication, and gaining wider positive advantage from the invention. The innovation process is often contentious, competes with other courses of

achievement, and poses a threat to vested welfares (Kanter, 1988). Innovative actions create alteration, increased risk, uncertainty, and imprecision (Kirton, 1976) . As such, most innovations in organizations inexorably experience confrontation and often become a subject of debate within an organization (Borins, 2002).

Transformational leadership and innovation

Birasnav , et al., (2013) are of the opinion that transformational leadership understands that organizations can only be transformed into innovative organizations only when human capital is created within the organizations. To develop human capital transformational leaders exercise empowerment among employees so that employees can make quicker decisions regarding innovations. Previous research has highlighted that if innovation is to be adopted and implemented in any organization, the leaders have to be adaptable to it. In other words, leaders need to be change oriented whether the change is to be initiated from within an organization or it comes from outside the organization (Cummings and Worley, 2005; Bowen et al., 2013; Wang & Tsai, 2014). There have been numerous studies that point out towards a significant relationship between leadership and organization innovation or creativity (Mumford et al., 2002). Researchers have highlighted that leadership behavior like participative and considerate would increase creativity of subordinates (Hage and Dewar, 1973). Similarly, researchers are of the opinion that leaders, who help in the development of cognitive skills of their subordinates, give them empowerment and provide conducive and supportive environment would help raise the creativity levels of their subordinates (Redmond et al., 1993; Scott and Bruce, 1994; Tierney et al., 1999; Oldham and Cummings, 1996). Literature is replete with studies that confirm transformational leaders' role in enhancing employees' creativity and innovation. The research highlights that leaders who follow transformational style help raise the employees' engagement levels within an organization (Bass , 1985; Gardner and Avolio, 1998; Shamir , House, and Arthur, 1993) by providing motivation through articulating a vision that links organizational and employees' interests together and thus, in the process not only help employees' to achieve organizational objectives but also their own personal objectives (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Conger and Kanungo, 1998; House , Spangler, and Woycke, 1991). In line with the view suggested in the literature, the study formulates the research hypotheses as below

H1: There is significant relationship between transformational leadership and administrative innovation

H2: There is significant relationship between transformational leadership and market innovation

H3: There is significant impact between transformational leadership and administrative innovation.

H4: There is significant impact between transformational leadership and market innovation.

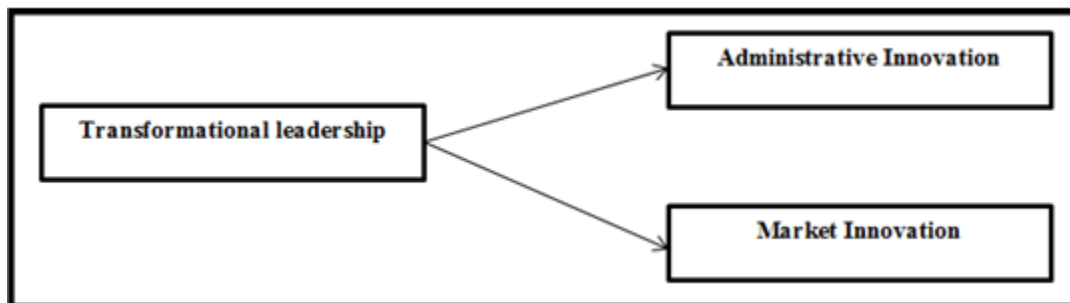


Figure.1. The Proposed Model of Study

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

The research used a quantitative data was collected through survey instrument. using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. The population for this study consisted of all academic staff in 10 public universities distributed throughout Iraq. The sample consists of 280 academic staff members in public universities located in Iraq selected through random sampling technique.

Transformational Leadership Questionnaire

For the transformational leadership was measured using Bass and Avolio (1997) and Avolio and Bass, 1995 Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form Bass & Avolio (1996) , also known as 5X-Short (Bass , Avolio,

Jung, & Berson, 2003) MLQ–5X has been shown to be a psychometrically sound instrument (Avolio , Bass, & Jung, 1997; Bass , 1998; Bass & Avolio, 1997; Bass and Avolio, 1995). The MLQ has been extensively used in prior research and is considered to be a well-validated measure of transformational leadership (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999). which is one of the most widely used and tested measures of transformational leadership (Singh and Krishnan, 2008). The MLQ 5x is a recent version of the scale which has been in development for nearly 20 years and used extensively to measure leadership practices, particularly transformational leadership. The five subscales (Idealized influence (attributed), Idealized influence (behavioral), Inspirational motivation, Intellectual stimulation, Individual consideration) that measure transformational leadership were extracted from the MLQ, and a composite transformational leadership score was computed from those items (Carless, 1998). The 20 items represented by these subscales employ a five-point scale ranging from 1=“Not at all” to 5= “Frequently, if not always”.

Administrative Innovation Questionnaire has been measured using 6 items adapted from (Tsai et al., 2008). Using a 5-point Likert scale, Respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with each item ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Markets Innovation Questionnaire has been measured using 3 items adapted from (Tsai et al., 2008). Using a 5-point Likert scale, Respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with each item ranging from 1= (strongly disagree) to 5 = (strongly agree).

Result and Discussion

Reliability Analysis

Reliability was tested for each variable of Transformational Leadership, administrative Innovation and market innovation. To measure the consistency of the scale, Cronbachs alpha was used as a measure of reliability. After factor loading was carried out, , reliability coefficients of 0.7 or more are considered adequate for social studies (Hair Jr, 2006) table 2 showed an acceptable range of reliability where the results score. table 1 showed an acceptable range of reliability where the results score.

Table 1. The Reliability result variables Transformational Leadership , administrative innovation and market innovation

No.	Variables	Number of items	Cranach's Alpha
1	Transformational leadership	20	.92
2	administrative innovation	6	.71
3	Market Motivation	3	.72

Correlation Analysis

In this section, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship among the study variables. In addition, it identifies significant that opposes the potential value of the error from first type, and it is the amount probability uncertainty value is at significance (0.05) and (0.01) to determine the moral differences between the study variables. The statistical results given in Table2 show that there are significant correlations between the transformational leadership and administrative innovation and market innovation. The details are as in the following.

Table 2. The Correlation result Transformational Leadership, administrative innovation and Market innovation.

Variable	1	2	3	Mean	Standard Deviation
1-Transformational leadership	(.92)			3.43	.61
2- administrative innovation	.54**	(.71)		3.36	.68
3- Market Motivation	.62**	.53**	(.72)	3.45	.86
Number of items	20	6	3		

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Cranach's Alpha coefficient shown in bracket in diagonal parenthesis

As the statistical results shown in table 3, Pearson Correlation Coefficient value on the relationship between transformational leadership and administrative innovation and Market Motivation. (Administrative innovation = .54** and market innovation = .62**) at a significance smaller than 0.01. It is a significant positive correlation. This means transformational leadership has strong significant relationship with administrative innovation and Market innovation. This in turn supports the first hypothesis mentioned below.

Testing Hypothesis

H1: There are significant relationships between transformational leadership and administrative innovation.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient value on the relationship between Transformational leadership and administrative innovation. was 0.54** at a significance smaller than 0.01. It is a significant positive correlation. This means Transformational leadership has strong significant relationship with administrative innovation. This in turn supports the hypothesis mentioned above.

H2: There are significant relationships between transformational leadership and market innovation.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient value on the relationship between Transformational leadership and market innovation was 0.62** at a significance smaller than 0.01. It is a significant positive correlation. This means Transformational leadership has strong significant relationship with market innovation. This in turn supports the hypothesis mentioned above.

Regression Analysis

A series of linear regression analyses was conducted to measure the impacts between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The regression results are shown in table 3. R square is the square of the multiple correlation coefficients; it indicates the proportion of the variance of the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. The closer R square near to 1, the better the linear regression model is. The F-value is computed as the ratio of the mean sums of squares of the regression equation and the residual. The coefficient indicates the number of units of increase in the dependent variable caused by an increase of one unit in the independent variable. The detailed verifications of the second hypothesis are provided in the following.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

variables	Standard Beta	Sig.	Model Summary
1- Administrative innovation	0.53	.000	R ² = 0.29 Adjusted R ² = 0.29 Standard Error = 0.57 F statistics = 113.95 p-value = .000
2- Market Motivation	0.62	.000	R ² = .39 Adjusted R ² = 0.38 Standard Error = .68 F statistics = 174.35 p-value = .000

**significant < 0.01, * significant < 0.05

Predictors: (Constant), transformational leadership

Testing Hypothesis

H3: There is significant impact of transformational leadership on administrative innovation.

Statistical results in Table 3 illustrate the impact of transformational leadership on administrative innovation and market innovation results illustrate the relations between transformational leadership and administrative innovation. were acceptable. As indicated in the test (F) the calculated (F) value is 113.95 which are the largest of the indexed value (F) at significance less than 0.01. As a result, value of the adjusted coefficient (interpretation) R² is 0.29. This

means the transformational leadership explain and interpret 0.29 from the gained changes administrative innovation. In addition, the value of the coefficient Beta (B) for the transformational leadership an explanatory (independent) variable for the respondent (dependent) variable of is 0.53 at a significant less than 0.01. In other word, the change of one unit in the transformational leadership is followed by an increase of 0.53 in the administrative innovation. This in turn supports the sub-hypothesis mentioned above.

H4: There is significant impact of transformational leadership on market innovation.

Statistical results illustrate the relations between transformational leadership and market innovation. were acceptable. As indicated in the test (F) the calculated (F) value is 174.35 which are the largest of the indexed value (F) at significance less than 0.01. As a result, value of the adjusted coefficient (interpretation) R² is 0.39. This means the transformational leadership explain and interpret 0.39 from the gained changes market innovation. In addition, the value of the coefficient Beta (B) for the transformational leadership an explanatory (independent) variable for the respondent (dependent) variable of is 0.62 at a significant less than 0.01. In other word, the change of one unit in the transformational leadership is followed by an increase of 0.62 in the market innovation. This in turn supports the sub-hypothesis mentioned above.

Conclusion

The above statistical results prove that there are significant strong relationship between the transformational leadership with administrative innovation and market innovation. More importantly, there are significant impacts of the transformational leadership on both administrative innovation and market innovation. In others words, Leaders are the key personnel within organizations and higher education sector giving directions and guiding employees to be more creative and innovation in their approaches. leadership in controlling the organizational factors varies. This is mainly because the humans possess abilities that differ across humans. The They are the ones who are responsible for ensuring a conducive environment that could lead to both administrative innovation and market innovation. Thus, the study contributes to the existing pool of knowledge on the empirical impact of transformation al leadership on both administrative innovation and market innovation. Different aspects of these variables were tested, so as to provide a wider and more comprehensive lead to understanding of the factors or elements that affect in Iraqi public universities.

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