

# **Transformational leadership: case for the South African National Defence Force**

**Goonasagree Naidoo**

**Department of Public Administration and Management**

**University of South Africa**

[naidog@unisa.ac.za](mailto:naidog@unisa.ac.za)

**Sinval Kahn**

**Department of Public Administration and Management**

**University of South Africa**

## **Abstract**

This article provides an overview of the critical aspects for effective leadership that is needed in the South African Public Service to promote transformation. This article analyses the feasibility of implementing transformational leadership approach in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). A qualitative case study is undertaken in this regard. The literature and findings of the case suggest that transformational leadership is critical for advancing transformation by the SANDF. The research suggests that the lack of an effective leadership approach has a negative impact on transformation in the SANDF.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the military environment, soldiers are not allowed to question orders as a result of the prevailing autocratic leadership style. Autocratic leadership is very directive and allows no participation (Luthans 2005:548). The absolute control that military leaders have over their followers is fuelled by the power of command that is vested in them by a military warrant (Department of Defence 2009c: B5). Command is the legal authority vested in an individual for the direction, coordination and control of military forces (Department of Defence 2009c: D3–4). Command is an element of military leadership that separates it from civilian leadership (Van Dyk & George 2006:777). However, in a military context military leadership and command are inseparable.

The literature suggests that without the adoption of an effective leadership approach, transformation in the SANDF would be hindered (Cronje & Willem 2010:3–4). Researchers (Naidoo 2009; Cronje & Willem 2010:3; McLennan & Seale 2010:5) agree that, more than a decade after the end of apartheid, nearly half of South Africa's communities do not receive adequate delivery of public services. These authors are of the opinion that this manifestation of the lack of an effective leadership approach has resulted in a high incidence of violence, and a consequent deterioration in service delivery in South Africa. The literature also suggests that some public service departments in South Africa adopt a relatively effective leadership approach, while others are simply appalling (Wright, Noble & Magasela 2007).

Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (hereafter referred to as the 1996 Constitution) (Republic of South Africa 1996a:111) provides normative guidelines for the transformation of Public Administration which impact on leadership, and command and management. The article examines the transactional leadership approach adopted in the SANDF, and proposes transformational leadership approach as an alternative. The authors argue that it would be challenging for the SANDF to implement transformational leadership as a dominant leadership approach in a military environment that has traditionally been autocratic in nature. They investigated the equitable implementation of the premise of transformational leadership, "change, innovation and entrepreneurship" that would benefit all the integrated armed forces equally (Van Wart 2008:74). They interrogated transformational leadership approach, which was in contrast to the predominant (autocratic) leadership approach that prevailed in the former integrated armed forces (the South African Defence Force [SADF], the former homelands of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei [TBVC], the Non-Statutory Forces [NSF], Mkhonto we Sizwe [MK] and the Azanian People's Liberation Army [APLA]) (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–1), would be implemented and military leaders respond to it.

An empirical study was conducted by the researchers in the SANDF. This article uses qualitative and desktop research to determine the impact that transformational leadership would have on the transformation of the SANDF. Semi-structured questionnaires were used in interviewing 35% of the senior officers in the Directorate

Corporate Services in the SANDF to determine the prevailing leadership approach and its impact on transformation in 2010. This article analyses the effectiveness of transformational leadership in the SANDF as a means to promote transformation. The article addresses, firstly, a theoretical approach to leadership; secondly, the methodological approach; thirdly, the two leadership approaches namely transactional and transformational; fourthly, leadership in the South African public service; fifthly, contextualising leadership in the SANDF; and lastly, the research findings. An appropriate approach is identified and elaborated within the context of this article.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Leadership is about influencing, motivating and enabling others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the institution. Leaders use various forms of influence, from subtle persuasion to direct application of power, to ensure that followers are motivated to achieve institutional goals (McShane & Von Glinow 2007:213-214). Public leaders should not only adopt private sector leadership skills, but they require a broader spectrum of knowledge, skills and abilities, and a solid grounding in public sector values and ethics (Raffel, Leisink & Middlebrooks 2009:330). This means that military leaders should not only be well-trained in military warfare, but should also be knowledgeable about political, social, business, technical and communication dimensions (Veldtman 2010). Kee, Newcomer & Davis *in* Morse, Buss & Kinghorn (2007:154) concurs, stating that public leaders requires heightened creativity and initiative, concern for the large community and careful management and leadership of change.

### **Conceptualisation of leadership**

According to Raffel, Leisink and Middlebrooks (2009:5) a leader is an individual that can be referred to amongst others as transformational, transactional, charismatic, inspirational, innovative and sensitive, while leadership is individualised – it rest with an individual who is expected to influence others. Leadership is a process, about change, moving people in new directions, realising a new vision or doing things differently or better

(Denhardt and Denhardt 2006:8). McShane & Von Glinow (2007:213) concurs, stating that leadership is about influencing, motivating and enabling others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the institution. Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse (1998:13) underscores this, claiming that leadership may involve the interaction of leaders on behalf of an institution; therefore leadership may or may not be exerted by those in positions of authority.

Huxham and Vangen (2000:160) assert that leadership is concerned with "a formal leader who either influences or transforms members of an organisation in order to achieve specific goals". Leadership involves collaboration within the two groups, the leader and the people being led. Both parties can consider working together towards achieving the desired goals of the institution. Ingraham (2009:364) adopts a similar stance by acknowledging that the leader can attempt to work to develop in-group relationships with followers. The developments will include recognising the leadership style, which within the context of this article is transformational. Approach refers to the manner in which military leaders relate to their subordinates, tasks, situations and challenges (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–3). The leaders should adapt or be able to develop several leadership approaches and use them when a situation demands such usage (Ingraham 2009:364). Van Dyk & George (2006:781) concur, stating that the complex and dynamic nature of different military operations (joint, departmental, international and peacekeeping) require flexibility of military leaders in different situations. Therefore, transformational leadership is particularly relevant to the SANDF when one considers the different situations (peacekeeping and combat operations) that military leaders have to manage: among others, the integration of the seven armies of the armed forces into a single South African Army; the transformation of the South African Army in achieving government's social goals (affirmative action, equal opportunities and gender equality); and the role of the SANDF in peacekeeping operations in Africa (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–4).

According to Van Wart (2003:214), effective leadership involves higher quality goods and services, personal development, higher levels of satisfaction, direction and vision, innovation and creativity and an invigorating organisational culture. While leaders are expected to lead, they should also provide an enabling environment by considering

the elements outlined by Van Wart (2003). A sense of belonging enhances an institution's productivity and the achievement of the objectives formulated. Considering the diverse groups and the democratic nature of South Africa, leaders are confronted by the challenges of satisfying the various individuals involved. This involves assessing what has been and still needs to be done. Barrington (1984:285) propounds a similar idea by stating that leadership involves intellectual and moral content in order to analyse what needs to be done and act on that analysis. Effective leadership leans to the transformational leadership approach and all the qualities that make a transformational leader are not mutually exclusive – they blend into one another in unexpected ways.

Various authors (Raffel et al. 2009:330, Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:13; Holzer *in* Morse & Buss 2008:23-24) emphasise that leadership is a process that influences followers in achieving organisational goals. However, military leadership differs from civilian leadership because it focuses not only on vision and charisma, but also on the command and control dimension of the military environment (Van Dyk & Van Niekerk, 2004:324). Military leadership is the art of influencing and directing people to an assigned goal in such a manner as to command obedience, confidence, respect and loyalty (Department of Defence 2009c: B5). Command is the authority that a commander in the armed forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organising, directing, coordinating and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for the health, welfare, morale and discipline of assigned personnel (Department of Defence 2009c: B5).

The changing environment, normative theories, and approaches of leadership will be ineffective if they are not appropriately situated and adapted in a complex and changing South African environment. Within the context of this article, it is suggested that leadership should aim at promoting transformation of the SANDF.

### **Transactional and transformational leadership**

According to McShane and Von Glinow (2007:221), transactional leadership allows institutions achieve their current objectives more effectively by linking job performance to valued rewards and ensuring that followers have the resources needed to get the job done. It takes the form of an exchange of valued good between leaders and followers (Van Wart 2008:78-79). Therefore, subordinates strive to achieve these expectations because of their fear of failure or desire for rewards (Donohue & Wong 1994:28). Transactional leadership affects the employee's motivation by exchanging rewards and by establishing an atmosphere in which there is the perception of closer links between efforts and desired outcomes. It focuses on the effects that leaders' behaviour has on followers, for example, recognition, motivation and performance (Anderson 1992:51).

Transactional leadership is based on contingent reward. The leader find out what employees' values and use varies incentives to motivate them in doing what leaders require of them. The weakness of contingent reward system is: 1) it may be viewed as tit-for-tat system, where what is rewarded is accomplished; 2) it rewards individual performance and not group achievement; and 3) it limits leaders options when financial resources are scarce and institution's needs are increasing (Van Wart 2008:78). For example, within the context of this article, commanders will ensure that troops have all the necessary equipment before engaging a military operation. In contrast, transformational leadership is "leading" – changing the institution's strategies and culture so that they have a better fit with the external environment (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:79-80). It is clear that transactional leaders manage followers to advance their own as well as their subordinates' agendas. Subordinates increase their performance as long as they get rewarded.

Transactional leaders rely on certain types of power (legitimate, reward and coercive) not only to manage subordinates, but also to ensure the achievement of institutional goals. They focus on basic self-interest and immediate needs of followers, which range from clear instructions to adequate working conditions (Van Wart 2008:80). Legitimate power is derived from the hierarchical position that a person occupy in an institution (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy 2005:546). Reward power is based on a person's ability to control resources and rewarding others (Luthans 2005:414). Bateman

and Snell (2004:369) state that coercive power is a manager's ability to punish subordinates for wrong doing.

According to Adair (2003:23–24) transactional leadership is 'managing' – helping institutions achieve their current objectives more effectively. Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse (1998:17) concur, stating that interactions between individuals and groups within a certain context allow for incremental adjustment therefore; transactional leadership can be equated with management. They argue that managers are not necessarily good leaders; they favour proven technologies and hierarchical structures, which are predictable and forms of control. Van Wart (2008:81) concurs, claiming that transactional leaders are content with the existing systems and structures of the institution because they seem to provide acceptable performance therefore; there is no desire to adapt them. Leaders who are innovative and able to empower followers are needed (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:51).

Transformational leaders motivate their followers to perform above their own and the leader's expectations. They accomplish this by raising the importance of certain goals, by demonstrating the means to achieve them and by inducing followers to transcend their self-interest for the achievement of goals (Reggio & Murphy 2002:106–107). Transformational leadership allows leaders to change teams or institutions by creating, communicating and modelling a vision for the institution and inspiring followers to strive for that vision (McShane & Von Glinow 2007:221). It motivates subordinates to work for transcendent goals and for higher-level self-actualising needs, instead of working through a simple exchange relationship (Anderson 1992:51). Self-actualisation becomes the primary motivator of subordinate behaviour, rather than external rewards. Visioning, inspiration, intense and honest concerns for the welfare of subordinates constitute the cornerstone of transformational leadership (Donohue & Wong 1994:29).

Transformational leaders create a strategic vision of a realistic and attractive future that bonds followers together and focuses their energy toward a superordinate organisational goal (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:79). Visions are typically described in a way that distinguishes them from the current situation, yet makes the goal both appealing and achievable (Wright et al. 2007:215). Transforming a vision into reality requires followers' commitment. Transformational leaders use words,

symbols and stories that build a contagious enthusiasm that energises followers to adopt the vision as their own (Wright et al. 2007:216–217). Their persistence and consistency reflect an image of honesty, trust and integrity. They build commitment by involving followers in the process of shaping the institution's vision (Reggio & Murphy 2002:109).

Transformational leadership influences followers to transcend self-interest and commit themselves to excellence. It focuses on the followers' emotional responses, self-esteem, trust and confidence in leaders and the followers' values and motivation to perform above and beyond what is expected of them (Luthans 2005:562). The vision and empowerment of leaders enable followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the leaders and the institution (Reggio & Murphy 2002:106). Transformational leaders can relate to their followers' need for identity, strengthen their self-concept and become part of the followers' identity (Van Wart 2008:80). It is clear that transformational leaders constantly motivate followers to increase their performance by stretching them to achieve above their own expectations. They show a keen interest in the well-being of followers and create conditions that allow followers to achieve organisational and individual goals. By satisfying followers' needs, transformational leaders are able to inspire followers to use their competencies to increase their performance, which in turn, results in better service delivery (Bass & Avolio 1994:11).

Transactional leadership relies on a sense of reciprocity between leaders and subordinates. It does not individualise the needs of subordinates nor focus on their personal development (Rost 1993:140). Transformational leadership changes people, affects their outlook on individual and collective life, and allows them to commit to a new identity and shared values (Morgan, Green, Shinn & Robinson 2008:301). This kind of leadership challenges the old order and breaks the continuity of the traditional way of doing things; it is a risky adventure that fosters change (Reggio & Murphy 2002:108). Followers are inspired to use their innovative and creative skills to produce better goods and services. This makes followers optimistic and enthusiastic about future work activities. Transactional leadership improves institutional efficiency, whereas transformational leadership steers institutions to a better course of action (Conger & Kanungo 1998:13–15).

Transformational leadership is preferred because it inculcates in followers commitment, inspiration, self-esteem, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Tucker & Russell 2004:2-3). It instils in followers a desire to improve their performance and to increase productivity. It encourages followers to internalise the leaders' vision and mission and use competencies to achieve organisational and individual goals. It also motivates followers to use their personality to build sound employee relationships (Van Wart 2008:74-75). Transformational leaders are agents of change who energise and direct followers to a new set of corporate values and behaviours (Reggio & Murphy 2002:108).

Esterhuysen (2003:2) is of the opinion that transformation can bring about the second order of change in an institution, which fundamentally transforms the basic structure, culture and defining values, including the overall form of an organisation. Esterhuysen (2003:2) states that in order to steer an institution through the second-order change, leaders must be willing to act as visionaries and leaders of change, with the appropriate skills of coach, trainer and facilitator. Morgan et al. (2008:302–303) concur, claiming that transformational leadership are more pertinent in managing transformation. When comparing the characteristics of transactional and transformational leadership, it is clear that the latter possesses the qualities that will promote transformation; therefore it is preferred (Morgan et al. 2008: 302–303; Bass & Avolio 1994:11; Van Wart 2008:80). In this context, military leaders, as transformational leaders, would create an enabling organisational culture that would promote transformation in which, among other things, gender equality and equity would be promoted; and followers would be motivated not only in exceeding the effectiveness of the former armed forces, but also in becoming a formidable force in sub-Saharan Africa.

The difference between transactional and transformational leadership is that the former can be referred to as “managing”, while the latter can be denoted as a leader of innovation (Tucker & Russell 2004:103). Transformational leaders work to change the institution, whereas transactional managers work within the existing structures (Van Wart 2008:81). Transactional leaders use existing power and authority to achieve goals, while transformational leaders motivate people to work new and greater achievements which lead to change. Transformational leaders appeal to higher motivation and add to peoples’

quality of life and that of the institution. Transformational leaders provide energy-producing characteristics that generate new change for an institution, which transactional management cannot do (Tucker & Russell 2004:104).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design provides a framework for the research. The first part provides the method of research data collection, the research problem, aim and limitations of the study. The last part of the article focuses on the discussions, results and implications for further research.

### **Method and data collection**

This article used qualitative and desktop research to ascertain the impact that transformational leadership would have had on transformation of the SANDF. Semi-structured questionnaires were used in interviewing senior officers from the Directorate Corporate Services. This article analyses the effectiveness of transformational leadership in the SANDF as a means to promote transformation.

### **Research problem**

Is the SANDF effective, and will the institutionalisation of transformational leadership promote transformation? The integration process unified the seven armed forces into a larger, more diverse officers' cadre of the SANDF. This diverse officers' corps has a wider spectrum of competencies and personalities, which can be used to solve complex problems and provide better services. The question is: To what extent will the transformational leadership approach promote transformation in the SANDF? Therefore, the research problem was: to determine the achievability of institutionalising the transformational leadership approach as the prevailing approach in the SANDF and its impact on transformation. The researchers asked the following key questions: Is it possible for a traditionally autocratic institution to implement transformational leadership?

How content are autocratic leaders to implement transformational leadership? Which leadership approach (transactional or transformational) will speed up transformation in the SANDF? How will transformational leadership promote transformation in the SANDF as a formidable force in sub-Saharan Africa?

### **Aim**

The aim of this article is to determine whether transformational leadership approach promotes transformation in the SANDF.

### **Limitations**

Semi-structured questionnaires were used in interviewing senior officers of the Directorate Corporate Services to determine the prevailing leadership approach and its impact on transformation in the SANDF in 2010. This study is related to one of the arms of the security cluster, namely the SANDF. Furthermore, it should be noted that the sample of this study which is, based on experienced and long serving senior officers of the SANDF, may be inadequate to provide a phenomenal input on leadership and its impact on promoting transformation in the SANDF. Despite the limitations, this study provides a basis for future research.

## **LEADERSHIP IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE**

In his State of Nation address (2009), President Zuma indicated a number of challenges in public service institutions in South Africa. The citizens of South Africa are adversely impacted upon by the state of leadership in the public service. While a number of valid reasons can be advanced for this phenomenon, the adverse situation invariably points to ineffective leadership in the South African public service (Cronje & Willem 2010:4; McLennan & Seale 2010:5). This is evident in ongoing protests by communities against the lack of service delivery. Cronje and Willem (2010:3) argue that many public service leaders do not work for the common good of society. The lack of effective leadership

manifests in an inability to provide the services that citizens expect from an effective state. There is also a lack of inclusive government in South Africa. In this regard, Cronje and Willem (2010:4) argue that leaders reveal little accountability to their constituents. Moreover, few efforts are made to engage citizens in meaningful consultation in order to address the service delivery problems or to create realistic expectations of what is possible. Instead, matters drift along until communities' behaviour became problematic, out of sheer frustration. This lack of inclusion is also demonstrated by the lack of active engagement by leadership with communities in furthering economic development and addressing other social problems (Cronje & Willem 2010:4).

Directors-General (DG) in the South African Public Service contend that human resource issues, such as the lack of management and leadership capacity, skills, experience and personnel conflicts continue to pose problems (Naidoo 2009:318). Despite large amounts invested by government in leadership development, many initiatives are regarded as failures (Naidoo 2009:318). The investment in leadership development has arguably created greater dissonance and frustration among managers benefiting from leadership development, as they start to realise the poor quality of senior management services (SMS) leadership in the public service. The greatest challenge is that it is highly likely that the current administrative leadership have not been selected into these positions on merit alone, but on the basis of their political affiliation to the government of the day (Naidoo 2009:319; Naidoo 2010:113–116). Malan and Smit (2001:45) refer to these political appointments and point to incompetence and a lack of exposure. Preferential policies such as affirmative action cause imbalances and fail to maintain a standard of efficiency. There is also a lack of training, or no time is given to train newly appointed leaders and give them the necessary exposure in their respective institutions. Ott and Russell (2001:397) argue that government tends to be more effective and efficient when leaders have flexibility and the power to choose qualified people who can implement policies with little interference. It is important to note that a leader's freedom is limited by bureaucratic laws, regulations and rules (Frederickson 2005:37). Occasionally, political sensitivities have inhibited the decision-making of Directors-General, such as their reluctance to dismiss non-performing public servants because of political considerations (Naidoo 2006:257).

Related to ineffective leadership is the lack of effective policy implementation, which impacts on organisational efficiency and performance; this in turn impacts on service delivery outcomes. Fraser-Moleketi (2007:3) suggested that non-performance by public servants took the form either of not delivering services or of goal displacement by complying with rules and regulations instead of achieving governmental goals. Moynihan and Ingraham (2004:429) concur, stating that leaders are failing to find a way of integrating management systems in order to achieve organisational goals. On the same note, Eliassen and Sitter (2008:149) adopt a similar view to that of Frederickson (2005:3). They highlight challenges around public institutions' objectives and goals, rules and regulations. There is undoubtedly a need for the South African public service to ensure that there is effective leadership to promote policy implementation and therefore improve service delivery (Rotberg 2004:29-30). All this highlights the importance of building effective administration, management and leadership capacity to drive the goals of government and meet the goals of ensuring a better life for all (McLennan & Seale 2010:5).

The sentiment 'a better life for all', in the SANDF, translates into the transformation of the SANDF, which is the responsibility of military leaders. Leadership in the SANDF is addressed in the next section.

## **CONTEXTUALISING LEADERSHIP IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE**

The military leader's ultimate test of leadership is during combat operations, which are characterised by the "dynamics of battle" that include danger, chance, exertion, uncertainty, apprehension and frustration; and the "psychological effects of combat" (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–4). The SANDF needs competent leaders at all levels because soldiers must be led into battle (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–5). Therefore, military leaders should have courage, willpower, temperament and flexibility of mind to take decisive action under difficult and dangerous circumstances (Fursdon 1999:42–43).

Military leadership induces compliance and subordinate commitment, and exerts influence on others (Department of Defence 1995: 1:18). Three key factors can be derived from the above definition. Firstly, its implicit obedience in executing orders and

influencing others requires effective relationships between leaders and followers, which lead to better understanding of their respective roles in achieving individual and institutional goals. The effective relationships are based on trust, respect and mutual obligation and generate influence between leaders and followers, which are reciprocal activities (McShane & Von Glinow 2007:78). It means that leaders and followers mutually affect each other (Van Wart 2008:210). Therefore, good relationships between leaders and followers are an indication that sound interaction exists between them (Venter 2004:9–10). It breaks down barriers of suspicious and mistrust, which are necessary for effective superior-subordinates relationship. The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 promotes effective labour relations in the private and public sectors in South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1995). Effective relationships allow leaders to motivate followers to use their potential in achieving military missions, especially during war. Secondly there is unity, which is one of the elements that are needed in building a new SANDF that consists of soldiers that were formerly enemies. The Preamble of the 1996 Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996a:1), rightly states that unity is one of the components that can bring diverse cultures together as well as building a democratic South Africa. Thirdly, motivation is the driving force that inspires followers to commit to the SANDF and use their potential in achieving self-actualisation (Bateman & Snell 2004:398); and individual and organisational goals (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk & Schenk 2000:344–345). Soldiers have a common goal in defending the sovereignty of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1996a:7); and the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom of all South Africans (Republic of South Africa 1996b:6).

The military leader's approach is essentially authoritarian and not persuasive, although there are occasions where the persuasive style was feasible (Nkone 2010). Military leadership means that the officers execute the assigned mission in such a way that by their actions and methods they command obedience, respect and the loyalty of their subordinates. It is also apparent that military leadership should be considered as a "means to an end", a means of carrying out the mission (Department of Defence 1995:1:18). This is evident in operational situations where commanding is applied and orders are executed implicitly (Gqoboka 2010). Superiors may use either their

hierarchical position, rational persuasion or technical expertise and insight to persuade their subordinates to accept their authority (Chuter 2000:88–90). The approach of leadership in the SANDF vary from autocratic, which is prevalent (Mafheda 2010), to accommodative and situational (Rudman 2010) and participative (Veldtman 2010). These leadership approaches are contrary to the transactional leadership approach that was adopted by the SANDF (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–1). They are also in contrast to the predominant leadership approaches that prevailed in the former armed forces (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–1). Transactional leadership is an exchange process – the followers' needs are met when they meet the leader's expectations, and this depends on the leader's power to reward subordinates for their successful completion of tasks (Tucker & Russell 2004:103-104).

### **Case for transformational leadership**

Van Wart (2008:74) claims that transformational leaders change institutions and people in three ways. First, they recognise the need for revitalisation. The competitive environment and the speed of responsiveness in which institutions operate require vitality of operations and processes (Pfeffer 1994:7). Transformational leaders influence followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the institution. They motivate ordinary people to extraordinary heights (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Bommer 1996:1). Yukl (2005:272-273) concurs, stating that followers feel trusted, respected and motivated to exert their efforts in doing more than what is expected of them. Second, they create a new vision. New ways of doing business should be contemplated, researched, rehearse and widely articulated. Transformational leaders engage followers and transform their vision of the world (Van Dyk & George 2006:786). Transformational leadership is proactive and operates beyond a particular context. The boundaries of a context may be extended, broken and rebuilt, taking into consideration the effect on people. Transformational leaders actively search for new frontiers and place a high emphasis on values, creativity, intelligence, integrity and cooperation (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:17, 52). Third, they institutionalise change. Understanding and acceptance of the new vision will lead to the implementation of new structures, systems

and procedures. It means that employees should be motivated as they continue to accept and adapt to new structures and processes of doing business. Transformational leadership is fundamental in identifying and pursuing vision, enhancing dialogue, promoting values to transform to a new and better world (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:79). Transformational leaders provide change and movement in an institution. They change the existing structure and influence people to buy into a new vision, new direction, new possibilities, new inspiration and new behaviour. They use authority and power to inspire and motivate people to trust and follow their example (Van Wart 2008:78).

According to Tucker and Russell (2004:106-107) transformational leaders influence two areas of an institution's culture: first, the internal mindset of the people in the institution. Transformational leaders engage peoples' self-concepts, which allow people to know who they are and how they connect to the mission of the institution. This allows for employees' self-development, self-actualisation and achieving what they desire to become in the institution. Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Bommer (1996:2) concur, claiming that transformational leaders positively influence employees' satisfaction and job performance. Transformational leaders have people skills, which they use to influence followers' unique human qualities by emphasising purposes, values, morals and ethics. They align internal structures to reinforce values and goals. They influence the way employees think by introducing new processes and by giving new directions (Van Wart 2008:228-229, 234). Transformational leaders encourage self-development and provide positive feedback to improve employees' performance. They inspire followers to become leaders themselves (Bass and Avolio 1997:17). The behavioural aspect of transformational thesis suggests that change needs to be modelled in people rather than in cultural or organisational forms. However, the leader's role in constructing corporate culture is pivotal (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:81). Second, transformational leaders influence the culture among the people of the institution through teams, innovation and productivity. Leaders can serve as a role model for team members and increase the level of cooperation among them. Tucker & Russell (2004:5) concur, stating that transformational leaders influence the culture among people and motivate teams to higher levels of performance. Bass and Avolio (1997:19-20) underscored this claiming, that transformational innovation leads to increased productivity.

Tucker and Russell (2004:104) assert that leaders should first experience personal transformation before they can help to transform others. They claim that leaders' own development provide internal changes that produce an emotional bond between them and followers. Changes in behaviour are necessary in order to change the organisational culture. Thus leaders' relational behaviour affects followers and the institution (Van Wart 2008:81-82). Transformational leaders are capable of providing a new vision and energy that will bring about change in an institution (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:19-21; Tucker & Russell 2004:106-107; Van Wart 2008:74-76).

### **Transformational leadership in the SANDF**

Institutional conditions in the SANDF require transformational leaders who are able to operate in unstable and uncertain organisational conditions, unlike transactional leaders who prefer to function in a stable organisational environment with properly functioning systems (Van Wart 2008:80). Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse (1998:81) concur, stating that leaders are responsible for creating an organisation's culture. Van Dyk and George (2006:785) claim that transformational leadership empowers military leaders with the knowledge, competencies and experience necessary for managing transformation in the SANDF. They argue that transformational leadership would allow military leaders to create an organisational culture that would allow for the formulation of new doctrine, open and honest communication and administration; facilitate trust; and promote cohesion in a culturally diverse workforce. Gildenhuis (2010) supports this, stating that an enabling organisational culture would contribute to creating united among former armed forces and allow employees to use their competencies in contributing to the effectiveness and professionalism of the SANDF.

The SANDF needs transformational leaders who focus on the institutional and employee development. Organisational-oriented leaders tend to focus on external and internal factors that may impact the effectiveness of an institution (Van Dyk & George 2006:786). More attention should be given to organisational culture and change management (Van Wart 2008:234). Transformational leaders would have managed the disbandment of military units differently. They would have reduced the number of

combat units but would have maintained the military capabilities of those units (Buthelezi 2008:191-193). Van Wart (2008:228-229) argues that people-oriented leaders tends to focus on the relationship, development, motivation and subordinates involvement in institutional decision-making processes

The SANDF has changed its HR system thrice since its inception in 1994. The majority of the change imperatives identified in the Constitution of Republic of South Africa, 1996, the White Paper on Defence and the Defence Review have a direct or indirect influence on the SANDF's HR (Department of Defence 2001:9-11). Retrenchment (Voluntary Severance Package (VSP), Employer Initiated Package (EIP) and Mobility Exit Mechanism MEM)) of employees would not have resulted in excessive loss of intellectual capital and knowledge management that negatively affected succession planning, mentoring and coaching in the SANDF particularly at the infancy stage of the integration (Yon 2010). It means that the previous HR systems did not adequately address the 'African soldiers' needs. For example, the leave policy does not make provision for soldiers to attend a cleansing ceremony at or near the place of an accident where an individual has died (Mdlulwa 2010).

The practice of annually appointing military leaders to various positions in the SANDF do not automatically confer upon them the qualities of leadership (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse 1998:13), that are needed to perform their duties and functions because leadership rest with an individual who is expected to influence others (Raffel et al. 2009:5). Leadership development as proposed by Van Dyk & George (2006) is the solution. The SANDF invest a large percentage of financial resources in training and development of military leaders (Department of Defence 1997). Military leaders spend a total of 4½ years undergoing military training (Preller 2010), which exclude young officers who studies full-time (doing Bachelor of Military Science (BMil) degree), at the South African Military Academy in Saldanha, Cape Town (Veldtman 2010). Military leadership training empowers military leaders to become experts in military warfare, contingency, humanitarian and peacekeeping operations (Department of Defence 1997; Reed & Sorenson *in* Morse, Buss & Kinghorn 2007:125). These competencies empower military leaders not only to change the military landscape, but also to transform the SANDF (Rudman 2010).

Reed & Sorenson (2007:126) argue that leaders with experience and a track record of success should be entrusted with increased hierarchical authority – appointed to SMS positions. Clearly, this advice was not heeded by the SANDF. Experienced military leaders were overlooked and less qualified ones were appointed to SMS positions (Department of Defence 1994b:3; Zwane 1995:33; Links 2010). The appointment of former Non-Statutory Forces (NSF) contract soldiers to permanent appointment, while excluding former SADF contracted Statutory Forces (SF) (Department of Defence 2009a:1), who contributed to the military professionalism and formidability of the SADF (Kahn 2009:85, 89). However, it is expected of former SADF members not only to mentor NSF members, but in certain instances to perform functions on a senior level (Yon 2010). It means that leaders at lower levels of the organisational hierarchy are finding themselves in situations where they must make decisions previously reserved for more senior members (Reed & Sorenson *in* Morse et al. 2007:130). Such drastic decisions by leaders, favouring one group over another, defeated the purpose of transactional leadership (Van Wart 2008:78) because these members were rewarded without performance or meeting leaders' expectations (Lourens 2010; Tucker & Russell 2004:3-4). Such actions promote exclusiveness at a time when inclusiveness is needed in unifying the SANDF and nation building in South Africa. It clearly shows the SANDF's preferential policy (Department of Defence 2009b:3-6), which is contrary to that of the 1996 Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996a:7), which promotes equality of all people, and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998), which endorses the 1996 Constitution. This is underscored by Zwane (1995:34–35) who argues that the SANDF can only adequately fulfil its service delivery if racism and sexism are no longer barriers to the appointment of the most capable candidates to relevant positions (Republic of South Africa 1998:50–51).

Transformational leaders are innovative and able to empower followers, nurture followers' skills, and develop their talents and building trust in them (Van Wart 2008:74-75). Transformational leaders are able to inspire followers to become leaders (Bass and Avolio 1997:17); they provide energy-producing characteristics that generate new change for an institution, which transactional management cannot do (Tucker & Russell 2004:104). Therefore, transformational leaders would not only empower women military

leaders, who find it challenging to acquire operational and strategic skills, to be deployed as operational commanders in combat and peacekeeping operations (Department of Defence 2009a:7); but be instrumental in developing leaders that would direct the SANDF for generations to come.

Pesonen, Tienari & Vanhala (2009:4) claim that leaders care more about their own race and gender rather than others. Therefore, they are inclined to promote their own to SMS positions. Could this be the reason why the executive structures of the SANDF is not reflecting the demographics of South Africa (Department of Defence 1994:2-3), particularly women (Kahn 2010:73-77). The SANDF can only achieve government's imperatives of affirmative action, gender equality, gender equity (*Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998*) and its own mission of a non-racist, non-sexist and non-discrimination institution (*White Paper on National Defence* 1996b:28-29); provided it adopts a transformation leadership approach that can transform the SANDF (Rudman 2010). Radical action that is needed in transforming the SANDF can only come from transformational leaders (Reed & Sorenson *in* Morse et al. 2007:127-129; Tucker & Russell 2004:104; Van Wart 2008:80). The need for transformational leadership is evident when one examines the challenges that military leaders are facing. These challenges amongst others include: an aging military force, resource constraints (armament, technology and capital investment), relationship with stakeholders (employees, government and trade union), government's imperatives, globalisation and technological advancement and involvement in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in sub-Saharan Africa.

Reed & Sorenson *in* Morse et al. (2007:126) claim that the military has been instrumental in informing and advancing formal studies of leadership with success. A change in approach of leadership in the SANDF may be a means of inspiring the South African Public Service and defence forces in sub-Saharan Africa to follow suit. A change of this magnitude may: 1) speed up the achievement of government's imperatives (health, education, basic services and rural development (Malefane 2010:8-9); 2) advance women's representation at SMS in the Public Service and more especially in the SANDF (Kahn & Louw 2010:677-678); 3) equal opportunities to previously disadvantaged

members of the SANDF (Xundu 2010); and 4) affirming previously disadvantaged blacks of the former SADF (Soldaat 2010).

Transactional leadership is practised at training units, particularly at the lower hierarchical levels (Makgwe 2010). For example, the company commander may reward a platoon with a long weekend for winning the SANDF's shooting competition. Adair (2003:24) is of the opinion that the management components of transactional leadership should have allowed not only the SANDF to achieve government's target of 50% women at SMS positions, but also top leadership echelons to reflect the demographics of the South African population. Luthans (2005:562) concurs, stating that transactional leadership would have prompted military leaders to take corrective measures in addressing past imbalances.

Was the recent labour strike by soldiers a result of ineffective leadership or a breakdown of transactional leadership? Has the leadership allowed a situation to develop where soldiers can strike or refuse to do military duty when their grievances are not addressed? Are soldiers being forbidden to exercise their individual rights? Soldaat (2010) is firmly convinced that the SANDF should not have been allowed to form a union, as this would contribute towards an increase in labour strikes, which will negatively impact transformation of the SANDF. According to Kubu (2010:72–73), South African Navy members have refused (since 2000) to be relocated to other provinces. These members argued that relocation to another province is a violation of their individual rights and that there is no guarantee that their spouses would be employed in other provinces. Such behaviour was unheard of and unacceptable prior to 2000, but is becoming a norm (Kubu 2010:73–74). It is clear that transactional leadership had limitedly contributed to transformation in the SANDF. in that it has only benefited NSFs, rather than creating an environment that allows for a win-win situation for all employees of the SANDF. Therefore, transactional leadership as a dominant approach has not been very effective in achieving the transformation mandate of the SANDF.

## **RESULTS**

The literature shows that transformational leadership not only bring about change, innovation and entrepreneurship, but also change the attitude of followers, motivating them to transcend their own self-interest in making the institution their first priority.

It means that the SANDF should not only create an enabling environment in which leaders' competencies can be developed, but also empower and enable them to become leaders (Bass & Avolio 1997). The study reveals that effective leadership is a key element in attaining transformation goals including improved service delivery that would benefit all followers. The need for effective leadership is underpinned by leaders' attributes, including courage and determination in ensuring that followers are treated fairly.

The results reveal that autocratic leadership was prevalent amongst the former integrated armed forces (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–1). The implementation of transactional leadership in the SANDF was a means of changing the culture of leadership and promoting transformation (Department of Defence 2009c: D1–1). Transactional leadership is prevalent at military training institutions, particularly at lower hierarchical levels (among juniors – privates to corporals). The premise of exchanging services for rewards seems to be extrinsic and tangible. The results show that transactional leadership has had racial undertones. The dominant race and gender (Africans and whites and males) benefited, while minority groups (Asians and coloureds and females) were marginalised. It is clear that, after 16 years, transactional leadership approach has failed to transform the SANDF because executive management does not reflect the demographics of the South Africa society.

The findings clearly show that transformational leadership is preferred above transactional leadership because it fundamentally transforms institutional strategy, structure, culture and values (Reed & Sorenson *in* Morse et al. 2007:127-129; Tucker & Russell 2004:104). Transformational leadership is capable of transforming the culture of the SANDF to one in which the competencies of the diverse workforce can be developed and optimally utilised, which in turn, would contribute to the SANDF being a formidable force in sub-Saharan Africa (Kulu 2010; Links 2010; Preller 2010). The results suggest that transformational leadership could be instrumental in creating a non-racial, non-sexist and non-discriminatory organisational culture. Such an environment would allow

followers to excel not only in developing their competencies, but also in utilising them optimally, which would allow them to achieve higher institutional and individual goals (Morgan et al. 2008:301–302; Van Wart 2008:80).

The results explicitly show that transformational leadership is about change, a new vision and new possibilities that will promote the professionalism and transformation of the SANDF, which in turn, would result in employees' satisfaction, better service delivery to stakeholders and improved quality of life for all South Africans. Transformational leaders would develop a leadership cadre that will lead the SANDF for generations come. These leaders would have a strategic mind-set that would allow them to create an institutional culture, with an underlying premise of a 'can do attitude' that is inclusive of all former armed forces. Transformational leadership would allow the SANDF to set the course for transformational leadership in the South Africa Public Service, which would change public servants' attitude towards service delivery in South Africa.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results provided noteworthy insights in introducing transactional leadership in a military environment that is traditionally autocratic in nature. Firstly, this study has shown that effective leadership is fundamental in ensuring transformation mainly with the implementation of equitable policies. It confirmed the argument by Ingraham (2009) that leaders should adopt different leadership approaches when the situation demands such usage. It is suggested that the transformational leadership can create an enabling environment that allows for leadership development, and empowerment of employees (Tucker & Russell 2004).

Secondly, this research suggests that autocratic leadership was prevalent in the former integrated armed forces. This contributed to the SANDF grappling with institutionalising transactional leadership that would aid transformation. The results have shown that the dominant race groups benefited, while the minorities are being marginalised. It is suggested that the SANDF consider implementing transformational

leadership that would allow it to create an enabling environment which could help it to achieve its strategic goals and government's imperatives.

Thirdly, the study has shown that the challenges that the SANDF are facing require transformational leaders. Leaders that would ensure that all employees benefit from affirmative action, equal opportunities and gender equality. Leaders that would make sure that employee enjoy employee satisfaction and use their competencies to achieve self-actualisation and institutional goals. Leaders that is able to transform the SANDF in becoming a public employer of choice; and a formidable force in the sub-Saharan Africa.

The findings of this study are related only to one service of the security cluster, namely the SANDF. The study focused on the implementation of transformational leadership in the SANDF. The impact that the institutionalisation of transformational leadership would have had on the SANDF would only be known in the future, when adopted.

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Authors' contact details:

Prof Sinval B Kahn

Department of Public Administration and Management

University of South Africa

*kahnsb@unisa.ac.za*

Prof G Naidoo

Department of Public Administration and Management

University of South Africa

*naidog@unisa.ac.za*