School leaders and transformational leadership theory: Time to part ways?

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Abstract

Purpose – After decades in which transformational leadership theory has prevailed as the dominant paradigm in leadership scholarship, critical voices have started raising serious concerns about its falsifiability, suggesting that transformational leadership theory should be abandoned. Although transformational leadership is key to conceptualizing ideal school leadership, the discourse did not find its way into the education field. The present work aims to address this issue.

Design/methodology/approach – The essay combines a review of the critique of the falsifiability of the transformational leadership theory with a discussion of the utility and fit of the theory.

Findings – On the 25th anniversary of transformational leadership theory, I suggest to the educational administration community not to abandon transformational leadership, but to address its shortcomings and look toward future challenges as the community contemplates the promises the theory holds for the field.

Originality/value – The essay examines the current status of the transformational leadership theory in the field of educational administration and offers an interpretative critique.

Keywords: Critique, Educational leadership, Good theory, School leadership, Transformational leadership

1. Introduction

Transformational leadership is one of the central and most influential leadership models in the field of education administration (Bush, 2014; Hallinger, 2003). The theory can be traced back to James Burns's work on political leaders. In time, the theory was extended by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio to describe the behaviors of business leaders. Transformational leaders are said to focus on inspiring followers to "commit to a shared vision and goals for an organization or unit, challenging them to be innovative problem solvers, and developing followers' leadership capacity via coaching, mentoring, and provision of both challenge and support" (Bass and Riggo, 2006, p. 4). Educational administration scholars recognized the relevance of the theory to the contemporary challenges encountered by principals. The theory was rapidly adapted in the field of education, and embraced as an ideal model for school leadership (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, 1994). Since the early 1990s, Kenneth Leithwood, Doris Jantzi, and their colleagues championed the adoption of transformational leadership behaviors in school management; in their works, they demonstrated the advantages of these behaviors, which often coincide with more effective school leadership (e.g., Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990). The popularization of transformational leadership theory in educational leadership cannot be understood apart from the current, change-oriented educational policy environment, which emphasizes restructuring and transformation to meet 21st-century schooling requirements (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, 1994). Today schools are expected to continually upgrade, and leaders play a key part in it.

The present essay explores the state of transformational leadership theory in the field of educational administration, relying on Bacharach's (1989) criteria for evaluating theories, including: (a) falsifiability (i.e., scientific refutability), (b) utility (i.e., usefulness in explaining and predicting), and (c) fit (i.e., ability to bridge gaps between other existing theories, or to transform our understanding of them). In the Appendix, I provide a list of literature-based criteria utilized in the present work, which can also be used for future exploration of the "goodness" of leadership theories in education. Although in my analysis I outline the current state of the science of transformational leadership in the field, a complete review of all our knowledge about transformational leadership in educational administration is beyond the scope of this paper. I argue that transformational leadership has shortcomings in the area of

falsifiability, but these could be addressed constructively. The theory has demonstrated its utility for the educational administration community, and if it is reconciled with other theories in the field, it still has underdeveloped potential to contribute to the understanding of education as a unique arena for working and learning.

2. Critique of transformational leadership theory

2.1 Critique of the falsifiability of transformational leadership theory

A recent review of general management scholarship indicates that transformational leadership theory is still the most explored and discussed leadership theory in the new millennium (Dinh *et al.*, 2014), and its dominance has been reaffirmed. Nevertheless, transformational leadership theory is at present strongly criticized in management studies. This critique has not made its way into the educational administration discourse. Although scholars of management and educational administration share some of their theories, the two scholarly discourses are often separated (Oplatka, 2010; 2014). However, some debates warrant cross-disciplinary attention. Presently, transformational leadership theory is under increasing attack for several reasons. The most comprehensive and articulate of these critiques is by Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013), who identified several key concerns with transformational leadership theory and measurement. Below I describe each of the critiques and explore some of their manifestations in educational administration.

The first criticism concerns the lack of a clear conceptual definition of transformational leadership. Good theory includes constructs that are clearly defined (Bacharach, 1989). The classic conceptualization of transformational leadership, which is associated with the work Bass and Avolio, includes the following dimensions: idealized influence (attributed and behavioral), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Critics suggest that the common ground of the different transformational leadership dimensions is unclear (Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013). The most popular measure of transformational leadership and of its dimensions in the general management field is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which is also the one commonly used by educational administration researchers (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005). In practice,

these dimensions are often summed up to form an overall transformational leadership index because the different dimensions demonstrate high intercorrelations. For example, Hsiao and Chang (2011), who explored 63 secondary high-school principals in Taiwan using MLQ and a sample of 330 teachers, reported intercorrelations of above .75 between the five dimensions of transformational leadership, about half of them above .80. Other works conducted exploratory factor analyses and reported not being able to replicate the multidimensional structure of the construct (e.g., Bogler, 2001; Nir and Hameiri, 2014). An additional problem that critics identified in transformational leadership theory is an absence of empirical distinctiveness from other elements of leadership. An earlier meta-analysis indicates that transformational leadership is highly correlated with contingent reward (Judge and Piccolo, 2004), an issue that appears also in educational administration studies. For example, Menon (2014) found that the best-fitted measurement model of the MLQ was the one in which contingent reward was loaded on the transformational factor, not on the transactional factor. Critics also identify a problem in the construct boundaries, related to the fact that transformational leadership showed high correlations with other forms of leadership such as participative leadership, ethical leadership, and leader-member exchange—without adequate theoretical explanation (Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013). Reports of a large shared variance between transformational leadership and other forms of leadership indicate a problem in the discriminant validity of the theory (Bacharach, 1989). The issue has also been described in the field of educational administration, although mostly in studies that used survey items to form specific measures of transformational leadership. For example, Marks and Printy's (2003) mixed method study found that principals who exhibited instructional leadership behaviors showed also high transformational leadership behaviors. Urick and Bowers (2014), who classified public principalship styles in the US, also found that transformational leadership and shared instructional leadership co-vary. Note that the use of measures constructed specifically for these studies raises questions about interpreting the results in the context of the larger picture of transformational leadership in educational administration.

The second critique deals with the fact that the conceptualization of transformational leadership confounds behaviors with their effects. It has been suggested that transformational leadership explains effective leadership and that it is

even equivalent to it (Shamir *et al.*, 1993). But critics regard this lack of distinction between the definition of transformational leadership and its effectiveness to be problematic, because transformational leadership theory borders on the tautological and as such it cannot be refuted (Bacharach, 1989). This issue is particularly problematic when it comes to the inclusion of the attributed idealized influence dimension (also known as charisma) in the construct (Kark *et al.*, 2003). Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) argued that the conceptualization of transformational leadership creates a logical deductive loop whereby "if it is not effective, by definition it is not charismatic-transformational" (p. 14). This problem surfaces in educational administration studies as well. For example, in meta-analytic review of unpublished research, Leithwood and Sun (2012) found an average correlation of .82 between aggregate and perceived leader effectiveness, rated by teachers. This result is far above the traditional multicollinearity cutoff.

The third critique concerns the inadequate causal models describing how transformational leadership affects outcomes and how the effects of transformational leadership are contingent upon moderators (Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013). Currently only one theory, the self-concept model of Shamir *et al.* (1993), describes an overall process with a coherent set of mediators. This issue is also noted in the educational administration literature. For example, Sun and Leithwood (2012) argued that the manner in which "different leadership practices travel" and affect student outcomes requires further theorizing and research (p. 441). Many of the mediators explored appear to overlap or be connected with each other in causal associations, so that "there may be fewer unique mediators than the current proliferation of concepts suggests" (Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013, p. 29). Critics also suggest that a conceptual theory is lacking regarding the moderating influences of the relationship between transformational leadership and outcomes (Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013). This shortcoming is manifest in the field of educational administration, where works synthetizing findings about transformational school leadership indicate that moderators are seldom theorized or explored directly (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005; Sun and Leithwood, 2012).

In light of the conceptual and methodological problems outlined above, Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) recommend that leadership researchers abandon the concept of transformational leadership. In contrast to such a purist approach, I

propose a more pragmatic one, in the spirit of Poole and Van de Ven's (1989) argument that tensions and contradictions within theories are inevitable, and that they can be coped with if we address them constructively. Some educational administration scholars (e.g., Bogler, 2001; Eyal and Kark, 2004; Eyal and Roth, 2011; Kurland *et al.*, 2010) already made notable decisions that make it possible to live with transformational leadership despite its shortcomings. These include: (a) adopting a unified index of transformational leadership; (b) omitting the attributed idealized influence dimension from the scale; (c) omitting the contingent reward dimension when exploring both transactional leadership and transformational leadership. I suggest taking two additional steps to avoid confusion in the field: (a) sticking to one of the two most popular measures of transformational leadership in quantitative explorations (i.e., the MLQ or the School Leadership survey), and (b) omitting the instructional dimension in transformational leadership measures.

Why make this effort? What is the benefit in adhering to a problematic theory? Two other criteria of a good theory, utility and fit, can help answer these questions.

2.2 Reflections on the utility of transformational leadership theory

Scholars tend to stand firm by concepts and theories in which they have been trained and socialized (Van de Ven, 1989). But this is not the only reason that I stand by transformational leadership despite the criticism presented above; the other is that I see value in keeping transformational leadership as a conceptual framework in educational administration. Conceptual distinctions may be valuable if two conditions are met (Gross *et al.*, 2011): (a) the concept is widely adopted by the community, and (b) empirical evidence supports the incremental validity of the concept above other related constructs. Below I will explore the contributions of transformational leadership to these areas.

A key indicator of the utility of a theory is whether people adopt and use it. The contribution of transformational leadership to the research community in the field of educational administration has been commonly acknowledged, but I wish to attach numbers to the effect of the theory in the field using data I mined with the ERIC search engine. Historically, from the early to the late 1980s, the number of documents published every year in English that contained the term "school leadership" was

below 50. For example, in 1988, an ERIC search found only 42 documents containing the term. Since the early 1990s, however, there has been a dramatic increase in documents containing the phrase. For example, in 1992 the number of documents stood at 113. This increase coincided with transformational leadership finding its way into the discourse in the field.[1] ERIC search yields a dramatic increase also in documents containing the term "transformational leadership" starting with the beginning of the new millennium, with the number of published documents doubling every 3-4 years. To better reflect the supplementary or complementary (depending on one's point of view) relationship of transformational leadership with school leadership, I calculated the ratio of published documents on transformational leadership to published documents on school leadership. Since the mid-2000s, transformational leadership makes up approximately 30%-45% of documents published containing the term "school leadership" (Figure I). During this period, when the frequency of the term "school leadership" remained constant, the increase in documents containing the term "transformational leadership" reflects the remarkable interest in the concept and the theoretical and empirical work driven by it.
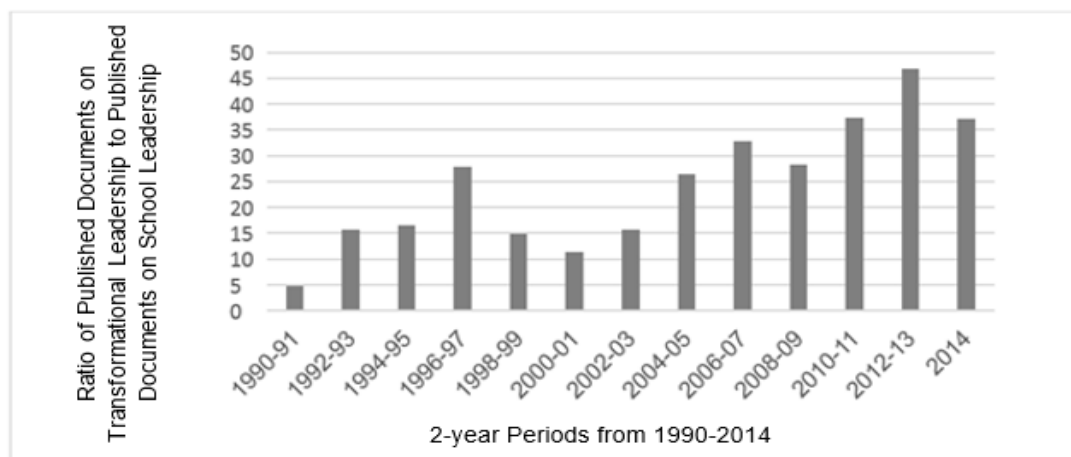
Figure I. Ratio of published documents on transformational leadership to published documents on school leadership, 1990–2014 (based on the ERIC search engine, bi-yearly)

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[1] At the same time, another key school leadership theory, instructional leadership theory, was rising in the field of educational administration. Although it is difficult to separate the influence of the two theories on the field in a retrospective analysis, the concept of instructional leadership as ideal school management model existed since the 1960s (e.g., Bridges, 1967), and the developed theory of instructional leadership was introduced nearly a decade before transformational leadership, in the early 1980s (e.g., Hallinger and Murphy, 1983; Murphy, 1983).

In applied areas such as education (Shavelson and Towne, 2002), theories are often used to connect scholars with practitioners, and must serve as a common language bridging the two groups. Therefore, theories in applied areas should be intuitively accessible to practitioners. Policy documents and research papers indicate that transformational leadership has become an essential component in many principals' training programs, and a standard of comparison. I traced the mentions of transformational leadership as a key component in training programs to the early 2000s, as the program of the California State University at Fresno offered on-the-job training for acting assistant administrators, which included courses in transformational leadership (Jackson and Kelley, 2003). Since then, transformational leadership has spread as a key component in training program reforms worldwide. For example, Steyn (2009) described the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) in South Africa as being responsible for the accreditation of academic institutions, indicating that their programs included transformational leadership as one of the criteria to determine the effectiveness of school leadership preparation programs. Another example of the popularity of transformational leadership among policy makers can be found in Israel. The Israel Institute for School Leadership, which is the national agency responsible for training principals, incorporates transformational leadership as a necessary element of the role of the principal (Avney Rosha, 2008). Evidence shows the adoption of transformational leadership in school leaders' preparation programs not only as training content or as desired standard but also as a selection criterion. Simmons *et al.* (2008) formulated a preparation program for first-time leaders for the St. Louis Public School District in which a tendency toward transformational leadership is one of the criteria used to identify suitable applicants. Transformational leadership has also made its way into more radical alternative preparation programs. For example, Black and Murtadha (2007) suggested a new signature pedagogy for educational leadership preparation programs in which transformational leadership and care are intertwined.

A second indicator that demonstrates the utility of a conceptual framework is related to its explanatory added value in empirical studies, over and above other related constructs (Bacharach, 1989). Below I present some findings illustrating the

exploratory power of transformational leadership in education.[2] One such example appears in Koh, Steers, and Terborg's (1995) exploration of Singaporean principals' leadership styles using the MLQ. The researchers reported that transformational leadership adds 17%-26% above other leadership styles to the explained variance of the school staff's organizational citizenship, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with the leader. Another illustration can be found in Dowling's (2007) work, which explored the leadership styles of assistant principals in Ohio. Dowling found that assistant principals' transformational leadership style, as assessed using the LQAP instrument, accounted for a significant amount of variance in school performance based on state assessment, independent of assistant principals' instructional leadership. Transformational leadership was also found to contribute positively to the prediction of organizational learning above and beyond the strength of organizational vision reported by teachers (Kurland *et al.*, 2011), and to directly reduce teachers' burnout even when teachers' autonomous motivation is introduced as a mediator (Eyal and Roth, 2011).

The evidence presented above supports the claim that transformational leadership is a useful framework for conducting research and practical activities in educational administration, and demonstrates its explanatory power.

2.3 Reflections on the fit of transformational leadership theory
In this last section I wish to talk about the manner in which transformational leadership theory fits the field of educational administration. Although some scholars do not regard fit as a criterion for a solid theory (Bacharach, 1989), I do, because successfully importing theories from other fields involves the ability to fit them within the new environment while maintaining the distinctive identity of the field. Oplatka (2014) suggested that educational administration draws heavily from organizational

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[2] One issue that should be noted in relation to the predictive value of transformational leadership theory is that a large portion of the knowledge is the product of correlative cross-sectional research designs. Prior syntheses consider this issue to be a widespread methodological challenge that the field of educational administration must address (Heck and Hallinger, 2014), so that it does not uniquely characterize the exploration of transformational leadership. Cross-sectional design explores between-person variance, and it is not suitable for exploring within-person variance (i.e., change in individuals over time), which means that it cannot be used to infer causality (Avey *et al.*, 2008). In the future, adopting longitudinal designs or combined designs integrating cross-sectional surveys with experiments can greatly expand our knowledge about the explanatory value of the theory.

behavior and "relocates" theories in contexts and meanings related to its arenas of research (e.g., schools), "to better explain the educational organization" (p. 131). Therefore, the extent to which transformational leadership fits the field of education is important. Theoretical fit can manifest in two ways (Bacharach, 1989): (a) connectivity, as the theory bridges the gap between different theories in the field, and (b) transformation, as the theory motivates the reassessment and modification of prior theories. In our case, it is important to assess theoretical contribution of transformational leadership theory to the field of educational administration because it directly relates to the educational qualities of the theory and to its insights regarding education as a unique arena. Shavelson and Towne (2002) identified five characteristics of education shaping the nature of scientific research in the field. I suggest that these features are more than constraints to educational research, because they can be viewed to a great extent as defining education as an arena. The features are (a) the centrality of values, social ideals, multiple interests, and power conflicts; (b) human volition manifesting in the fluid composition of stakeholders; (c) variability in programs and processes as a function of site; (d) the interdependent and multilayered organization of schools, given that a school structure reflects political, social, and economic differences; and (d) the diversity of individuals nested within the same unit with respect to different geographic, historical, social, ethnic, linguistic, economic, and cultural backgrounds.

       Naturally, the list is debatable, but I use it as a reference point to judge whether or not a specific study significantly contributes to our understanding of education. My general assessment is that currently the potential insights of transformational leadership theory on education as a unique arena are quite limited. At present, theories that prevail in educational administration such as critical/critical race, feminist/queer, institutional, social-cognitive, social capital, complexity, chaos, systems, turbulence, actor-network, adult learning, organizational learning, agency, and personal-construct (Oplatka, 2014) seldom form the focus of transformational leadership studies. If they are mentioned at all, it is often offhand, and they rarely form an integral part of the research. Most educational administration scholars stand for a different interpretation of fit in their works because they are convinced that conducting leadership research in educational organizations fosters such a fit. The more rigorous ones assume that including students' test scores as leadership outcome

assures the education orientation of the study. Below I review most of the empirical research focusing on transformational leadership in schools published in 2014 in journals of education and educational administration.[3] I replaced the terms "principals" and "teachers" with "managers" and "employees" to illustrate my point. Among the studies that explored transformational leadership in schools as a potential predictor of dependent variables were those focusing on employees' overall job satisfaction, managers' information-processing systems, managers' decision-making style, perceived leadership outcomes, employees' communication satisfaction, managers' powerbases, and employees' intention to use digital materials in their professional practices. I identified one study that explored transformational school leadership as an outcome of managers' emotional intelligence, and three studies that also included students' test scores (about 19% of the relevant publications). But only one study in 2014, about 6% of the publications identified in that year, investigated transformational school leadership with relation to other educational administration theories (the study explored how managers advance social justice and educational equity).

Note that this overview is not the result of nitpicking, and to the best of my knowledge it does not represent the year 2014 exclusively. Currently, transformational leadership is explored mostly without deep theoretical connections to other educational administration theories, and therefore its potential contribution to our understanding of education as a unique arena is limited. My critique, however, is not intended to motivate educational administration researchers to abandon the theory, but rather to reassess the research questions they pose. I believe that transformational leadership theory has the potential to contribute valuable insights on education at this time and age. Transformational leadership theory deals primarily with the manner in which leaders exert their influence on followers (Bush, 2014), and therefore in many ways it is a descriptive-functional theory. Because educational aims and processes are inherently ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations (Hostetler, 2005), transformational leadership can be an ideal litmus indicator of what works, making "reverse engineering" possible, in other words, transformational leadership can help us use successful leadership in education in order to understand what is consistent

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[3] Sixteen empirical studies were identified in the search. Detailed information can be obtained by contacting the author.

with effectiveness in education in various settings. Principals' transformational leadership may thus serve as the starting point for understanding various elements such as role demands, and the values and goals that motivate leaders. Other educational administration theories are ideal sources for conceptualizing likely mediators, such as teachers' sense of calling, and moderators of transformational leadership, such as the socioeconomic context of schooling, because they fill the theoretical gaps in the general transformational leadership literature. This creative process requires a level of openness on the part of the research community that can foster theoretical leaps (Bacharach, 1989). Unquestionably, researchers must beware that in the process of re-conceptualizing transformational leadership not to distort the concept and not to stretch it beyond reason (Van de Ven, 1989). But the potential profits of this creative process are greater than its risks.

4. Discussion

The present paper is structured around Bacharach's (1989) criteria of a "good" theory: falsifiability, utility, and fit. My arguments are intended to serve as a response to the growing critique of transformational leadership theory on the grounds of its non-falsifiability. The suggestions in the first part of the essay address these issues. Some scholars might object to the suggestion to set aside the differences between sub-dimensions in favor of moving toward a simpler and less elegant model, yet it is necessary to exchange theoretical "beauty" for empirical support. Following this path is likely to lead us to consider alternative compact versions of transformational leadership scales, after researching their psychometric characteristics. Other scholars might consider the suggestion to exclude the instructional management dimension as making the theory less relevant for education, but this step is required to maintain distinctiveness from other educational leadership models. School administration includes many imperatives;[4] therefore the exclusion of the instructional dimension is likely to better represent transformational principals who focus on other imperatives. I contend that the changes proposed to address the issues of falsifiability will leave the core of transformational leadership untouched because the theory will still describe a

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[4] For instance, Greenfield (1995) also mentions moral, political, managerial, and social imperatives beside instructional.

small number of leadership behaviors that aim to encourage "followers to work toward transcendental goals instead of immediate self-interest, and also toward achievement and self-actualization rather than simply safety and security" (Sun and Leithwood, 2012, p. 419).

Readers might wonder if it were not better to embrace only "prefect" theories. To judge whether a theory can be prefect, let us consider first what a theory is. Farber defines theory as "a system of interrelations among highly abstract concepts which serves to organize a very large number of laws that were previously unrelated" (as cited in Bourgeois, 1979, p. 443). Theorizing is therefore the art of specificity in asking questions and providing answers (Goodson, 2010). But as the popularity of a theory grows and it becomes subject of multiple explorations, its specificity decreases. Theories constantly change as a result of refinement, elaboration, or contextualization in empirical research (e.g., Jia *et al.*, 2011; Judge *et al.*, 2009). In response to such threat to their specificity, theories are adapted by their original proponents or by other researchers.[5] Theories also undergo fundamental change as a result of the development and legitimization of a new approach in the discipline, seemingly unrelated to the theories' core.[6] Thus, theories are never prefect in the sense that they are never final, and theoretical adaptions are part of the scientific dynamics. Therefore, the question rises what kind of patching is acceptable in our theories. It may be argued that accepting patching within a theoretical framework inhibits the coherence of the theory and the development of the field. To address this argument, I emphasize the distinction between incompatibility that is a logical contradiction and incomparability as a difference that disallows comparison (Slife, 2000). In my opinion, some fragmentation within a theoretical framework can be tolerated as long as we can soundly determine whether findings are transferable and hold across differences.

As others have noted previously, transformational leadership is a highly relevant theory to our day and age, which is greatly change-oriented (see Bush, 2014; Hallinger, 1992, 2003; Leithwood, 1994). School upgrade, whether as a result

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[5] See, for example, Karl E. Weick's early work on loose coupling (Weick, 1976) vs. his reconceptualization of it in his later work (Orton and Weick, 1990).

[6] For instance, multilevel modeling made possible a new understating of theory and research in organizations (Kozlowski and Klein, 2000), which is currently stimulating adaptations in multiple leadership theories.

restructuring, performability, or local initiative, is the common agenda of most school leaders worldwide. Many school leaders find themselves operating in a post-bureaucratic system (Maroy, 2009), in which hierarchal power is less effective. Leadership theory that aims to explain how leaders promote change by operating on the emotions, motivations, and identity of followers to enlist them is extremely pertinent. The viewpoint expressed in this essay is based on a perspective that prioritizes the relevance of scientific work to some degree. Although this may not be the mainstream position in the research community, it is not new. For example, Lee Cronbach, the noted educational psychologist and statistician, argued that "The goal of our work… is not to amass generalizations atop which a theoretical tower can someday be erected... The special task of the social scientist in each generation is to pin down the contemporary facts… in the effort to gain insight into contemporary relationships, and to realign the culture's view of man with present realities" (Cronbach, 1975, p. 126). If social scientists have a social commitment to slightly tip the balance in favor of relevance over perfection in their work, transformational leadership theory still has value in educational administration research, at least until better options emerge.

5. Conclusion

After decades of consolidating its place in scholarship, transformational leadership theory is currently an inseparable part of how educational administration scholars consider ideal school leadership. We do not reflect on the manner in which our theories achieve consensus. This essay, timed to coincide with the 25th anniversary of transformational leadership, offers an interpretative critique of its current status in the field of educational administration. I contend that in the field of educational administration, given the shortcomings of transformational leadership in the area of falsifiability, we need to adopt a pragmatic approach and take several corrective steps in future research. I consider these steps to have merit because of the extensive use of the theory in educational administration, both in research and practice, and because of its demonstrated exploratory power. Most important, I contend that most transformational leadership researchers in educational administration do not attempt to meaningfully fit transformational leadership theory to other theories in the field of educational administration, thereby missing valuable contributions of this theory to

the understanding of education as a unique arena. Although some perceive this lack of integration as yet another problem of an external theory imported into the field of educational administration, and argue in favor of abandoning the theory, I view it primarily as a promising, underdeveloped direction that requires improved efforts. I hope that this essay provides a foundation on which transformational leadership researchers can build future works, when they use the theory to increase our understandings of education as it is situated in this time and place.

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Appendix

Criteria for examining the "goodness" of leadership theories in education

Criteria	Sub-criteria
Falsifiability	(a) Does the leadership construct have a clear conceptual definition and has its validity been demonstrated? • Do sub-dimensions of the leadership construct have both a common ground and distinctiveness between themselves? • Is the structure of the leadership construct replicable? • Does the leadership construct show discriminant validity from other leadership constructs? (b) Is there a conceptual separation between leadership behaviors and their effects? (c) Are relevant causal mechanisms mediating the effects of the leadership construct being offered? (d) Are relevant moderating conditions contingent upon the effects of the leadership construct being offered?
Utility	(a) Has the incremental validity of the leadership construct with respect to other leadership constructs been demonstrated? (b) Has the leadership construct been adopted by both researchers and practitioners?
Fit	(a) Does the leadership theory bridge existing gaps between various theories in the field of education?

	(b) Does the leadership theory lead to reassessment and modification of earlier theories in the field of education?

Notes: Although many criteria can be evaluated in the seminal work in which the theory is introduced, other criteria require an accumulated knowledge base before their evaluation. For further discussion of these criteria and examples of their exploration, see Bacharach, 1989; Gross *et al.*, 2011; Van de Ven, 1989; Poole and Van de Ven, 1989; Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013.