

AN EXAMINATION OF SELF-PERCEIVED TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OF TEXAS SUPERINTENDENTS*

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Abstract

This study examined self-perceived transformational leadership behaviors among Texas superintendents. The purpose of this study was to examine if relationships existed between superintendents' self-perceived transformational leadership style, district size, teaching, principal, and superintendent years of experience. A review of the literature indicated that transformational leadership theory has been recommended for administrators, including school district superintendents, as a means for increasing organizational effectiveness (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Chin, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). A purposive sample of 215 Texas superintendents was selected from those who attended the Lamar University Superintendent Leadership Academy between the years 2000 and 2010. Survey research was used to gather data. A 27 item questionnaire, completed by 115 superintendent participants, consisted of a 20 item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio & Bass, 2004) and seven questions soliciting demographic information. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used in this study to quantifiably measure the four factors of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership was self-reported to be prevalent across all district sizes and experience levels suggesting that it can be taught to and learned by all superintendents.



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1 Sumario en español

Este estudio revisó conductas transformacionales auto percibidos de liderazgo entre supervisores de Tejas. El propósito de este estudio fue de revisar si las relaciones existieron entre estilo de liderazgo de supervisores, tamaño de distrito, enseñar, el director, y años de supervisor transformacional auto percibido de experiencia. Una revisión de la literatura indicó que teoría transformacional de liderazgo ha sido recomendada para administradores, inclusive supervisores de distrito de escuela, como un medios para la eficacia organizativa creciente (Bajo & Riggio, 2006; Mentón, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Una muestra intencional de 215 supervisores de Tejas fue seleccionada de los que asistieron la Academia de Liderazgo de Supervisor de Universidad de Lamar entre los años 2000 y 2010. La investigación de la inspección fue utilizada para reunir los datos. Un 27 cuestionario del artículo, completado por 115 participantes de supervisor, consistió en un 20 Cuestionario de Liderazgo de artículo Multifactor (Avolio & Bajo, 2004) y siete preguntas que solicitan información demográfica. El Cuestionario del Liderazgo de Multifactor (MLQ) fue utilizado en este estudio para medir cuantificablemente los cuatro factores de liderazgo transformacional: idealizó influencia, motivo inspirador, estímulo intelectual, y consideración individualizada (Bajo & Riggio, 2006). El liderazgo transformacional fue auto informado para ser predominante a través de todos los tamaño de distrito y experimentar niveles que sugieren que puede ser enseñado a y aprendido por todos los supervisores.

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2 Introduction to the Study

Education has been in a state of reform for decades and calls for reforming education and closing the achievement gap continue (Levine & Marcus, 2007). No position within a school district has more control over reform than that of the superintendent of schools. The superintendent, as CEO and the district's instructional leader, is accountable for providing the leadership that motivates principals and teachers to increase academic achievement by engaging all student groups in the work of learning (Schlechty, 2001). According to Waters and Marzano (2006), superintendent leadership does make a difference and effective superintendent leadership has been found to be associated with higher levels of student achievement.

Educational reform is needed and transformational leadership, exercised by educational leaders responsible and accountable for closing the achievement gap has the potential and promise for large scale educational reform (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Schlechty (2001) extended these thoughts by stating that transformational leadership is the kind of leadership required to lead fundamental reform movements. He cited the absence of transformational leadership in our school systems, more than any other factor, as the reason behind the slow pace of school reform.

The theory behind transformational leadership is that an organization's effectiveness increases with the presence of leadership that is concerned with emotions, mission, vision, goals, ethics, values, meeting follower needs, and developing leadership capacity (Northouse, 2007). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership theory explains how leaders transform their organizations, their followers, and even themselves through leadership that influences, motivates, stimulates, and considers the needs of individual followers. Bass and Riggio also asserted that the application of transformational leadership theory can move followers to accomplish more than they believed possible and perform beyond expectations resulting in increased organizational effectiveness. It takes the forward movement of school leaders, teachers, students and the community to follow a true transformational leader. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) wrote that effective leadership in the school setting significantly influenced the likelihood that teachers will change their classroom practices. The ultimate goal of schools is to improve student performance and Waters & Marzano (2006) found that effective superintendent leadership is related to increased student achievement.

3 Background of the Problem

Levine and Marcus (2007) identified achievement gaps in the academic progress of students based on race, class, and language. The educational achievement of non-white students continues to lag behind that of their white counterparts, while drop out and retention rates continue to be higher for students of color (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). One of the greatest challenges facing superintendents today is that of accommodating the needs of multicultural learners (Hodges, 2001). The arduous task of meeting the needs of all students continues to challenge the most astute superintendent and closing the achievement gap has even gained national attention. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was initiated in 2001 to reform public education by reducing the racial student achievement gap (Simpson, Lacava, & Graner, 2004).

Chin (2007) reviewed 28 independent research studies that found transformational school leadership improved equity in education by producing positive effects on teacher job satisfaction, school effectiveness, and student achievement. Transformational leadership appeared to be both a widely used and valuable approach for leading and effecting organizational change (Northouse, 2007). Altering teachers' job satisfaction has a direct impact on student performance and student achievement. Transformational leadership has been proposed as the means by which large-scale educational reform can be implemented at all levels within a school organization (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

4 Statement of the Problem

Superintendent leadership is frequently discussed as pivotal for school district success by the American Association of School Boards (AASB) (Hardy, 2004). Hardy (2004) highlighted the need for ongoing professional development for superintendents. This author reported that superintendents today have an almost impossible job with so many new demands and the teaching profession so rapidly changing. Also, this author made the claim that the pipeline of urban superintendents was drying up as a result of the pressures and problems they were forced to confront which included pressures of accountability, social problems, poverty, and interest groups competing with each other. School district problems of low achievement, high dropout rates, poorly functioning operational systems, facility disrepair, labor issues and decreased funding were all problems that many superintendents assumed (Quinn, 2007).

Waters and Marzano (2006) opined that effective superintendent leadership was critical and necessary for increased student academic achievement to be realized in a district. Schlechty (2002) corroborated this and called attention to the importance of superintendent relationships, especially with building principals and classroom teachers, in ensuring that educational change efforts are sustained and institutionalized. Extending these thoughts, Robelen (2008) asserted that the role of superintendents required these leaders to push stakeholders, including principals and teachers, to meet the needs of all students. A primary role of superintendent leadership was to influence those in the school community, especially principals and teachers, to collaboratively take action (Leech & Fulton, 2008). Burns (2003) stated that strong relationships between transforming leaders and their followers was a powerful force for change.

Bass and Riggio (2006) theorized that “idealized influence”, “inspirational motivation”, “intellectual stimulation”, and “individualized consideration” (p.6-7) were the four factors that leaders exhibited when they acted as transformational leaders. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was developed and has often been used as a means to measure behaviors related to these four factors of transformational leadership using Likert scale response items (Avolio & Bass, 2004). According to Northouse (2007), the MLQ was the most widely used measure of transformational leadership.

In this challenging and complex era of school reform, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) noted that transformational leadership had the potential for building commitment, fostering growth in the leadership capacities of teachers, principals and superintendents, and creating the conditions for school success. These authors reported that much of what successful educational leaders did was related to transformational leadership such as building and working for consensus on vision, mission, goals and objectives. In this nation’s complex educational systems, superintendent leadership is considered pivotal to improving schools and increasing student success (Bjork, Kowalski, & Young, 2005).

Therefore, this study involved examining how superintendents perceived themselves as transformational leaders as measured through self reported responses to the MLQ. This study also examined if the size of the school district and experience of the superintendent were related to the self-perceived presence of superintendent transformational leadership in Texas school districts. Bass and Riggio (2006) reported transformational leadership to be important in all settings and in all types of organizations.

5 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine if relationships existed between superintendents’ transformational leadership scores, years of educational experience, and district size. Educational experience was broken down into years of teaching experience, principal experience, and superintendent experience. District size referred to the district’s total student enrollment as of 2010. A study of superintendent transformational leadership may provide insight into improving superintendent preparation programs and opportunities for mentoring new superintendents. The model of leadership being explored in this study is transformational leadership theory as proposed by Bernard Bass (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Contributions include understanding how superintendents of various district sizes and with varying years of educational experience perceive themselves as transformational leaders.

6 Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. *Is there a relationship between the size of the district in which the superintendent serves and his or her self-reported use of transformational leadership as measured by the MLQ?*
2. *Is there a relationship between the years of teaching experience of Texas superintendents and their self-reported use of transformational leadership as measured by the MLQ?*
3. *Is there a relationship between the years of principal experience of Texas superintendents and their self-reported use of transformational leadership as measured by the MLQ?*
4. *Is there a relationship between the years of superintendent experience of Texas superintendents and their self-reported use of transformational leadership as measured by the MLQ?*

7 Review of the Literature

Superintendent leadership has been studied and reported to be essential to school effectiveness (Black, 2007; Ediger, 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Leech and Fulton (2008) suggested that identifying the best possible leadership practices for superintendents, principals, and teacher leaders helped to create more productive organizational cultures and retain employees. These authors introduced that transformational leadership

empowered followers who, along with and led by the educational leader, must have a vision of re-engineering the learning organization.

Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) summarized the main findings from numerous empirical studies in the field of leadership and found school leadership was only surpassed by classroom teaching as an influence on student learning. According to Leithwood et al., educational administrators who demonstrated transformational leadership qualities widely distributed school leadership. These researchers explained that school administrators who were transformational leaders understood that leadership was provided by the superintendent, principal, teacher, parent, assistant principal, support staff, students, and others. The presence of this total leadership increased capacity, motivation, and commitment in addition to improving the working conditions of the followers (Leithwood et al., 2008).

7.1 Evolution of the Study of Leadership

In the past six decades, leadership has been classified using at least 65 different classification systems and can be defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007). Due to its complex nature, leadership has been a challenge to define and understand (Rowe, 2007), considered to be a highly valued phenomenon (Munro, 2008) and can be categorized into three approaches (Northouse, 2007). Trait approach, skills approach, and style approach are approaches of leadership.

Leadership trait approach. According to Northouse (2007), the trait approach, often called the “great man” theory, was one of the first attempts utilized throughout the twentieth century to study leadership. Northouse added that it was believed by many that these leaders were born with specific leadership traits and that only great people possessed them. Munro (2008) reinforced this and stated that there were as many lists of desirable traits as there were leadership experts.

Stogdill (1948) challenged the universality of leadership traits. He suggested that there was no consistent set of leadership traits that could differentiate leaders from followers when considering different contextual situations. Stogdill proposed that leadership was not necessarily a quality one possessed but rather a relationship between individuals in a social context. The author identified leadership traits such as intelligence, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability. In a second survey, Stogdill (1974) identified tolerance, accountability, perseverance, desire to take the initiative, ability to influence others, and the ability to organize as characteristics or traits that were positively associated with leadership.

Mann (1959) conducted a survey and examined over 1400 findings dealing with personality and small group leadership. Mann posited that leadership consisted of intelligence, masculinity, dominance, extraversion, and conservatism. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) developed a qualitative synthesis of earlier research on leadership trait theory. They found that leaders differ from nonleaders based on drive, the desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and their knowledge of the business. According to these researchers, leaders were either born with these traits, learned them, or both.

Leadership skills approach. Similar to the trait approach in that it focused on the leader, the skills approach emphasized skills and leadership abilities that can be learned and developed as opposed to being innate (Northouse, 2007). Katz (1955) posited that leadership depends on three personal skills: technical, human, and conceptual, which are different from personality traits. He clarified that skills are what leaders can accomplish whereas innate personality traits are who leaders are.

Katz (1955) wrote that technical skill was knowledge about a specific type of work activity and included competencies in specialized areas, the ability to analyze, and the ability to use tools and techniques. He added that human skill included the knowhow and ability to work effectively with people. Katz clarified that technical skill dealt with knowing how to work with things and conceptual skill dealt with how to work with ideas. He went on to explain that leaders with conceptual skills were comfortable talking about the ideas that shaped an organization and put the company’s goals into words that followers could understand.

Katz explained that top level management required less technical skill and more conceptual skill. Conversely, Katz noted that lower level management or supervisory management required more technical skill and less conceptual skill. He posited that all three levels of management required the same level of human

skill to be optimally effective.

Leadership style approach. According to Northouse (2007), the style approach differed from both the trait approach and the skills approach. Northouse explained that in shifting the focus to the style approach, the study of leadership was expanded to include leader actions toward followers in diverse contexts. Northouse clarified that those researchers who studied the style approach divided leadership into two different kinds of behaviors: task behaviors and relationship behaviors. According to Northouse, much of the theory behind the leadership style approach was based on research utilized in Blake and Mouton's (1985) Managerial or Leadership Grid.

The Leadership (Managerial) Grid explained leadership behavior by exploring two factors: concern for production or task behavior and concern for people or relationship behavior (Blake & Mouton, 1985). According to Blake and Mouton (1985), concern for production or task behavior referred to the accomplishments the organization was seeking. These researchers also wrote that concern for people referred to how a leader worked with the people trying to accomplish the goals of the organization. Blake and Mouton (1985) combined the two leadership factors to create five leadership styles, each representing various combinations of task behavior and relationship behavior.

Full range of leadership model. Bass and Riggio (2006) wrote that the Full Range of Leadership Model (FRLM) placed laissez-faire leadership at the suboptimal or least effective level. These authors explained that transactional leadership, based on rewards and disciplinary actions, was located at the mid level of the FRLM. Bass and Riggio stated that transformational leadership was on top as the most effective, optimal level of leadership. The FRLM has been the standard used in leadership training around the world in business, military, religious, and educational contexts (Sosik & Jung, 2009). According to Sosik and Jung (2009), organizations that support and develop transformational leadership across organizational levels are more productive and profitable, attract and retain high quality associates, promote creativity and innovation, and garner trust and commitment from employees.

Laissez-faire leadership. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), laissez-faire leadership is the absence or avoidance of leadership. These researchers stated that this form of leadership is the most inactive and most ineffective according to the majority of the research on this style. Bass and Riggio described this style as representing a nontransaction with necessary decisions not made and actions delayed.

Transactional leadership. Burns (2003), over three decades ago, classified leadership into two types: transactional and transformational. Bass and Riggio (2006) reported that more transactional leadership was likely to be found in organizations where leaders faced a stable and predictable environment. Cotton (2003) compared transactional leadership in schools to a bureaucratic leader using enticements to motivate staff to do those things that administration valued. Burns (2003) asserted that transactional leaders exchanged rewards and incentives for compliance by followers. Bass and Riggio (2006) clarified that to be more effective, leaders needed to use both transactional and transformational leadership behaviors with their followers. The researchers found that more transformational leadership was likely to be the case with an unstable, uncertain, turbulent environment.

Management-by-exception. Bass and Riggio (2006) theorized that Management-by-Exception was more effective than laissez-faire leadership but less so than transformational leadership. These authors broke management-by-exception leadership into two types: passive and active. According to Bass and Riggio, when leaders employed a passive management-by-exception approach, they wait for complaints before taking action. Conversely, Bass and Riggio wrote that leaders, who use active management-by-exception, monitor and watch for deviances from acceptable performance and then take action as needed to rectify the situation.

Contingent reward. Bass and Riggio (2006) wrote that contingent reward is a form of transactional leadership and pointed out that although contingent reward has been found to be effective in many cases, it has not been as effective as transformational leadership. Bass and Riggio explained that contingent reward leadership occurs when the leader offers actual rewards in exchange for satisfactorily carrying out assignments. These authors shared that contingent reward leadership involves making clear to followers what is expected and what can be expected in return for satisfactory performance. All transactional leadership depends on contingent reinforcement with contingent reward being positive and the management by exception being more negative.

Transformational leadership. Bass and Riggio (2006) explained that transformational leadership consists of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Burns (2003) defined transformational leadership as a process in which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. He also added that a chief element of transforming leadership was the ability to cultivate the needs of the follower in a follower-centered manner. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership was in some ways an extension of transactional leadership. These authors characterized transactional leadership as exchanges between leaders and followers based on the leader discussing with others what was required and specifying rewards and consequences for fulfilling and failing to fulfill those requirements. They contended that transformational leadership raised leadership to the next level by inspiring followers to commit to shared visions and goals. Bass and Riggio also argued that transformational leaders challenged followers to be problem solvers and developed follower leadership capacity through mentoring, coaching, and supporting.

Most successful school leaders who exhibited a transformational leadership style drew upon the same four leadership practices that included building vision, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the teaching and learning program (Leithwood et al., 2008). These researchers found that successful transformational leaders understood that improved teacher performance was a function of staff's motivations, commitments, capacities, and work conditions. Barbutto and Burbach (2006) wrote that leaders who acted in ways consistent with the four transformational leadership factors realized positive organizational behavior outcomes. Miner (2005) reported that transformational leaders employ all four transformational leadership factors and are likely to be rated high on all of them.

Factor one: Idealized influence. Bass and Riggio (2006) wrote about the four transformational leadership behavior factors, with the first called charisma or idealized influence. According to these researchers, this factor described leaders who acted as powerful role models with whom followers readily identified. Transformational leaders are charismatic and are those leaders who followers wish to emulate. Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson (2003) reported that idealized influence related to the manner in which a leader was viewed by others and that transformational leaders who employed idealized influence are admired, respected, and trusted by followers who want to follow their leader's consistent example of strong ethics, values, and principles.

Factor two: Inspirational motivation. Bass and Riggio (2006) reported that the second factor of transformational leadership was inspirational motivation. They wrote that leaders who exhibit inspirational motivation communicate high expectations and inspire followers to commit to working to achieve such. Bass et al. (2003) wrote that this factor relates to the ability of the transformational leader to provide meaning and challenge to others' work. They clarified that the motivation provided by the transformational leader was primarily intrinsic such as inspiring followers to achieve goals for personal satisfaction and for the sake of the students with less emphasis placed on extrinsic rewards such as gifts, perks, or cash.

Factor three: Intellectual stimulation. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), the third factor of transformational leadership was called intellectual stimulation. Those who follow a transformational leader are intellectually stimulated to use more of their abilities, feel challenged to perform at higher levels, and believe they can do so. These researchers stated that transformational leaders stimulate followers to be creative, innovative, and challenge their own beliefs. Bass et al. (2003) argued that transformational leaders look for input from others in developing shared visions and in making decisions. Shared decision making inspires followers to reflect upon the successes and failures of the program and collaboratively develop suggestions for growth and improvement.

Factor four: Individualized consideration. The fourth factor of transformational leadership was called individualized consideration according to Bass and Riggio (2006). Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) reported that transformational leaders provided a supportive climate, were more of a coach and mentor to followers, and were considerate of the individual needs of their followers. Burns (2003) emphasized that the needs of people are the most powerful forces on this earth. Transformational leaders provided followers with the support, mentoring, and coaching they required to be successful and helped followers to grow and develop and meet their individual needs (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass et al. (2003) wrote that transformational leaders believed that helping others was more important than their own personal achievements. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) stated that motivating employees and building leadership capacity were both part of transformational

leadership. Bass et al. explained that transformational leadership involved building trust, articulating clear and high expectations, demonstrating commitment to the organization, listening attentively to employees and paying special attention to their achievements and growth requirements. Transformational leaders use a combination of the four transformational leadership factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Thus, Leithwood et al. (2008) reported that transformational leaders powerfully influenced and improved staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions in order to improve teaching and learning.

8 Methodology

The purposive sample of superintendents for this study consisted of 215 superintendents who participated in the Lamar University Superintendent Leadership Academy (LUSLA) between 2000 and 2010. These superintendent participants were administered a questionnaire consisting of items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and other questions soliciting demographical information about the respondents. Quantitative methods were utilized to conduct the investigation. Descriptive statistics and Pearson r correlation coefficients were calculated to quantitatively describe the respondents and their responses and to determine if relationships existed between the variables under examination. Superintendent participants self-reported their years of teaching, principal, and superintendent experience and their district size as the total student enrollment in the school district in which they were serving.

8.1 Research Design

For the purposes of this study, a quantitative non-experimental design was selected. Pearson r correlation statistics were calculated to determine the existence of possible relationships between variables. The variables examined included district size, years teaching, years as a principal, years as a superintendent, and the superintendent participants' transformational leadership scores obtained from the MLQ.

Instrumentation. The researcher gathered quantitative data by administering the MLQ which was designed by Bernard Bass to be used as a self-report measure of an individual's use of specific transformational leadership behaviors (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Section I of the questionnaire administered to superintendent participants in this study consisted of questions from the MLQ. Section II of the questionnaire included questions designed to collect demographic information such as size of school district, gender, ethnicity, school district accountability rating, teaching years of experience, principal years of experience, and superintendent years of experience.

Reliability and validity. Bass and Riggio (2006) reported that the MLQ has gone through repeated revisions and refinements over the years in order to strengthen its reliability and validity. Bass and Riggio assert that the MLQ has been proven to be both a valid and reliable tool to measure the leadership dimensions of transformational leadership. Researchers regard the MLQ as the best validated measure of transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Walumbwa, Avolio, & Zhu, 2008). The MLQ has been the primary means by which transformational leadership researchers have been able to distinguish between effective and ineffective leaders in studies involving leadership in the military, government, industrial, education, church, hospital, and other organizations (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Chin, 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Avolio and Bass (2004) reported that generally, the pattern of results has been consistent and that the psychometric properties of the MLQ are comparable for direct reports and for peers rating their leaders. The effectiveness of transformational leadership, as measured by the MLQ, has been demonstrated in many studies and in diverse settings.

Avolio and Bass (2004) collected two different data sets consisting of a total of 23 samples that were used to validate and cross-validate the MLQ Form 5X, used in this study. According to these researchers, reliabilities for the total items and for each leadership factor scale ranged from .74 to .94, indicating a high degree of internal consistency. The reliabilities within each data set indicated that the MLQ 5X reliably measured each leadership factor across the two data sets. Bass and Riggio (2006) reported good to excellent internal consistency for the MLQ with alpha coefficients above .80. These researchers reported correlations

of the MLQ rate – rerate follower ratings ranging from .66 to .79 for the four transformational leadership factors. There is substantial evidence that the MLQ is both a valid and reliable instrument to measure the four factors of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Study participants. The researcher employed purposive sampling in the design of the study by choosing to survey superintendents who attended the LUSLA between 2000 and 2010. The goal of the researcher was to survey Texas superintendents and ensure a sufficient number of completed responses. The researcher emailed a letter to each of the 215 superintendents in the sample, explaining the study, clarifying assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, and requesting participation in the survey. The 115 superintendent participants who responded were practicing Texas superintendents. Superintendent participants were asked to rate themselves for each survey statement on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). There were 20 survey questions measuring the four factors of transformational leadership included in the survey instrument sent to the participating superintendents. The survey questions on the MLQ were designed to measure each of the four factors of transformational leadership. The four factors of transformational leadership measured by the MLQ were idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

The overall response rate for the questionnaire was 53.5 %. Total district student enrollment for the superintendent respondents ranged from 100 on the lower end of the range to 108,000 on the upper end of the range. Eighty percent of the superintendents reported their total school district enrollment to be less than 5,000 students, which is comparable to statewide statistics (Waak, 2010). The breakdown of respondents by gender indicated that 83.5 % of the superintendent participants were male and 16.5% female. The majority of the superintendent participants in the study sample were White, accounting for 86.0 % of the sample. Hogue (2008) reported a comparable statewide number of white school district superintendents in Texas. The percentages of non-White superintendent participants in this study were as follows: 7.0 % Hispanic, 6.1 % Black, and 0.9 % other. The majority of the school districts led by the superintendent respondents were rated “Recognized” by the Texas Education Agency, 53.9 %. A rating of “Academically Acceptable” was awarded to 28.7 % of the participants’ school districts. The school districts rated as “Exemplary” comprised 16.5 % of the total. One respondent or 0.9 % reported to be working in a school district that was rated “Academically Unacceptable”.

The superintendents who responded to the questionnaire had differing levels of educational experience. Participants reported to have classroom teaching years of experience ranging from zero to 24 years, principal experience between zero and 25 years, and superintendent experience between zero and 25 years. A large majority of the superintendent study participants reported having between three and 10 years of classroom teaching experience. The exact percentage of the respondents in this category equaled 75.6 %. The majority of the study participants reported to have had between two and 10 years of principal experience. The exact percentage of the respondents in this category equaled 74.6 %. A large majority of the responses fell between three and 15 years of superintendent experience. The exact percentage of the respondents in this category equaled 73.2 %.

Data collection procedures. The researcher contacted the Center for Executive Leadership at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, for a list of the LUSLA participants between the years 2000 and 2010 with their contact information. Upon receipt, an emailed letter with a link to the online questionnaire was sent to each superintendent to explain the research study and solicit their participation. The letter included an introduction of the researcher, a request for assistance, and assurances of superintendent participant anonymity. The questionnaire was designed to allow superintendents to complete the survey in approximately 15 minutes. Superintendents were asked to respond to the survey within a two week period. Once the survey data were received and exported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), descriptive analyses and statistical procedures were performed to determine if relationships existed between the superintendents’ transformational leadership scores, district size, and years of experience.

Data analysis. The data consisted of scores for each of the superintendent’s answers to questions from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and the questions designed to gather demographic information. Descriptive statistics were performed on the data generated from each of the 27 questions in the survey. Pearson *r* correlation statistics were calculated to determine the existence of possible relationships

between the superintendents' years of experience as a teacher, principal, superintendent, and the superintendents' level of transformational leadership scored from the responses recorded on the survey. The same procedures were employed to identify the existence of possible relationships between district size as measured by student enrollment in each superintendent's school district and the superintendents' self-perceived level of transformational leadership style.

The researcher selected Pearson r correlations as the statistical technique to use to explore if relationships existed among the variables in the study. After the Pearson r correlations were conducted, results were analyzed for direction and strength of the relationships. The level of statistical significance ($p < .05$) was selected. Correlation coefficients (r) were calculated for superintendents' total transformational leadership and factor scores as evaluated against district size, teaching years, principal years, and then superintendent years of experience.

9 Findings/Presentation/Analysis of Data

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to investigate if relationships existed between the superintendents' transformational leadership scores and the demographic variables in the study. Pearson r correlation coefficients were calculated to determine if relationships existed. The variables examined included transformational leadership scores, district size, years of experience in teaching, as a principal, and as a superintendent.

9.1 Study Findings

The four research questions were used as the framework for identifying the findings in this study. The MLQ Self Rating Form was used to assess the superintendents' transformational leadership styles. The MLQ included a five point scale to indicate the frequency of the participants' rating on each item in the survey. The five points of rating were: 1 – not at all, 2 – once in a while, 3 – sometimes, 4 – fairly often, and 5 – frequently, if not always.

Descriptive statistics on the MLQ. Means were calculated from the scale responses to determine the level of transformational leadership style of the 115 participating superintendents. The means for each question that measured a transformational leadership construct ranged from 3.86 to 4.83. Superintendents perceived that they demonstrated transformational leadership behavior between “sometimes” (indicated by a score of three on the MLQ) and “fairly often” (indicated by a score of four on the MLQ) for the lower end of the range. Superintendents as a group scored between “fairly often” (indicated by a score of four on the MLQ) and “frequently, if not always” (indicated by a score of five on the MLQ) for the upper end of the range of means.

In addressing the four research questions in this study, the researcher calculated Pearson r correlation coefficients to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the study variables. The researcher ran a Pearson correlation analysis between superintendents' transformational leadership scores and the following variables: district size, teaching years of experience, principal years of experience, and superintendent years of experience. The results of the statistical correlation analysis are organized by research question.

Research question one . *Is there a relationship between the size of the district in which the superintendent serves and his or her self-reported transformational leadership scores as measured by the MLQ?*

The superintendent participants self-reported their district student enrollment which was used in the correlation statistical analysis to examine possible relationships between superintendent transformational leadership and district size. The self-reported size of the school districts ranged from 100 to 108,000 students. Further disaggregation of the data revealed that 33.9 % of the respondents reported their total district student enrollment to be less than 1,000 students. Approximately 46.1 % of the participants reported leading a district that had between 1,000 and 4,999 students enrolled. Only 12 superintendents reported district enrollments between 5,000 and 9,999 students. At the upper end of the range, approximately 9.6 % of the superintendent participants reported total student enrollments 10,000 or greater. Approximately 80.0 % of superintendent

participants reported to be leading school districts having less than 5,000 students. Conversely 20 % of the participants in the study served in school districts having total student enrollments of 5,000 or greater.

Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were calculated to determine if correlations existed between the means of transformational leadership scores ($M = 86.37$) and the means of district size ($M = 5,029.92$). Results of the statistical analysis returned a small correlation ($r = .122$) between superintendents' transformational leadership scores and district size scores. This small correlation was not found to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

The researcher then disaggregated total transformational leadership into its four factors. Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were calculated for each of these against district size. Results of the statistical correlation analysis returned no statistically significant correlations when the district size variable was examined in conjunction with idealized influence (behavioral), idealized influence (attributed), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration with Pearson correlation coefficients equal to .072, .088, .087, .151, and .096 respectively. Each of these failed to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. None of the correlations were found to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Research question two. *Is there a relationship between the years of teaching experience of Texas superintendents and their self reported transformational leadership scores as measured by the MLQ?*

The superintendent participants self-reported their years of teaching experience which were used in the correlation statistical analysis to examine possible relationships between superintendent transformational leadership and teaching years of experience. The self-reported years of teaching experience ranged from zero to 24. Further disaggregation of the data revealed that 75.6 % of the respondents reported their years of teaching experience to be between three and 10. Only three superintendent participants had more than 17 years of teaching experience. Four superintendents had two or fewer years of teaching experience.

Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were calculated to determine if correlations existed between the means of transformational leadership scores ($M = 86.37$) and the means of teaching experience years ($M = 7.82$). The correlation coefficient (r) calculated to be -0.16. This was not found to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. The researcher then disaggregated total transformational leadership into its four factors or five dimensions. Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were calculated for each of these against the superintendents' years of principal experience. When the principal years of experience variable was examined in conjunction with idealized influence (behavioral), idealized influence (attributed), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, Pearson correlation coefficients (r) calculated out to be -.033, -.014, .053, .070, and .004 respectively. Each of these failed to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Research question three. *Is there a relationship between the years of principal experience of Texas superintendents and their self reported transformational leadership scores as measured by the MLQ?*

Again, Pearson correlations were calculated to determine if correlations existed between the means of transformational leadership scores ($M = 86.37$) and the means of principal years of experience ($M = 6.98$). Results of the analysis returned a statistically insignificant correlation between the two variables superintendent transformational leadership scores and superintendent years of experience, $r = -.016$, $n = 115$, with higher levels of principal years of experience associated insignificantly with lower levels of superintendent transformational leadership.

The researcher then disaggregated total transformational leadership into its five dimensions. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients (r) were calculated for each of these against the participants' years of principal experience. When the principal years of experience variable was examined in conjunction with idealized influence (behavioral), idealized influence (attributed), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, Pearson correlation coefficients equaled .032, .054, .007, -.035, and .006 respectively. Each of these failed to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Research question four. *Is there a relationship between the years of superintendent experience of Texas superintendents and their self reported transformational leadership scores as measured by the MLQ?*

Once again, Pearson r correlation coefficients were calculated to determine if correlations existed between the means of transformational leadership scores ($M = 86.37$) and the means of the study participants' years of experience as superintendent ($M = 10.7$). Results of the statistical analysis returned a statistically insignificant correlation of .091. The relationship between superintendent years of experience and transformational

leadership was found to be statistically insignificant at the $p < .05$ level. Superintendent years of experience was examined in conjunction with idealized influence (behavioral), idealized influence (attributed), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, Pearson correlation coefficients equaled .063, .097, .009, .105, and .088 respectively. Each of these failed to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

10 Summary

Transformational leadership scores for the questions measuring a transformational leadership construct ranged from 3.86 to 4.83. This indicates that superintendents' perceived use of transformational leadership was high. Eighty percent of the superintendent participants in the study reported to be leading school districts ranked by the state as exemplary or recognized for high student achievement. Another 19.1 % of the participants reported to be leading school districts that earned the rating of academically acceptable by the state. Only 0.9 % of the respondents reported that their school district was academically unacceptable, as ranked by the state accountability system. The superintendent participants in this study led school districts with student enrollment numbers ranging from 100 to 108,000. These participants had varying years of experience as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. Over 99 % of the superintendents led school districts that were rated by the State of Texas as academically acceptable or higher with the vast majority of the participants leading school districts that were rated as recognized or exemplary for high levels of student achievement. Findings indicated no statistically significant correlations between district size, teaching years, principal years, and superintendent years when analyzed against the participants' transformational leadership scores.

10.1 Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This study was designed to examine the self-perceived transformational leadership behaviors of Texas superintendents. The researcher examined the self-perceived transformational leadership behaviors of Texas superintendents by formulating and answering four research questions. Surveys were administered to a purposive sample of superintendent participants. Statistical analyses were performed to examine if relationships among the variables in the study existed. The researcher presented findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research based on the results of the study.

Summary of major findings. The major finding was that no statistically significant correlations were found between district size, years of teaching, years as a principal, and years as a superintendent when paired with the participants' total transformational leadership scores and with each of the individual transformational leadership dimension scores. The lack of statistically significant correlations between the variables examined in this study suggests that superintendents may utilize transformational leadership and realize acceptable, recognized, or exemplary levels of student achievement regardless of district size or their years of experience in education. This study found that transformational leadership is prevalent across all sizes of school districts and with superintendents of differing levels of experience.

Conclusions. District size, years of teaching, years as a principal, and total years as a superintendent did not appear to have an impact on the level of superintendent transformational leadership style. No statistically significant relationships were found, leading one to conclude that superintendent transformational leadership is not influenced by years of experience or the district size. Superintendent participants rated themselves high on transformational leadership and 99.1 % of these superintendents led school districts that were rated acceptable, recognized, or exemplary for their levels of student achievement, lending support to the claim by researchers including Bass and Riggio (2006) that the presence of transformational leadership is associated with increased levels of organizational effectiveness.

As presented in the statement of the problem, education is in a state of reform and superintendent leadership is needed to enact reforms to close the achievement gap that continues to exist. This study examined superintendent leadership and found the superintendents who participated in the study self reported a transformational leadership style and acceptable or higher levels of school district effectiveness as measured

by the state ratings of acceptable or higher. One conclusion of the study is perhaps the most significant. Transformational leadership can be taught to and learned by superintendents regardless of their levels of experience and the sizes of their school districts.

According to Northouse (2007), superintendents who are transformational leaders understand and adapt to the needs of their followers while inspiring them to accomplish great things. Northouse clarified that transformational leaders act as change agents articulating a convincing vision of the future, empower followers to meet higher standards, act in ethical and moral ways that make followers want to trust them, and give meaning to the work in which all are engaged. If superintendents are going to overcome the challenges their school districts face and successfully transform their educational organizations to meet the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, transformational superintendent leadership should be a key component of the strategy to do so (Waters & Marzano, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Implications for practice. The superintendents who participated in this research study tended to report behaviors consistent with transformational leadership theory. As the superintendents selected for this study self reported high levels of transformational leadership and led districts with acceptable, recognized, and exemplary levels of student achievement, the researcher recommends professional development for superintendents of low performing school districts in the area of transformational leadership. The researcher suggests that university superintendent certification programs include professional development in how to apply transformational leadership theory into everyday school district leadership practice. Professional development in transformational leadership theory should be part of school districts' leadership capacity development programs.

Recommendations for further research. Several recommendations for further research include increasing the sample size, selecting different populations from which to sample, having principals complete the questionnaire about their superintendents, extending the study to include teachers, and adding a qualitative component to the quantitative study. There are multiple avenues of research that would complement this study. It is recommended that further research incorporate a larger selection of superintendents and those who are impacted by their leadership such as principals and school board members. Replicating this study outside Texas could also increase the depth of research in this area. This study was limited to examining if relationships existed between transformational leadership and the following: district size, teaching years of experience, principal years of experience, and superintendent years of experience. Future areas of research include examining leadership in districts of different sizes and poverty levels.

11 References

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