

Nelson Mandela as transformational leader

Executive summary

Nelson Mandela is one of most admirable personality in world political history. He is recognized as one of the greatest leader who made huge impact to current generation. In 1993 he was awarded Nobel Peace Prize and he was appointed as first black president of South Africa in 1994. He is considered as a role model for leaders because of his commitment, dedication, self-confidence and compassion towards humans. Therefore this report will be basically discussed the leadership skills of Mandela, why he is so admired as a leader and what organization level leaders can learn from Nelson Mandela.

Introduction

This report will discuss about importance of Nelson Mandela as a leader. Nelson Mandela is one of most respective personality in world political arena. Mandela was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 together with F.W de Klerk for ending racism in South Africa. This report will discuss whether Mandela's leadership style is charismatic or transformational. Further this is discussed how his leadership role change as his circumstances changed why he is admirable as a leader. And this is included comparison between Mandela and other world political leaders. Finally this is discussed what we can learn about leadership from Mandela and which personality dimensions, values and attitude useful for individuals who want to be a transformational leader.

Nelson Mandela charismatic leader or transformational leader

Nelson Mandela had many charismatic leadership skills including extra ordinary skill in communication, humility, compassion on people, positive body language and high level of self-confidence. However Mandela can be categorized as a transformational leader due to his extra ordinary achievement to change the destiny of South Africans. According to Riggio, R and Bass, B (2006) Transformational leaders are those inspire to followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and encourage them to develop their leadership capacity. Mandela's leadership was caused to abolish apartheid policies in South Africa and to establish democracy. That made huge impact not only South Africa world politics too. Therefore he is categorized as a transformational leader. There can be discussed four elements under transformational leadership.

Transformational Leader



Idealized influence

According to Riggio, R and Bass, B (2006) transformational leaders need to be a role model to their followers. Mandela became a symbol of South Africans' struggle. He stayed 27 years of years in prison but his goal was never changed. He rejected all kind of racism including black domination. He showed it by his own practice after he became a president of South Africa by protecting every citizens' rights.

Individualized consideration

According to Riggio, R and Bass, B (2006) transformational leaders pay special attention to followers needs for achievements and growth by acting as a mentor. Mandela as a political leader rather than focused on each and every individual's need, he represented common need of all community. As a member of ANC (African National Congress) he became a voice of all South African people. He devoted his life for his followers without thinking of his personal glory or comfortable. Further when he stayed in Robben Island prison, he educated his fellow prisoners about politics, nonviolence movements as a mentor. His fellow prisoners called their prison as "Mandela's university".

Intellectual stimulation

Transformational leaders encourage innovation among their followers. Mandela used creative ways to gain support international community to their struggle. He used 1995 rugby world cup as to bring all citizen of South Africa together. He used creative ways even in his reconciliation process and his campaign against AIDS. He used his prison number "46664" to campaign against

AIDS as a symbol of hope. Most of the South African community joined with him and accepted his concept.

Inspiration motivation

According to Riggio, R and Bass, B (2006) transformational leaders motivate their followers by providing meaning and challenge to their followers work. Even though South African government put him in prison for 27 years in hard working condition but he never gave up his ultimate goal. Government offered him conditional release few times to make him quiet but he refused. He showed great character and determination throughout their struggle which inspired his followers to keep fighting for their freedom.

How did Nelson Mandela's leadership role change as his circumstances changed?

Nelson Mandela's leadership role can be divided to three circumstances; before the imprisonment, imprisonment period and after the imprisonment. His commitment to achieve his goal and his concept on reconciliation was never change throughout these situation. But strategies he used to achieve his goals were change time to time. Nelson Mandela used nonviolence method to get attention of international communities. Mandela led their followers various protest and campaign such as "stay at home" protest, sabotage campaign etc. However ANC had warfare movement too. His great communication skills was helped to inspire their followers. Even in beginning he refused both white domination and black domination.

When he was in prison, he led his followers by being an example for them not to give up. He became a symbol of their struggle. This caused to gain international attention to them. Mandela met Commonwealth Eminent Persons' group in 1986. International communities put lot of pressure on South African government to introduce reconciliation. At that time he initiated negotiation discussion with government representative. Winnie his wife and some of ANC members had moved to extreme path against the government. But he negotiated with government because he believed that nonviolence method is the way to freedom. So he had high level of self-confidence and he continued what he believe even though some of his followers criticized him. This prison time indicates Nelson Mandela's self-confidence and determination.

When he released, he gave an example by his life about importance of forgiveness. After he released, he visited widow of Hendrik Verwoerd who introduced apartheid policies and Verwoerd was assassinated in 1966. He could win his opponent hearts by spreading message of peace. He had a charisma that could influence to others and it helped him to spread his message. He had ability to bring everyone who fought each other to common platform due to his leadership skills.

Why is Nelson Mandela so admired as a leader?

Nelson Mandela one of the most admirable personality in world history. People respect him since his wisdom and determination that brought freedom to people. Once he said "If there are dreams about a beautiful South Africa, there are also roads that lead to that goal. Two of these roads could

be named goodness and forgiveness”. He was flexible and realistic to negotiate with authority which put him into jail. He refused black domination too while he fight against white authority. According to his autobiography (Long walk to freedom) he said that “I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination”. Since this moderate view, he could gain trust of every community and they admired and accepted him as their leader. Further he used sports to make people united. 1995 Rugby world cup was remarkable event that bring everyone to one purpose. His inspiration, determination, humanity and this creative approach caused to make him one of most admirable personality in world history.

How is he similar to or different from other world leaders?

Some people call Nelson Mandela as Africa’s Lincoln. Both Mandela and Lincoln made huge changes in their society. However Mandela had to do more scarification to make that change. Mandela has said that he is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. Both Gandhi and Mandela fought long time for freedom so both showed great courage. Both Mandela and Gandhi had great charisma, both had good communication skills and compassion on people. And there was difference in their approach; Gandhi completely follow nonviolence method and Mandela used warfare as a strategy. However Gandhi failed to address all community in India and finally he was assassinated by extreme religious group. Mandela was also criticized by his own followers but he could convince them to agree with him.

What can we learn about leadership from Nelson Mandela?

Even though Mandela is a political leader, there are many lessons that we can apply to organizational level.

Persevere – Mandela devoted 27 year of productive years of his life in prison. But he never changed his goal. Even in prison, he tried everything possible to achieve his goal. He had a purpose driven attitude.

Believe in your self - Even when some of his followers criticized him and accused him as a treason, he kept fighting for what he believed. Once he released, he said “I had no specific belief except that our cause was just, was very strong and it was winning more and more support”. It indicated that level of confidence that he had on himself and their struggle.

Empathy – Mandela fought against the government because he saw the suffering of his own people. He realized that what his people most needed is freedom. Leaders should have ability to understand the situation on their followers’ perspective too. It is caused to strengthen their relationship.

Likewise there are lot that anyone can learn from Mandela and apply for their personal and corporate life.

Values and attitudes that need to be developed to be a transformational leader

Anyone can be a transformational leader. But there should be a requirement from environment to make a huge change. Nelson Mandela had great qualities to be a transformational leader and also there was a space and requirement in that society to someone like Mandela. Becoming a transformational leader is a long process. Individuals need to develop certain qualities in their character.

Transformational leaders are always good mentors. Leaders need to delegate responsibilities to their team members and need to give proper guidance to complete those responsibilities. Leader should have a good relationship with every member of his team and need to guide them to success of their personal and corporate life.

Transformational leaders are risk takers and they take mistakes and failures as learnings. They encourage creativity among their team members and empower them to achieve their goals on their own ways. They are not afraid to change and they give support, provide facilities and remove barriers to change.

Transformational leaders motivate and inspire their team members to get best out of them. They guide the team by setting vision, mission and strategy. And most importantly transformational leaders need to be a role model to their team members by providing an example for their personal and professional life.

References

Riggio, R. Bass, B (2006) "Transformational Leadership". 2nd edition. London: Lawrence Erlbaum associates publishers

Mandela, N. (1994). "Long walk to freedom" South Africa: Little Brown & Co