

Transformational Leadership Approaches in a Community School: A Case Study

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Abstract

Transformational leadership approaches help organization to reform and move toward a new horizon and also adds new bricks for the betterment in a competitive world. The principal who is guided and followed by transformational leadership approaches, is able to lead organization in effective way. Moreover, leader who embraced transformational leadership know how to engaged its stakeholders for the betterment of the organization. The research question “How has the school principal been a case for exemplary transformational leader?” is used as a guideline for the research process. In the area of transformational leadership practice at community school of Nepal, there has been only a few research studies. Its purpose is to explore transformational leadership practice in a community school. Single case study method is used to explore the strength and challenges experienced by the principal who embraced transformational leadership. One principal from better performance community school of Chitwan was taken as research participant where interviews are done and meaning is withdrawn. The result of the study is based on the principal’s experience regarding the betterment of the school in an ever-changing, complex with competitive educational environment. The transformational leadership theory supports this study. The result shows that those school leaders who practice transformational leadership approach got succeed in transforming the school and are able to change all the challenges and problems into opportunities for the school.

Keywords: *better performance, community schools, principal, transformational leadership, practices, stakeholders*

Scene Setting

When I look back to my school life, I had changed nearly three community schools till my secondary level because of school's environment. I remember except last school others two schools had enormous problems with principal's leadership, school culture, student centric teaching and learning practices, school and local community people. In addition to this, with the lack of effective leadership approaches embraced by school and its principal, my earlier schools were faced enormous problems and challenges.

Today, when I heard news about some community schools suffer from pathetic situation like, for a number of years, the pass rate of SLC/SEE examinations has also been below 50% (OCE, 2014). Nearly, average of 30% in SLC results for the last 5 years (MoE 2015), and only around 40% of average achievement rate in grade eight from 2011 (Education Review Office [ERO], 2015). Pass rate has not been progressing significantly even after the change in the evaluation system of SLC/SEE result into grading points (OCE, 2017). It is estimated that more than 80 percent of the government's yearly education budget goes to school education reform and improvement for (grades 1-12) (MoE, 2016). Despite huge government funding, still many community schools of Nepal give poor performance.

At the meantime, I remember McFarlin and Sweeney, (1998) who claimed that leaders of tomorrow will be transformational leaders who are able to embrace with strength, weakness along with characteristic behaviors. Therefore, I have been asking myself whether transformational leadership approach is important for school or not to tackle all its challenges and problems in recent timeframe. Many unsolved questions bombarded me to explore transformational leadership approaches in school.

Today in this competitive globalization and ever-changing environment, if any community school of Nepal fails to encounter school's objective behind its establishment. First and foremost, all the stakeholders like: teachers, parents, students, local public, federal, state, local bodies have pointed finger toward principal because they believe that principal has high accountable for any unwanted circumstances. In this scenario, how one principal of the school takes accountability for betterment of the school. And how has the school principal been a case for exemplary transformation leader?

I always wanted to understand how leadership of principal injects school for better place for learning and teaching. I always have been engaging myself to find out the effective leadership qualities of principal which makes community school a better place for learning and enhance toward better performing school that could be learned and delivered to other schools and enhanced them accordingly. Such expression of myself forced me to select this topic.

Therefore, I personally believe that, managing and making school better in today's competitive educational environment needs appropriate leadership skills. Leadership skills play effective role for betterment of the school. Marzano (2003) states that, leadership is the crucial factor for any school reform. Therefore, my desire to enlarge my knowledge and enhance my transformational leadership skill support me to investigate transformational leadership practice in community school of Nepal. All stakeholders pointed toward only principal (manager) for more accountability on the education sectors. Educational leaders are asked to perform crucial role for school betterment.

Introduction

According to the (DoE, 2014), community school is an important educational institution in Nepal and holds the key responsibility for fulfilling the educational necessity of the nation. There are all together 34806 schools in Nepal; out of them nearly, 29133 schools (i.e. 84%) symbolize as community schools where more than 83% of school going children enroll every year for their education. As per the necessity of national education system, community schools have been devoting, engaging and ensuring by better education performance, quality and output for the well educational rights of the students. Therefore, the national education system has not only been developing educational policies and regulate as well as directive it, but also allocated some structure such as school supervisor, resource person and other monitoring performances. Due to unsatisfactory performance presented by most of the community schools of Nepal, several question has been raising regarding head teacher's leadership practice. Leithwood and Jantzi, (2000) states that the seven dimension of transformational leadership at school are building school vision, setting goals, delivering intellectual stimulation, giving individual support, establishing best practices and values of the organization, fixing high academic standard expectation, establishing and developing school culture with fostering participation in decision.

Flash Reports printed in the starting and ending of academic sessions of every year from the Department of Education (DoE, 2016), shows that more than 80% of the student of Nepal are studying in community schools (DoE, 2016). In Nepal, most of the community schools has been getting full support from government and non-government organization. GoN has distributed NRs. 134.51 million (10.23% of the total budget) in education, science and technology in the budget discourse for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018/19 (MoF, 2018). Hence, the operating of the public education arrangement for the delivery of quality education to all look like a major concern for everybody. Despite, full assistance there is always undesirable and unwanted performance presenting by many community schools of Nepal. Moreover, are one example of bad-performance of community schools in Nepal. My question is that it is because of lack seven dimension of transformational leadership at school as Leithwood & Jantzi (2000) stated, so that many community schools in Nepal have been fading despite huge financial and other assistance by government and non-government agencies of Nepal Marzano (2003), stated

that leadership is the crucial factor for any school reform. Therefore, my desire to enlarge my knowledge by exploring transformational leadership practice in community school of Nepal. The main purpose of the study is to explore the case of transformational leadership in practice. Additionally, the study explores the strength and challenges experienced by principal who embraced transformational leadership.

This study deliver the complete view of how transformational leadership that helps to transform the school toward betterment. In the area of transformational leadership practice at community school of Nepal there has been only a few research study. Therefore, this is my interest area because, I have passion to explore the case of transformational leadership in practice. First and foremost it is important for me to explore principal with leadership qualities. Secondly, this issues open avenue of leadership qualities of existing school of Nepal. Thirdly, I am interest with this study, because it can give policy input. Then, I can add new domain in the leadership. Lastly, this is burning issues of Nepal and useful for answering the question how has the school principal been a case for exemplary transformational leaders?. Additionally, the outcomes of the research can use for wider educational debates and for answering the solution against deterioration of overall school activities. Similarly, it also provide a glimpse to reflect on the strength and challenge of those leader of school who embraced transformational leadership approaches for fulfilling all its stakeholders objectives. Hence the finding can replicate to promote and sustain the school from competitive, globalization, ever-changing environment and adds bricks of important of transformational leadership approaches for the principal of the school and also inform policy maker of the school to prioritize on transformational leadership at school for better performance, sustainable, growth, as well as holistic development of the schools, students, teachers, society and nation as well.

Cases of Transformational Leadership

Gautam and Alford, (2014) carried out a study in two successful secondary school in Nepal found that head teacher's commitment can influence student's academic performance as well as personal prosperity. Kanana (2015), stated that the managerial skills of head teacher positively influence the academic performance of a school. Similar, study also disclose that successful head teacher bring the improvement of student's academic achievement through their traits and contribution in public schools. The same study shows that there is a positive and important relationship between teachers' participation and academic performance of students in school. Therefore, teacher's presence in school managing significantly influences the academic performance of students in public school (Kanana, 2015). Similarly, (DoE, 2011), also highlights, the role of head teacher in community based schools and points that " A team spirit among the SMCs, PTAs and head teacher including parents; and backing the awareness about Education Act and Regulation, for the success of CMSs" (p.10).

Transformational Leadership

According to Jean Brown (1991), transformational leadership stands as a leadership for change. In school, at the current time the transformational leadership is tremendous popular (Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger said that transformational leadership approaches conceptualize leadership as an organizational whole instead task of a single individual Therefore, it is embraced to delivered instruction to students in the classroom, use for change process as well as motivating for continuous learning among staff, working with all community for achieving profound organizational goals (Hallinger, 2003).

Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010), state that transformational leadership is a motivational with a crystal-clear organizational vision, who encourage and motivate employees, to considerate their needs, helping them to attain their prospective, and contributes to good outcomes for an organization. Similarly, Castanheira and Costa (2011), states that transformational leadership has three basic function. First and foremost, leaders honestly dedicate themselves for fulfill the needs of others, and then empower them and motivate to achieve success. Secondly, leaders set vision, enhance trust, confidence and pride in working with charismatically lead. Lastly, they stimulation intellectual to the followers the same quality the leader has. According to Leithwood (1994), conceptualizes transformational leadership with eight dimension they are a) building school vision, b) establishing school goals, c) providing intellectual stimulation d) offering individualized support, e) modelling best practices and important organizational values, f) demonstrating high performance expectations, g) creating a productive school culture, h) developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. Transformational leadership therefore, defines as a specific type of influence process based on increasing the obligation of followers to organizational goals.

Therefore, making any school a better place for all stakeholders and dynamic for any changes the transformational leadership approaches plays a pivotal role. But it is a matter of question about how the leader (principal) of the school demonstrate and guided by the characteristics of transformational leadership.

Methodology

This research study was carried out with simply an interpretive qualitative study based on case study method that took place in one community school of Chitwan, Nepal. The single school case was used to know how transformational leadership approach embraced by the principal leads school toward betterment. These types of research are used to explore in-depth knowledge in a study. The case study research method is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2009).

In data analysis and interpretation parts, I gathered and compiled primary data in a systematic way. After pile up the raw data, I translated them in making representation of realities. I edited and processed the translated data to bring into the right shape of thematic meaning. After excision data, I categorized the data as per the norms and standards of interpretative research method. As per the research theme and research question, I divided data into different themes so that it become easier to analyzed and interpreted. I reviewed and transcribed rigorously the gathered data with cross-confirmation and cross-checks. My prime focused is to make the research process more readable and writable.

I collected the experiences and stories of participant as information. Research information are compiled using in-depth interviews, meetings with school's principal. The participant of this study was a principal from one community school of Chitwan, Nepal. The participants were chosen by using a purposive sampling method which may be sufficient for understanding human perceptions, problems, needs, behaviors and contexts, which are prime explanation for a qualitative audience (Bailey, 1994). Principal's experiences and stories were coded in order to understand the gist things expressed by participant. Three theme were developed being based on different code expressed by the participant.

The method of collection information provides me the ample information from the selected school and research participation. The collected information was categorized thematically based on research question. I am aware that the information collected and interpretation should perform synchronously in the case study research. Therefore, I started scrutiny only after gathered all information. Explanation building is a special type of analysis which intentions is to analysis the case study data by building an explanation about the case. In analysis process, the researchers' impression also make sense to understand the findings (Stake, 2005). I followed different strategies to figure out the nature of case relevant to the research issues like: a) transcribing and capturing of notes, b) writing up case study, c) interpreting and enfolding finding in literature, b) concluding and writing the case study report.

To maintain quality standard in my study, Firstly, I applied trustworthiness of any information describing as the relation between wanted information and collected information. It defines whether the study actually measures what was proposed to measure, or how truthful the research result was. Validating data is critical to the trustworthiness of any qualitative study. Secondly, verisimilitude which allowed me to collected information from representative ground and participants who have thoughtful awareness and experiences on research phenomena and socio-culture background. Thirdly, informed consent which considered and prioritized consent of my participant during interaction and information collection. As a researcher I am very aware of ethical issue. Finally, confidentiality and anonymity which deals with that habit of disclosing the identification of participant should not be revealed. as a crucial tool

Learning, Insights and Discussion

Even in today's scenario the image of school is still renowned and termed as a best and effective school of the place. Nowadays, there were many community and institutional schools and many community schools have also been doing better. But still many students of local community want to pursue their school level education from this community school, because they believe that school have student- centered mindset. If students are not succeeding in enrollment than only, they like to search for second options. The flow of students is still mammoth, parents and students feel proud to be a part of this school, the result and overall performance is still excellent. Parents, community, teachers and students have positive impression toward school because of its positive school climate for overall development of the children.

Principal's experiences are described in the following themes:

Theme 1: School climate

Theme 2: Student centered quality method of learning and teaching

Theme 3: Collaboration and coordination with local communities

On the basis of three themes, school's case was described using transcendental approach. The transcendental approach in each theme is given below:

School Climate

The principal of the school said:

I made school climate by enhancing all the dysfunction system, rules, policy and practices by collaborating with all staffs and stakeholders for the betterment of the school. Primarily, I enhanced all policies of school along with activities, behaviors carried by teachers, students and other staffs inside school which ensure socially, emotionally and physically harmless. Furthermore, my concern will always to establish favorable school climate that ensure overall safety. Through establishing school climate more safety and security I am able to maintain, attracting, retaining, and developing students and teachers by concerning their and school needs as well. I personally believe that, this types of practices at school emphasis superior performance by both teachers and students, support for desirable outcomes. Ensuring physical security for learning and teaching helps to attain parents, students, and other stakeholder's satisfaction. Due to such practices, I am able to improve my school's overall performance and learning and teaching environment than earlier principal did. This type of practices has been effective for transforming my school.

From the above information, I understand that the transformational leadership approaches help to maintain school climate effective for all students, teachers and stakeholders. I understand that principal who is guided by transformational leadership approaches contributing for establishing rules and norms which avoided physical aggression, harassment, teasing, enforcement, and prioritized for safe building, disable –friendly structure for transforming

school toward better place for all stakeholders. Therefore, objective and future development of the school is reinforcing only by transformational leadership practices by principal. In addition to this, If the school have good climate than it can motivated teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders.

This idea was also substantiated by Hoy, Hannum and Tschannen-Moran (1998), studied on the influence of organizational climate on pupils' achievement and they found that good school climate enhances and polish the teachers' belief which at the end can make a difference in pupils learning.

If I merge the theory of transformational leadership to understand, I come to this point that, principal who embraced transformational leadership approaches at school can manage overall school's climate effective and also satisfy its stakeholders by ensuring them through suitable learning and teaching climate at school.

Student Centered Method of Learning and Teaching

The principal of the school said:

Our school main motto is "student centric learning and teaching". On the basis of our school objective or motto, I have been giving priority on each and every tasks and jobs of all ours staffs. I allocate the task and responsibility on the basis of teacher's qualification and experiences. Similarly, on the basis of student's performance and overall activities in school, I have been strictly and actively monitoring and guiding each student with the help of their own class teacher. Therefore, I like to assign teachers with interesting and encouraging works, where they can show their skills, knowledge, ability, innovation for student centric teaching and learning. Moreover, I have been giving full autonomy to all our teachers for teaching, carried out any relevant and useful activities which help to enhance student's knowledge, skills and critical thinking. I believe, such activities and practices increases teachers' motivation for teaching and mentoring students and students' involvement for learning and gaining knowledge. By embracing such types of practices, I am able to improve my school and students' outcomes compared to earlier principal. This types of practices have been functioning from the starting days of my appointment as a principal and till today it is useful for transforming my school.

From the above information, I understand that transformational leadership can understand the effective of student center quality method of teaching and learning for child cognitive development. I understand that principal who embraced transformational leadership approaches have better knowledge and ideas on how to enhanced student overall knowledge, skills, behavior and activities toward learning and gaining. Moreover, principal who is guided by transformational leadership have ample strategies and activities on how to functioning school's teachers on child centric learning method.

This idea was also substantiated by Felder and Brent (2009), teaching and learning method where students are actively engaged in their activities by endorsing student's autonomy through various activities such as solving open-ended problem through critical and creative thinking, role-playing with active participation, undertaking collective team projects and learning through community arrangement. They also believed that student centered techniques enhance inspiration in learning with better retention of knowledge, depth understanding and remarkable positive attitude toward the subject being taught.

If I merge the theory of transformational leadership to understand, I come to this point that, principal who embraced transformational leadership approaches prioritized on effective student centric quality teaching and learning methods. Moreover, transformational leadership also helps principal to formulate different techniques and strategies along with its teachers and other stakeholders to enhance knowledge, skill, attitude, behavior of the student toward learning and such practices help transforming learning and teaching pedagogy and also enhance student's knowledge, skills, attitude, behavior.

Collaboration and Coordination with Communities

The principal of the school said:

In today's competitive educational environment the active collaboration and coordination with local communities is effective strategy to enhancing school environment. Therefore, I particularly believe that, our school have embrace the similar, value, goals, commitment, involvement and expectation similar with community people. As a principal of the school, I encouraged and involved local community members in each and every activities and program of the school. Our school consider and value their suggestion, feedback for the well being of the school and also we actively participate them in planning, organizing, developing and decision making activities. By considering local community suggestion and feedback at ace, it motivates them to bring new concept, knowledge, ideas, strategy and help to resolve conflict easily without any school's extracontribution. Furthermore, I also encourage them to assist school to build suitable learning and teaching by contributing through financial help, supervision and school community management. Every year our school motivated active local community members through some reward. Rewarding purely relates with providing return to the active local community members for their contribution for the well being of the school. This types of practices have been functioning from the starting year of my appointment as a principal of the school and till today it is useful for transforming my school.

From the above information, I understand that, in today's competitive world for the betterment, sustainability and success for longer period of time the active participation of local

community members play pivotal roles. School principal who is guided by transformational leadership approach have more potentiality and knowledge on how to actively and fruitfully collaboration and coordination with its community members. Therefore, such principal always gives prioritized and makes strategies on how to engaged and involved more and more community members on school activities, decision making so that the school can do better and better.

This idea was also substantiated by Mathema, et al. (2004), his team states that, there is a positive association between stakeholder efforts and school result in examinations. Similarly, Cheng and Cheung (2003), notice that efforts to improve organizational performance have featured stakeholder's participation in schools' corporate governance. This emphasizes that the participation of stakeholders at all levels of an organization in the analysis of problems, development of strategies and application of solution.

If I merge the theory transformational leadership to my understanding then, I come to this point that transformational leadership helps leader of the school to considered and prioritized to established coordination and cooperation between school, its management along with community people for transforming school toward betterment and became highly competitive for the longer period of time.

In each theme – first present the case and interpret the case from multiple angles for better meaning and discuss on the meaning.

Conclusion and Implication

Basically, transformational leadership prioritizes motivation of all stakeholders, considering their needs, building school vision, boost high performance, developing consensus about group goal and organization goals with caliber performance at school. Research paper identified several ideas used by school principal for maintaining, developing, organizing school properly and address its students, teachers and other stakeholders objective for making school effective and better. Through transformational leadership practices one principal can implement the best practices of plan, norms, value, policies, activities, strategies and system for making school a better place for holistic development. Therefore, from the case transformational leadership approaches in school is useful and crucial for today's ever-changing competitive environment and betterment of the organization. However, it is also a continuous subject matters of discussion whether principal of any school is guided and demonstrate themselves through the transformational leadership characteristic properly or not. The final result of this study reveal that the principal of the case school is highly influence, motivate, prioritize each employees concern and linked it with school's vision, objective, influence students in effective ways and transform structure, system, policy, rules, norms, to makes the school betterment. The implementation and finding reached through this case of transformational leadership in practices are:

School leader (principal) who embraced transformational leadership approaches can influence on students and teachers' performance and transform school toward betterment and input caliber performance at school. Similarly, the beautiful side of transformational leadership approach is to empowering, enriching, enhancing, coordinating, collaborating with teachers, other personnels so that it can develop the feeling of loyalty and dedication toward school and adds bricks for holistics development in ever-changing environmet.

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