Moving From Transactional to Transformational Leadership in Colleges of Agriculture[1]

Larry J. Connor[2]
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32611-0270

NACTA

Abstract

Administrators/faculty typically have little exposure to salient leadership literature, and college applications. A major example is transactional vs. transformational leadership, which has become increasingly important with deteriorating budgets. Transactional leadership emphasizes transactions/exchanges between leaders, colleagues, and followers, and uses contingent reward and management by exception in dealing with others. Transformational leadership emphasizes transformation/change in an organization through the use of empowerment, visioning, and ethics (end results).

College decision making typically requires different leadership forms. Transactional leadership is typically employed for hiring faculty, programmatic assignments, allocating resources, salary adjustments, promotions/tenure actions, counter offers, problem employee interventions, and academic governance. Transformational leadership is appropriate for strategic planning, cutback management, task forces for problem solving, leadership/professional development, requests for proposals, and grievance resolution.

A case study of utilizing transformational leadership for college academic programs at Florida is presented. Enrollment had declined, the state had reduced funding and indicated low enrollment majors would be abolished, there was little curricular change and faculty morale was low. Change was accomplished through the use of ethical, visionary and empowerment leadership. The transformational response was generally successful in that enrollment dramatically increased, major curricular change occurred, and funding and faculty/staff were considerably expanded.

Introduction

Administrators and faculty in Colleges of Agriculture (COA) typically have little formal training in leadership. Consequently, they are seldom versed in emerging/salient leadership literature, and potential COA applications. A major example of such literature is transactional versus transformational leadership. These leadership forms have become increasingly important in recent years as administrators and faculty have grappled with deteriorating budgets.

Major objectives of this paper are to: 1) review pertinent literature pertaining to transactional versus transformational leadership; 2) appraise potential applications in a COA; and 3) present a case study of moving to transformational leadership in COA academic programs. The focus of this paper is on leadership forms based on administrator/faculty decision making on major policy issues.

Pertinent Literature

COA administrators/faculty typically use several leadership forms in the discharge of their duties, although they may emphasize or are most skilled in

Table 1. Major Leadership Forms Utilized in Colleges of Agriculture[z]

Form	Characteristics
1. Command	Faculty seldom consulted on major policy decisions.
2. Transactional	Emphasizes transactions or exchanges between leaders, colleagues, and followers.
3. Transformational	Emphasizes transformation and change.
4. Laissez-faire	Leaders avoid decisions, or wait for problems to arise before taking action.

[z]Leadership forms based on administrator/faculty decision making on major policy matters.

would be abolished, there was little curricular change and faculty morale was low. Change was accomplished through the use of ethical, visionary and empowerment leadership. The transformational response was generally successful in that enrollment

one form (Table 1). At one extreme, they may use a "command" or traditional military form. Although still important, this leadership form has diminished in importance with the advent of formalized academic governance systems, affirmative action hiring

procedures, and the increasing use of transactional leadership. At the other extreme, they may use a "laissez-faire" form by waiting for problems to arise before taking action, or by avoiding decisions. This can be a very damaging leadership form, although appropriate for some situations. For example, administrators seldom intervene in a course taught by a faculty member, unless student evaluation forms are bad or the instructor violates the University teaching code of conduct. Transactional and transformational leadership are intermediate forms which may be utilized in COA's (the focus of this paper).

Ideally, administrators and faculty should use all leadership forms in carrying out their duties. However, few are adept at using all forms because of differences in interpersonal skills, conceptual capacity, decisiveness, and willingness to bear risk. Transactional and transformational leadership are of particular interest because of the growing use of transactional methods and the newness and underutilization of transformational leadership.

Prior to 1978, leadership was often approached in the literature from an exchange context. Leaders and followers interacted and influenced each other's behavior. In 1978, Burns introduced "transform ational leadership" in his classic book on Leadership (Burns, 1978). Various authors have subsequently refined and expanded Burns' basic concepts of leadership. Transactional leadership is generally defined as emphasizing the transactions or exchanges that occur among leaders, colleagues and followers. Transformational leadership deals with transformation or change in an organization (Bass, 1996).

On the other hand, transformational leadership places greater emphasis upon intellectual capability and creativity. It tends to be more abstract, and emphasizes vision over goals.

The major components of transactional and transformational leadership are different (Avolio and Bass, 2002) and (Bass, 1996). Transactional leaders tend to be "contingent rewarding" through providing rewards for followers if they meet performance standards set jointly or by the leader (or controlling/punishing followers who do not). They all also tend to be active in "managing by exception," whereby they monitor followers performance, and take any needed corrective action when output falls below, or exceeds, expected "norms."

Transformational leaders, on the other hand, tend to be idealized, and oriented to change. They place greater attention on organizational transformation and behavioral change of individuals.

Transactional and transformational leaders relate quite differently to their colleagues and followers (Bass, 1996, p. 66). A major difference is that transformational leaders work to change the organizational culture by envisioning new alternatives, and empowering colleagues and followers in this change process. A cultural shift can only be accomplished through changes in leader, colleagues, followers, and organizational skills and values. Transactional leaders work within the organizational culture.

Finally, transactional and transformational leadership must be understood in the context of Terry's leadership views: "political, visionary, and ethical" (1993, pp. 30-49). He defines leadership in

Leadership Form	Emphasis	Uses
1. Transactional	Transactions and exchanges	Contingent reward and management by exception
2. Transformational	Transformations and change	Empowerment, visioning, and ethics (end results)

Table 2. Summary of Transactional Versus Transformational Leadership

Bass and others emphasize that transformational leadership is an expansion of transactional leadership. It does not replace it. Transformational concepts have been applied to such diverse fields as the military (Bass, 1996), community colleges (Gilbert, 1997), business (Kotter, 1995), nursing (Marriner-Tomey, 1993), and cooperative extension (Moyer, 1996).

There are major cognitive differences between transactional and transformational leadership (Wofford and Goodwin, 1994). Transactional leaders tend to think more about specific goals, work skills and knowledge needed to accomplish those goals, work assignments, and various reward relationships.

the context of power "over" and power "with." Power "over" does not adapt to change, but initiates it. This provides the foundation for transactional leadership. Power "with" is about empowerment, and is associated with transformational leadership. It should not be confused with delegation. Administrators working with faculty task forces is an excellent example of power "with" empowerment.

Visionary leadership assesses trends and paradigm shifts as major reasons for change (Terry, 1993). For example, curricular planning must necessarily consider student enrollment trends in making change. The computer/information paradigm shifts in distance education and classroom technology, and

the advent of teaching portfolios with peer evaluations in the nineties had major impacts on teaching. [See Kouzes and Posner (1995) pp. 111-121, for an excellent discussion of visioning.]

Ethical leadership focuses resources on beneficial and desired end results (Terry, 1993). Burns (1978) uses the meeting of human needs and elevating moral reasoning to help distinguish transformational from transactional leadership. Curricular change which ignores student impacts (enrollment, program quality, job marketability, etc.) may be unsustainable. Tenure decisions which ignore a unit's programmatic priorities may result in a faculty poorly equipped to meet the unit's mission. Ethical leadership thus requires value judgments and decision making on what ends are most beneficial and important for the organization, and how resources should then be allocated.

An interpretive summary of transactional and transformational leadership is shown in Table 2. Clearly, transformational leadership is an expansion of transactional leadership, although these leadership forms have a different emphasis, and utilize different approaches in dealing with colleagues and followers.

Transactional Versus Transformational Leadership in Colleges of Agriculture

Transactional and transformational leadership tend to be complementary in COA decision making. Depending upon the specific decisions, a different leadership may be required. An excellent example is hiring new faculty. If a position vacancy represents a replacement position, transactional leadership is required for the chair to clear the position with his/her faculty and the Dean, and to initiate necessary search procedures. However, a position may be defined as a result of a strategic planning process which nets a new position or represents a change in emphasis from past staffing in the department. In this case, transformational leadership would be required. Once the position is specified, necessary transactions would then need to occur between the Dean, chair, and faculty.

In Table 3, various activities are specified which correspond to transactional leaders' efforts. These activities are contingently rewarding, or utilize management by exception. Hiring new faculty represents an exchange between the chair and the new faculty member whereby the programmatic assignment is specified, office, lab space, support staff, operating funds and salary are allocated, and the conditions for salary adjustments and promotion and tenure are discussed. On the other hand, the chair may use management by exception in dealing with counter offers or problem employees. Finally, special note must be made of academic governance which deals with the various ways faculty collectively relate to each other and to administration. This may take a variety of forms such as standing or advisory committees, coordinators, or the faculty meeting as a whole.

The various transformational leadership activities specified in Table 3 represent situations which require empowerment, visioning and ethics (prioritizing end results). They represent efforts by the unit leader in working with the entire faculty, or with individuals. While strategic planning may be approached in a variety of ways, it represents major transformational efforts by a college or individual units. On the other hand, such activities as faculty sabbaticals and grievances deal with individual situations. It should be noted that with transformational activities, leadership is required of both administrators and faculty.

The preceding list of activities is not intended as

Table 3. Examples of Transactional Versus Transformational Leadership Activities in Colleges of Agriculture[z]

Transactional Leadership	Transformational Leadership
1. Hiring faculty	1. Strategic planning (teaching, research and outreach)
2. Programmatic assignments (teaching, research, outreach)	2. Cutback management/downsizing
3. Allocation of office and lab space, support	3. Faculty task force for problem solving
4. Salary adjustments	4. Faculty/administrator leadership development programs
5. Promotion/tenure actions	5. Individual faculty development programs
6. Counter offers	6. Preparing "requests for proposals"
7. Problem employee interventions	7. Faculty sabbaticals
8. Academic governance (standing and advisory committees, coordinators, etc.)	8. Faculty and/or student grievance resolution

[z]Not intended as an exhaustive list – for illustrative purposes only. Depending on how they are handled, some activities may require both kinds of leadership.

an exhaustive list and is open to debate. Depending on how they are handled, some activities may require both kinds of leadership. They merely illustrate some of the major decision making which must occur within a COA over time, and how these activities may be approached by the administrator and faculty. Clearly, administrators who only can practice transactional leadership will be limited in dealing with all problems arising in their unit.

A Case Study of Transformational Leadership in Academic Programs

An excellent case study for moving to transformational leadership is COA Academic Programs at the University of Florida for the period 1991-2001. This case study example represents an actual college situation where major problems necessitated the use of transformational leadership by college/unit administrators and faculty.

The situation existing in 1991 for COA Academic Programs was somewhat tenuous. At that point in time, the College faced major problems. Enrollment had been declining, the legislature had reduced funding, the State Board of Regents indicated that low enrollment majors would be abolished, and there had been little major curricular change by national standards. For example, there were three undergraduate majors in both the animal and horticultural sciences, and no agribusiness focus in food and resource economics. The morale of the teaching faculty was low, in some measure because of no raises for several years. Incentives for teaching were not always clear from the standpoint of department budgets, teaching awards and salary adjustments, and there were limited faculty development teaching programs. Finally, relationships were somewhat limited with other university and college administrators. What should academic program administrators have done in the way of transformational leadership in this situation?

The transformational leadership response of the University of Florida to the problems existing in 1991 was to first establish three faculty task forces to formulate ideas and action plans for undergraduate, graduate, and off-campus programs. This approach was taken because of the necessity of engaging and empowering the faculty in the decision process. These three original task forces formed the basis for a number of follow-up task forces (25 in all). The utilization of faculty task forces was based on the concepts identified by Connor and Cheek (2002). Faculty development programs enhanced faculty participation on task forces.

As a result of these task forces, low enrollment majors were merged to prevent their abolishment, new majors/minors were established, a distance education plan was developed and implemented, and an aggressive recruiting strategy was undertaken. Of crucial importance was the movement of the College from programmatic to state enrollment formula funding in 1992-93 per college budget requests. This represented a major risk inasmuch as the enrollment had been declining. However, funding could be substantially increased if enrollment could also be increased.

Faculty development programs were considerably expanded, and a Teaching Resource Center was established in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication to assist individual faculty in the College in improving their performance. Excellence in teaching was enhanced through revised and expanded college teaching awards, university teaching incentive program awards, and non-salary incentives such as teaching minigrants, equipment and lab updates and assistantships for large enrollment classes. Teaching portfolios/peer evaluations were also introduced. In order to improve relationships with administrators, the Dean and Assistant Deans periodically met with university and other college administrators to review college programs. Monthly meetings with Chairs were concurrently initiated by administrators in the Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences. This facilitated regular interaction between chairs and the academic Dean. New ACOP scholars also contributed to the solution of practical problems through their special projects.

The results of the transformational efforts were generally successful. A distance education program also was launched, and a variety of other faculty development and student programs were initiated. The end result was undergraduate enrollment increased by 1700 students over the decade and graduate enrollment by 7 percent. Minority undergraduate enrollment rose to approximately 24 percent and graduate enrollment to 12 percent of the College total. With the increased enrollment, funding was secured for 58 additional faculty positions and 52 new support positions. The teaching operating budget increased by $2,295,000, and nonrecurring funds of $2,800,000 were allocated to units for upgrading equipment and laboratories by utilizing salaries from unfilled, new enrollment growth positions. Eleven new degree programs were initiated, nine degree programs were consolidated into four, and three others were significantly changed. Scholarship funds were expanded for campus and off-campus students.

While the overall results were successful, some task force recommendations encountered problems. Financial constraints, university sensitivities, and the lack of a faculty consensus precluded the adoption of some recommendations. For example, it took almost a decade to change the name of the college because of opposition from liberal arts and sciences. A GIS lab was placed within the college computer lab because of disagreement on its location. One task force was disbanded because of faculty conflict. However, the overall batting average in adopting

recommendations was fairly high (well over 90 percent).

Several points need to be kept in mind when evaluating this transformational situation. First, the environment was favorable for change in the College during the 90's. The Deans and Department Chairs were receptive to change. State revenues began to expand, and funds were available to the College to meet enrollment growth and off-campus demands. Also, the President of the University, at that point in time, was a strong transformational leader who encouraged innovation and expansion in college programs. Without this favorable environment, transformational activities would have been more difficult to undertake.

Transformational change was mainly accomplished because of the emphasis on ethical, visionary, and empowerment leadership best expressed by Terry (1993). Resources were focused on the end results of increasing enrollment and enhancing faculty development. It was believed that this focus would be beneficial to accomplishing other goals (funding, faculty morale, graduate marketability, etc.). Visioning emphasized the evaluation of alternatives through an assessment of trends and paradigm shifts. Some major trends noted were the increasing popularity of college majors leading to professional schools (microbiology, nutrition, animal science), the declining enrollment of narrowly based commodity majors, and concurrent development of more generic, interdisciplinary, market based majors such as agribusiness, plant medicine, human resource development, environmental management, plant science, packaging, etc. Major paradigm shifts noted were the advent of distance education/classroom technology, and teaching portfolios/peer evaluation for faculty development.

Finally, faculty empowerment in supplying ideas, evaluation, and implementation was absolutely crucial to enacting transformational change. This empowerment was largely accomplished through the use of the 25 task forces. Leadership was not delegated to these task forces; the faculty were made partners with administration in bringing about change. Contributions of task force faculty were recognized by college/unit administrators wherever possible. The role of college/department administration was basically serving as catalysts, facilitators, and implementers.

Summary

COA administrators and faculty utilize several leadership forms ranging from a "command" form to a "laissez-faire" form in carrying out their responsibilities. Transactional and transformational leadership are intermediate forms typically utilized in COA's. The movement to transformational leadership typically requires a shift in organizational culture based on empowerment, visioning, and ethics (end results). COA administrators and faculty would be well-advised to become familiar with this leadership literature, and to appraise potential COA applications. Hopefully, this article may spur the undertaking of case studies, data analysis, and other research on college/unit/faculty leadership.

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