

## Assessment of transformational-transactional leadership of university teachers

Evaluación de liderazgo transformacional-transactional de docentes universitarios



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### Abstract

The aim of this research was to evaluate the transformational-transactional leadership profile of university teachers at a private university in Ecuador, adopting Bass and Avolio's leadership model. The approach of this research was mixed (qualitative and quantitative), correlational, non-experimental and cross-sectional design; with a sample of 34 teachers and 86 students, to whom the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) questionnaires were applied. The data were processed in the statistical software SPSS version 19. The analysis of the results shows that the leadership style that predominates in the teachers from the self-perception and perception of the students is transformational leadership and is the one that causes the greatest impact on the outcome variables (satisfaction, extra effort and effectiveness).

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership, university leadership, leadership and satisfaction

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Page 1-15

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## Resumen

La investigación tuvo como objetivo realizar una evaluación del perfil de liderazgo transformacional - transaccional en los docentes universitarios de una universidad privada en Ecuador, adoptando el modelo de liderazgo de Bass y Avolio. El enfoque de esta investigación fue mixto (cualitativo y cuantitativo), de tipo correlacional, diseño no experimental y transversal; con una muestra de 34 docentes y 86 estudiantes, a quienes se les aplicó los cuestionarios del Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Los datos fueron procesados en el programa estadístico informático SPSS versión 19. El análisis de los resultados demuestra que el estilo de liderazgo que predominan en los docentes desde la autopercepción y percepción de los estudiantes es el liderazgo transformacional y es el que causa mayor impacto en las variables de resultados (satisfacción, esfuerzo extra y efectividad)

**Palabras clave:** Liderazgo transformacional, liderazgo universitario, liderazgo y satisfacción

## Introduction

In the Roman Empire, effective leaders were needed to conquer new lands and defend their territory. Similarly, in the dispute between the Danes and Saxons, the Danes, also known as Vikings, made incursions into the territory of the English kingdoms, this dispute lasted 250 years and in the end the Danes became kings of the English.

If we analyse the history of kings and their leadership styles we realise that some leaders were effective and others were not, that certain leaders had different personality traits from others, but depending on the context and the situation they had to adopt and develop certain traits, overcoming their own interests for the common good of their people.

Thus, a definition of leadership would be the leader's ability to achieve organisational goals by overcoming his or her own self-interest. Historical as well as current events make us presume that people, organisations, require leaders to guide them.

But if the leader is not prepared to lead, he or she will probably have ineffective results, so researchers have focused on studying this phenomenon and proposing leadership models that help to achieve effective leadership.

One of the models that has been most widely accepted and scientifically proven is Bass and Avolio's transformational-transactional leadership model, which will be discussed below.

In the educational context, university teachers must exercise the role of leader, they must know how to direct and guide their students, they must fulfil the goal of training competent professionals, motivate them and stimulate them to exceed their own expectations. If we think back to our student days, we have surely had teachers who have left their mark on our lives, either for better or for worse, depending on what they instilled in us. We have liked certain subjects and hated others, this affection is possibly due to the relationship we had with the teacher, we liked the subject if the teacher was pleasant and charismatic and we hated it if the teacher was the opposite.

The Pygmalion effect has shown that if a teacher treats a student as excellent, the result is that the student will be excellent. A study carried out by Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1966 proved this hypothesis, an intelligence test was given to all the students and then the teachers were given the list of the students who had the best scores, at the end of the experiment the students' scores were validated and indeed the students who the teachers thought had the best scores on the test were the ones who performed the best, but they were the ones who had the best performance, The reality was that the list of students was chosen at random and no intelligence test was given, which revealed that the teachers had a tendency to treat their students as excellent and they ended up being excellent.

The aim of this research was to determine which leadership style predominates in the teachers of this private university, from two approaches, the first from the self-perception of the teacher and the second from the perception of the student, the model adopted and adapted is the transformational-transactional leadership of Bass and Avolio. It is also necessary to know the impact of the teachers' leadership profile on the outcome variables: satisfaction, extra effort and effectiveness. With this information, universities could create training plans so that teachers can develop or enhance the leadership factors that have the greatest positive impact on the dependent variables. The managers of the different degree courses will be able to optimise economic resources in terms of training, since by knowing the most effective leadership style, the economic resources for training will be efficiently directed.

The research approach is quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional design, with a correlational scope.

Leadership is the activity of influencing people to voluntarily commit themselves to the achievement of group objectives (Koontz & O'Donnel, 1959; Terry, 1960). Leadership is the act of exerting interpersonal influence in a situation and directing it, through a process of communication, to the attainment of a specialised goal or goals (Tannenbaum, et al., 1959).

Leadership is the process in which leaders influence followers and vice versa, to achieve the objectives of an organisation through change (Hersey & Ken H. Blanchard, 1984; Lussier & Achua, 2002; Pesantez Molina, 2015).

Leadership is the ability of a person to influence followers to achieve goals and in turn convert followers into leaders (Pesantez Molina, 2019).

‘A leader is an individual who leads with excellence to make good things happen. The main objective is to generate confidence in the followers and create an exemplary image, where they can imitate the profile of the leader, so they can achieve success together without personal interests’ (Baldoni, 2011; Berenstein, 2010).

Research on leadership in education has helped to show that teachers are more effective when applying leadership theories in the classroom (Cheng, 1994; Walumba, Wu & Ojode, 2004).

Pounder (2008) in his research on transformational leadership and student performance evaluation found that teachers who are perceived by their students as transformational leaders influence them to give extra effort in the classroom, and that students perceive their teacher as effective and feel satisfied with their learning.

As we have just reviewed, there are some meanings of leader and leadership, as well as leadership theories, starting from the great man or trait theories, following behavioural theories, contingency or situational theories and transformational leadership, most of the theories have been conceptually structured without having an empirical verification to contrast the proposed theory, For example, the trait theory is not subject to empirical testing and does not consider behavioural or situational variables, which is why other theories have emerged, but these new theories also lack empirical validity.

Bass' transformational-transactional leadership has had great acceptance in the study of leadership, since this theoretical model has been subjected to empirical validity in different organisations and it has been statistically proven that transformational leadership increases the performance of followers, as we will analyse later in this study.

#### Trait theory

This theory is based on the personal characteristics of the leader. Individuals such as Nelson Mandela, Steve Jobs, are recognised as charismatic, courageous, inspirational leaders. Early research on leadership focused on the personality, physical and intellectual attributes of leaders. This theoretical approach affirms that leaders are born and not made.

It is framed within the so-called great man theory that suggests that certain stable characteristics of people differentiate those who are considered leaders from those who are not, some of the personal characteristics of leaders are: intelligence, intuition, persuasiveness and high levels of energy.

Between 1904 and 1948, researchers conducted more than 100 studies on leadership characteristics, concluding that no single list of characteristics could be defined and inferred to be effective leadership. By the mid-1970s, a more balanced view emerged, finding certain characteristics to be potentially useful, such as: drive, motivation, integrity, self-confidence and business savvy (Bateman & Snell, 2009).

When researchers began to organise the traits based on the Big Five personality theory: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience. Most of the dozens of traits described in the research fit into one of them, thus giving strong support to traits as predictors of leadership (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

Traits are more useful for predicting the emergence of leaders and the form of leadership than for indicating the difference between effective and ineffective leaders; the fact that an individual possesses the characteristics necessary to lead and is identified as a leader by followers does not necessarily mean that the leader is successful, which is why this theory did not have much impact.

New personality traits and physical characteristics are continuously appearing, which creates confusion in the studies of traits, leadership will not depend only on the traits of the leader but on the situation, for this reason it cannot be explained why some leaders, although

intelligent and with emotional maturity, are not effective; what is clear is that effective leaders are different from other people and need to have the right combination of traits to be more likely to be effective (Hill, Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly, & Konopaske, 2007).

By way of commentary, this body of theory can be synthesised that certain leader traits are predictive of effective leadership in followers. But this theoretical approach has not had a great impact on the academic and organisational environment due to the diversity of its findings, which makes it difficult to synthesise each of the traits and be able to infer the results to enhance effective leadership, so it is possible that this was the cause for researchers to take a step towards researching the leader's behaviours.

#### Behavioural theories

In order to establish the criteria for behavioural theories, the first step was to consider the failures of early trait studies, which led researchers from the late 1940s to the 1960s to question whether there was something unique about the behaviour of effective leaders. Trait theory helps us select the right leader, but behavioural theories of leadership indicated that it was possible to train people to become leaders.

This type of leadership considers two factors: task-oriented: they tell their followers how to do the job, define roles, structure; and people-oriented: they have consideration for their follower, trust, mutual respect, warmth.

Within the behavioural theories, the following contributions stand out: a) studies by the University of Ohio, b) studies by the University of Michigan and c) the management grid by Blake and Mounton (Blake & Mounton, 1964).

To sum up, this body of theory can be summarised by saying that certain behaviours of the leader are the prediction for exercising effective leadership in followers and achieving organisational objectives by increasing their level of performance (Zevallos Peñalva & Gutiérrez Vásquez, 2023).

However, this theoretical approach has been flawed by focusing its research only on the leader's individual behaviours and considering that leadership is effective when leaders always behave with an adequate combination of behaviours and without considering other variables, such as the situation. These other variables could intervene in the relationship of the leader's behavioural variables in a mediating or moderating way.

This limitation of variables and their relationships in Blake and Moun-ton's model could be the reason for the inconsistencies in the empirical results observed in practice. In turn, these inconsistencies might invite leadership experts to look for the effectiveness sought in other models.

#### Contingency or situational theories

Referring to the contributions and limitations of the researchers who have explored the issue Robbins & Judge, (2013) state:

When researchers studied situational influences, they observed that in condition a, leadership style x would be most appropriate, while style 'y' would be best for condition b, and style z for condition c. But what were conditions a, b and c?

The most representative models are: Tannenbaum and Schmidt's democratic authoritarian model, the Fiedler Model (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974), Reddin's three-dimensional model, the situational theory, the path-to-goal theory and the leader involvement model.

Situational theories are difficult to subject to rigorous empirical testing, on the whole they present certain restrictions. The empirical results have not been consistent enough to support the hypotheses put forward.

#### Transformational-Transactional Leadership

One of the most studied and empirically tested leadership styles is transformational-transactional leadership. Its main precursor is Bernard M. Bass (1985) who built on the original studies of James Mac Gregor Burns (1978). Most transformational and charismatic leadership theories consider both leader traits and behaviours as well as situational variables, resulting in a more comprehensive analysis than traditional approaches.

James Mac Gregor Burns was the researcher who introduced the concepts of transformational (TFL) and transactional (TTSC) leadership. Transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire their followers to achieve extraordinary results and in the process develop their own leadership capabilities.

Transformational leadership is related to the relationship-oriented behavioural style as the leader cares about his or her staff and transactional leadership is related to the task-oriented behavioural style, because of the reward the leader gives to the follower by accomplishing the given task. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to the

individual needs of followers, empowering them and aligning the goals and objectives of the followers, the leader, the group and the organisation.

Empirical evidence has shown that transformational leadership can exceed follower performance expectations and group and organisational commitment (Bass, 1985; Ahmad Saifuddin, 2020; Alwali & Alwali, 2022). Transformational leadership involves inspiring followers to achieve organisational goals by challenging them to be innovative problem solvers and to exceed their own expectations.

A criticism concerning these transformational and charismatic leadership theories implies that many refer to the dark side of charisma, charismatic leaders used their skills to motivate their followers to perform activities that cause harm to humanity (Chen, Song, Wei, & Wang, 2024), such as Adolf Hitler, Osama Bin Laden, but these leaders are called pseudo-transformational, they exhibit many elements of transformational leadership, but have personal motives of exploitation and self-aggrandisement.

For Burns (1978), transformational leadership is the opposite of transactional leadership. In this sense, Bass (1985) states that leaders exhibit both transformational and transactional leadership behaviours, both types of leadership can manifest in the same individual, but in different intensities. In his initial research with US military personnel, Bass conducted an exploratory factor analysis of the data obtained, resulting in three components or factors of transformational leadership: inspirational charisma, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration.

The sociologist Max Weber conceptualised charisma as a certain quality in the personality of an individual, which sets him apart from ordinary people and causes him to be considered as a being endowed with extraordinary powers or qualities. The individual who has these qualities is considered a leader. Weber argued that charismatic leadership was one of several ideal types of authority (Weber, 1947).

In later transformational leadership research, Bass subdivided the inspirational charisma factor into three factors: idealised attribute influence, idealised behavioural influence and inspirational motivation. Transformational leadership is a construct-type variable as it is measured through indicators or factors.

The total rank model of transformational-transactional leadership, measured with the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ),

implies that each leader shows a frequency of both transactional and transformational factors, but each leader's profile involves more of one and less of the other. Those leaders who are more satisfying to their followers and who are more effective as leaders are more transformational and less transactional as indicated by Avolio and Bass (1991) cited by (Bass, 1998).

The factors that form the transactional leadership construct are: contingent reward, management by active exception and management by passive exception.

**Contingent Reward:** The leader rewards followers for their efforts, thus managing to motivate employees with a salary reward to perform their respective activities with good performance.

**Active management by exception:** The leader closely inspects the movements of his followers, makes sure that they do not deviate from the established rules, verifies that there are no errors in their work performance and takes the necessary measures to be able to immediately repair any faults.

**Management by passive exception:** The leader only acts when there are serious deviations that cannot be solved easily, only then does he or she appear to take action to solve the problem.

The factors that form the construct of transformational leadership are: idealised influence (attribute and behaviour), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration.

**Idealised influence (attribute):** A leader's ability to influence his or her followers, becoming a role model, distinguished by personal characteristics that make the follower want to emulate him or her.

**Idealised influence (behaviour):** It is the ability of a leader to influence the behaviour of his followers as a consequence of the behaviour adopted by the leader. ethics.

**Inspirational Motivation:** The leader has the ability to motivate followers, create in them a beneficial vision, encourage them to strive to achieve what is expected, encourage change with enthusiasm and commitment.

**Intellectual stimulation:** Leaders encourage their followers to be creative, innovative, debate hypotheses, deal with unexpected situations wisely. Followers can suggest ideas, ask questions, and try new approaches.

Individual Consideration: The leader cares about the situation and examines the needs of individual employees to direct their intellect. Followers see their leader as a coach who directs, supports, listens, communicates, and provides challenges and opportunities to stimulate their development’.

Transformational-transactional leadership has been related to outcome variables such as satisfaction, extra effort and effectiveness, these variables can be measured with the same MLQ instrument.

Satisfaction: The leader performs actions that produce gratification in the work team. Followers consider the decisions made by the leaders to be correct and feel great.

Extra effort: The leader performs actions that produce greater cooperation from the employees in terms of better performance in their tasks. Followers participate in whatever the leader is willing to do.

Effectiveness: Leaders carry out actions that produce the achievement of the objectives and goals of the followers, that is to say that the employees perform in the best way to achieve the objectives set’. (Mendoza Martínez, et al., 2012).

For this research, the transformational-transactional leadership theory of total rank of the author Bernard Bass is adopted.

## **Materials and methods**

The research has a quantitative approach with a non-experimental design, cross-sectional and correlational scope. The unit of analysis are the teachers and students of the private university at the La Troncal campus, the sample is made up of 34 teachers and 88 students of the law, business engineering and accounting engineering careers, for the collection of information the respective authorisation was requested from the directors of each career. In the case of students, those who were 50% advanced in their degree were considered for the sample because they have a greater knowledge of the behaviour and characteristics of teachers when teaching classes.

The online surveys were applied, the measurement instrument is the MLQ adapted to the Ecuadorian context by Pesantez (2019), two versions of the instrument were made, one version to survey teachers under their self-perception and another version to apply it to

students. We proceeded with the calculation of the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument, giving cronbach's alpha values above 0.90.

The research hypotheses are: 1) Transformational leadership has a significant impact on the outcome variables satisfaction, extra effort and effectiveness, and 2) Transformational leadership is the predominant leadership style among the teachers investigated. The statistical software Spss version 19 was used to test the hypotheses.

## Results

Of the 34 teachers surveyed, 27 are male and 7 are female, all are over 30 years old, 33 teachers have a master's degree and 1 has a doctorate degree. Of the 86 students surveyed, 52 are male and 34 are female.

To test the first research hypothesis, multivariate multiple regression analysis is used. When transformational-transactional leadership was regressed on the satisfaction variable, an R2 of 0.91 was obtained, with individual consideration and idealised influence as predictors. With the variable extra effort, an R2 of 0.97 was obtained, with inspirational motivation, management by active exception and individual consideration as predictors. With the effectiveness variable, an R2 of 0.91 was determined, with inspirational motivation and contingent reward as predictors.

According to the statistical results obtained, the transformational leadership factors such as individual consideration and inspirational motivation have the greatest significant impact on the outcome variables: satisfaction, extra effort and effectiveness, and the transactional leadership factors such as contingent reward and management by active exception have a lesser impact on the variables extra effort and effectiveness.

In order to contrast the second research hypothesis, a descriptive analysis of confidence intervals was carried out both from the teachers' self-perception and from the students' perception.

From the teachers' perception, the following means were obtained in hierarchical order: inspirational motivational 18.21; intellectual stimulation 18.09; idealised influence attribute 17.79; idealised influence behaviour 17.59; individual consideration 17.24; contingent reward 16.74; administration by active exception 16.68 and administration by passive exception 7.50.

From the perception of the students, the following mean results were obtained in hierarchical order: inspirational motivation 13.44; intellectual stimulation 13.30; idealised attribute influence 13.12; idealised behavioural influence 12.99; individual consideration 12.67; administration by active exception 12.19; contingent reward 11.52; and administration by passive exception 10.0.

## **Discussion**

According to the statistical results obtained, the leadership profile that predominates in university teachers is transformational leadership, from both teachers' and students' perceptions, with the difference that teachers perceive themselves to be more transformational than students do.

The results of this study show how transformational leadership is related to the variables satisfaction, extra effort and effectiveness, this relationship is significant only in the factors individual consideration, inspirational motivation and idealised influence in contrast to transactional leadership that only the factor contingent reward and management by active exception is positively related to effectiveness and extra effort respectively.

Teachers have behaviour aligned to transformational leadership and in the same way students perceive them as transformational, which increases student satisfaction with the teacher's leadership style and they are motivated to go the extra mile, leading to greater effectiveness in meeting learning objectives.

To increase student satisfaction, teachers should increase their transformational behaviour in the variables: Individual Consideration and Idealised Influence (attribute), because these are the ones that have the greatest impact on the outcome variable: satisfaction, and in such a way they would be the most predominant in order to obtain greater satisfaction.

In order to increase the degree of student effort, teachers should increase their transformational behaviour in the factors: motivational inspiration, management by active exception and individual consideration, because these factors have a positive and significant impact on the extra effort variable.

And if it comes to effectiveness, teachers should increase their transformational behaviour in the factors: motivational inspiration

and contingent reward, because these are the factors that significantly impact the effectiveness variable.

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