



RESEARCH PAPER

Role of Transformational Leadership for Promoting the 21st Century Skills among Secondary Students

Shamim¹ Dr. Tasleem Ullah² Muhammad Ghafoor*³

1. MS Scholar, Department of Education, University of Sialkot, Punjab Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Sialkot, Punjab Pakistan
3. MS Scholar, Department of Education, University of Sialkot, Punjab Pakistan

***Corresponding Author**

muhammad.ghafoor@uog.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the role of leadership styles in promoting 21st century skills among secondary school students. The research was quantitative in nature and survey method was used to collect data using head teachers' leadership styles questionnaire and a scale on 21st century skills i.e. collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication. Two stage Random sampling was used to select 200 students from 20 schools. Results based on t-test revealed that transformational leaders were significantly better for promoting 21st century skills i.e. communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration among the students as compared to transactional leaders. It was recommended that while hiring school leaders, the higher authorities may focus on transformational leaders as well as diversity of applicants according to the need of 21st century and for poor performing schools, higher authorities may continuously train school leaders on best leadership styles to boost performance.

KEYWORDS 21st Century Skills, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Transformational Leadership

Introduction

Today, we are role models and effective leaders by demonstrating leadership competencies, including distributed, ethical, learner-centered, and sustainable forms of leadership, to come across the challenges of the 21st century. We need leaders and teachers who practice to fulfil the needs of today's diverse individuals, learning should be more individualized. Teachers should encourage students to become independent. The education system needs to restore its failed public trust and get adequate funding and support from the government for teacher training programs, school innovations and more. If governments could better prioritize their efforts in their education agenda, they could close the education gap, achieve equality with a more socially balanced and economically just society, and empower students to develop their 21st century skills.

Avolio (2004), who advance the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to define the degree to which a head teacher is a transformational leader, assumed that since transformational leadership can be established in persons, and there may be a connection concerning transformational leadership styles and improved student commitment. This association should be discovered and established to make the 21st century learning environment classroom. This research gap, attached with the inadequate quantity of research to analyze the impact of transformational leadership styles on students. The inevitability for more research is made supplementary urgent by

the stresses and prospects placed on 21st century leaders to train teachers who lead pupils into the classrooms of the 21st century, teaching the Core Curriculum. They are answerable for making students to prosper and thrive in a vigorous, universal society. What well-thought-out a virtuous education 50 years was before is no longer satisfactory for accomplishment in the 21st century (Snell & Swanson, 2000).

Perhaps equally important for transformational leaders are the head teachers who lead and prepare their subordinates to satisfy the needs of the 21st century classroom as transformational leaders. Many studies show that head teachers who improve strong associations based on expectation, stimulate teachers and students to take on problematic and demanding tasks. These features are directly related to the features of a transformational leader. Four features of a transformational leader are scholarly inspiration, individual attention, stimulating drive, and personal encouragement. The ideal outcome for classroom teachers is a classroom environment that encourages students to perform at their best and overcome challenges grounded on a believing association with the teacher under the leadership of transformational leaders (Stuhlman, Hamre, & Pianta 2002).

To meet the necessities of the 21st century classroom and develop the skills of 21st century among students, teachers must transform classroom pedagogy from traditional content delivery models to one that promotes discovery-based learning, while empowering the entire student population. Institutes have been organized and considered places of education for centuries. The challenge of the 21st century is to reconsider schools as homes of learning for instructors and pupils. To sustain this educational change, teachers must deliver continuing chances to involve in professional growth engrossed on 21st century skills and pedagogics. The prime objective of the educational change is to make students for universal society. Teachers focus on teaching core subjects such as math, science, English, social studies, and the arts, while providing more occasions for pupils to exercise and grow critical thinking, communication, collaborate and creativity skills among themselves (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

The Enterprise for the 21st Century Framework purposes to identify and explain the abilities, understanding, proficiency and sustenance methods, students require to do well in work, life and social responsibility. It directed to the increase of implementing 21st Century Framework. This framework has spurred schools and organizations to hold super skills, creativity, communication, critical thinking and cooperation at the nationwide level of the 21st century as an emphasis of education reform. A main challenge for teachers in implementing the 21st Century framework is the need to transform instructional design and teaching methods. The transition to a student-centered classroom design that assimilates the 4Cs into everyday instruction has been difficult. Policy makers and administrators should provide teachers with the professional development opportunities needed to design lessons and pedagogy that adapt to this new 21st century context (Abukhdeir & Park, 2008). According to above mentioned research, it is vibrant that the capability to inspire and stimulate, shape relations of trust, and encounter the individual desires of each student are important characters that teachers must possess to motivate students. There is little research on the link between principals' leadership styles and the promotion of 21st century skills among students. Therefore, the researcher wanted to investigate the role of transformational leadership in promoting 21st century skills in high school students.

In the present era, school leaders are facing a challenge to convert the traditional classroom into a 21st-century learning environment to develop 21st-century skills

among their students (Bellanca, 2010). Of course, this is no easy task, as classrooms become laboratories for students to engage in 21st century skills. Principals cannot do the job on their own. Teachers need to be leaders in their classroom transformation. They must do the hard work of adapting their instructional techniques to foster student commitment and promote accuracy while making a difference to support individual learners. Both policymakers and managers must support teachers in this challenging task by providing continuing professional development (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). There is a gap in research that specifically examines the influence of school leadership styles on the promotion of 21st century skills in high school students. It is also significant to comprehend the link between school leaders' leadership styles and their involvement in professional development work, explicitly designed to support the promotion of 21st century skills in middle school students. Finally, there is insufficient research on role of transformational leadership for promoting the 21st century skills among students, particularly at secondary level. So, the researcher decided to investigate the role of transformational leadership for promoting the 21st century skills among students at secondary level.

Literature Review

In education, the outdated management model sustains a hidden orientation with the intention of reducing expenditures, enforcing rules, and dividing labor. This model is categorized in nature, emphasizing regulator, compulsive rules, and authoritarianism with a disciplined method to management and a consequent automatic direction to devices. The old-style management approach was aimed at improving efficiency and source consumption in a fixed and constant technological situation and it functioned well when the market, product and technology were comparatively constant, but the weaknesses has revealed itself with changing globalization and ever-changing technology. However, the 21st century has accompanied in a new revolution in the structure of educational leadership, which has become an opportunity for less hierarchical, flatter and more flexible institutions (Ayiro & Sang, 2010).

A new wave of research into instructional leadership has confirmed that the excellence of leadership practices in schools can make a significant alteration in student accomplishment and learning (Davidson, 2014). It is described that approaches to increase student attainment essentially comprise efforts to transition the principal from a primary administrator to an instructional leader. It is further asserted that while ethics of instructional leadership may differ based on traditional variances, lessons learned from around the world approves that instructional leaders have common acquaintance, approaches and beliefs. Thus, student-centered leadership can interpret into school efficiency and is a stage for leaders to expedite teaching and learning by guiding, founding and emerging relationships.

The world is changing rapidly, demanding new expertise and skills from leaders. The 21st century is completely dissimilar from the 20th century due to the expansion of cultured information and communication technologies (Dede, 2010). According to Zhao (2020), in the time of Covid-19, the role of education and school leadership has been redesigned and redesigned as a technology-powered online business. The core functions of the school have changed dramatically and the principal has been pushed to the limit. As accountability increases among school leaders, leadership has attracted great attention over the past decade. Today, in times of epidemic, school leaders focus more on their management skills on appealing others in

cooperative, common, and combined work that is equally imperative and significant (Netolicky, 2020).

Pont, Nusche, and Moorman (2008) argue that today it is necessary to exercise innovative skills to face new encounters. School leaders with 21st century skills can shape good associations with others. They can also practice various skills to progress the school. Considerate dissimilar skills can aid school leaders to improve their actions to produce an optimistic environment (Piaw et al., 2014). Leaders who can advance and shape a positive culture where possibilities can be expanded and improved not only succeed in emerging their squad but also better manage the circumstances. Now, in times of pandemic, this is difficult to achieve in the virtual world that requires school leaders to make extra efforts to stay in touch with others and maintain relationships (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020).

Life in the 21st century becomes more unified, more global, and accomplishment in the place of work in education necessitates new expertise (Suto, 2013). School leaders have made a significant transition to networking through teamwork and communiqué throughout the present epidemic (Harris, 2020). The accomplishment of each institute depends comprehensively on the ingenuity of its leaders, which creates pressure on school leaders to perform nimbler than formerly. 21st century educational leaders need sturdy leadership expertise to be operative. They necessarily practice and apply 21st century skills for permanent modification. Leadership is an extraordinary task, requiring special training as well as up-to-date abilities to efficiently manage non-human and human resources, as well as emergency circumstances (Azorin, 2020). Though, leadership has faced various variations and encounters in the 21st century and nonetheless faced systemic disruption during the Covid-19 pandemic. In times like these, we need leaders who are dynamic, enthusiastic to take dangers, and keep new visualization and skills (Harris, 2020). According to Piaw et al., (2014), leadership skills can express the variance between operative and unsuccessful schooling. Dede (2010) argues that training in 21st century skills is one of the most significant requirements of each individual, nevertheless is still mistreated in the professional growth of school leaders. Conferring to more current research, the school system of the 21st century is different from that of previous centuries. Current trends have changed such as globalization, technology, increased enrollment, accountability, and existing condition like covid-19 requires variation of leadership skills and approaches from school leaders to administrators, which can support to achieve school goals and objectives throughout a pandemic (Akinbode & Shuhumi, 2018).

Leadership skills are not merely significant for a school leader to do their job effectively but also to uphold their status in the 21st century. Piaw et al., (2014) indicates that in order to maintain school effectiveness and deliver high performance, school leaders need some leadership skills. The principal is the head of the school; play a character in all features of the school arrangement; educators, managers, planned problem solvers, supervisor, learned leaders, exchangers, advocates and servant leaders etc. The furthestmost significant skills for school leaders are communiqué skills and the capability to do what they can with measurable knowledge (Mood & Toni, 2015). Harris (2005), described that today's school leaders require such skills to aid them to lead their schools to achievement and improvement. Leaders have a great responsibility as they engage with teachers in dissimilar curriculum projects, engaging in design spaces that are comfortable for educators, pupils, and paternities. Suto (2013) argues that the utmost common skills, desirable for the 21st century, are interdisciplinary skills, problem solving, ICT operation, cooperation, active communication and information mastery. Many research has recommended that the job of school leaders is not merely to resolve

multifaceted problems or complications that have never arisen within this framework, but in solving problems, school leaders must have the ability to measure the value of danger of each substitute and select the alternative that is the best conceivable clarification for a multifarious organizational framework (Mumford et al., 2000).

Lunenburg (2010), described that virtuous leaders are those who see the entire institute as a unit and solve problems in the interests of everyone. School leaders having strong abilities are stimulated to create an optimistic environment, as well as academic and non-academic achievement; attitudes of students and teachers; reciprocal communication; answerability and stakeholder relationships (Kean et al., 2018). Chalkiadaki (2018) mentioned that the 21st century is an era classified mainly by globalization, ICT and the necessity for modernization. Consequently, it is necessary to emphasize the requirement for school leaders to apply applicable skills and abilities.

21st Century Skills encompasses many of the skills and abilities needed to succeed in the world of technology. 21st century skills foster lifetime knowledge, helping students to familiarize and react further quickly as the world everywhere them vicissitudes and as they nurture amendment among themselves. As workplace and culture are continually altering, the capability to acclimatize the fast-paced life of a universal communal grow into progressively important for success in the universal workplace. Consequently, it is significant for students to improve the full range of 21st century skills to be elastic and changeable with the changing world. Though the various theoretical frameworks for training 21st century skills are slightly different, including critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, communication and creativity (Dede, 2010). When developed and learnt, these skills will go together with students for their whole lives. Students having these capabilities are better talented to familiarize in new situations, resolve their personal difficulties, share thoughts, and reproduce on how their activities disturb others. As grownups, they will be capable to reply confidently to the unavoidable variations in the world and deal with the difficulties that arise as a result of these fluctuations. In the 20th century, at the height of the engineering age, the ability of students and employees to track clear instructions from instructors and managers was valued. Nevertheless, due to changes in commerce, economy and technology, employees must not merely track the guidelines but correspondingly adapt to the varying world. Scholars essentially be equipped to enter a workforce radically different from that of the 20th century (Lemke, 2002).

Though it is commonly accepted that definite 21st-century skills are essential for success, leaders have described that students "lack" such skills and that the absence of these skills in our culture "will meaningfully influence forthcoming financial development in the United States (Mosier et al., 2016). In addition, American scholars are also covering behind in the outdated parts of math, reading and science. A research was directed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and the main challenge when it comes to teach 21st century skills is to find the time to teach these skills in a comprehensive core curriculum. Teachers and students are habitually limited to learning and testing environments that are forced by school or state instructed curriculum and assessment (Strimel, 2014). Numerous teachers have wriggled to teach the whole curriculum needed for their content area to support their students in passing identical tests. Additional curriculum even a crucial curriculum that comprises teaching necessary 21st century skills will create more challenges for teachers struggling to meet necessities. Though, according to Dole et al., (2016), 21st century skills cannot be adequately measured by present consistent testing approaches. Skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication and collaboration need most to succeed in the workplace are not even mentioned. Consequently, when teachers

communicate on the test or when they use teacher-centered approaches to teach a program that helps students succeed on statewide assessments, students may miss out. Occasions to develop creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration skills. Although students appear to be successful based on their tests, they may not have the necessary skills to succeed in the working world. As a result, students today can pass standardized tests of reading, writing, and math, but these tests do not indicate whether a student is fully equipped with all the necessary skills.

Material and Methods

The research was quantitative in nature and survey method was used to investigate the research objective of the study. In this study four 21st century skills known as 4Cs (collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and communication) were taken as 21st century skills. Population of the study were all public secondary schools of Tehsil Gujrat district Gujrat. Simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of representative sample. 10% schools were selected as sample of the study. There were 183 secondary schools in Tehsil Gujrat. In this way, 20 schools were randomly selected. All the students enrolled in 10th grade of the selected 20 schools and head teachers were the sample of study. So, total sample of the study was 20 head teachers and 1284 students.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study to investigate the research objectives.

- I. Head teachers' Leadership styles Questionnaire
- II. 21st Century Skills Survey Questionnaire for Secondary School Students

Head teachers' Leadership Styles Questionnaire was adopted and changed according to the need of study and context. 21st Century Skills Survey Questionnaire for Secondary School Students was developed by the researcher under the kind supervision of the supervisor. Four 21st century skills (Collaboration, Critical thinking, creativity and Communication) were taken as sub factor of the instrument. There were 28 items of the final 21st Century Skills Survey Questionnaire for Secondary School Students.

Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics (Mean, standard Deviation, Frequency) as well as inferential statistics (t-test) were used for the analysis of collected data.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Comparison of Overall 21st Century Skills in schools under Transformational and Transactional Leaders

21 st century skills	Leadership Style	N	Mean	S. D.	t-value	Sig.
Overall	Transformational	469	4.09	.33	5.47	.00
	Transactional	815	3.97	.39		

Table 1 shows the differences between overall 21st century skills among students in schools under transformational and transactional leadership styles of heads at

secondary level. Analysis shows that schools under transformational leadership ($M=4.09$, $SD=.33$) were significantly better for promoting 21st century skills among students as compared to schools under transactional leadership ($M=3.97$, $SD=.39$) having $p=.00$. Furthermore, analysis shows that transformational leaders have significant role in promotion of 21st century skills among students at secondary level.

Table 2
Comparison of Communication Skills in schools under Transformational and Transactional Leaders

21 st century skills	Leadership Style	N	Mean	S. D.	t-value	Sig.
Communication	Transformational	469	3.84	.645	2.632	.009
	Transactional	815	3.74	.651		

Table 2 shows the differences between communication skills among students in schools under transformational and transactional leadership styles of heads at secondary level. Analysis shows that schools under transformational leadership ($M=3.84$, $SD=.645$) were significantly better for promoting communication skills among students as compared to schools under transactional leadership ($M=3.74$, $SD=.651$) having $p=.009$. Furthermore, analysis shows that transformational leaders have significant role in promotion of communication skills among students at secondary level.

Table 3
Comparison of Creativity Skills in schools under Transformational and Transactional Leaders

21 st century skills	Leadership Style	N	Mean	S. D.	t-value	Sig.
Creativity	Transformational	469	4.17	.579	2.048	.041
	Transactional	815	4.09	.714		

Table 3 shows the differences between creativity skills among students in schools under transformational and transactional leadership styles of heads at secondary level. Analysis shows that schools under transformational leadership ($M=4.17$, $SD=.579$) were significantly better for promoting creativity skills among students as compared to schools under transactional leadership ($M=4.09$, $SD=.714$) having $p=.041$. Furthermore, analysis shows that transformational leaders have significant role in promotion of creativity skills among students at secondary level.

Table 4
Comparison of Critical Thinking Skills in schools under Transformational and Transactional Leaders

21 st century skills	Leadership Style	N	Mean	S. D.	t-value	Sig.
Critical thinking	Transformational	469	4.36	.57	3.06	.00
	Transactional	815	4.24	.70		

Table 4 shows the differences between critical thinking skills among students in schools under transformational and transactional leadership styles of heads at secondary level. Analysis shows that schools under transformational leadership ($M=4.36$, $SD=.57$) were significantly better for promoting critical thinking skills among students as compared to schools under transactional leadership ($M=4.24$, $SD=.70$) having $p=.00$. Furthermore, analysis shows that transformational leaders have

significant role in promotion of critical thinking skills among students at secondary level.

Table 5
Comparison of Collaboration Skills in schools under Transformational and Transactional Leaders

21 st century skills	Leadership Style	N	Mean	S. D.	t-value	Sig.
Collaboration	Transformational	469	3.99	.51	5.08	.00
	Transactional	815	3.81	.65		

Table 5 shows the differences between collaboration skills among students in schools under transformational and transactional leadership styles of heads at secondary level. Analysis shows that schools under transformational leadership (M=3.99, SD=.51) were significantly better for promoting collaboration skills among students as compared to schools under transactional leadership (M=3.81, SD=.65) having $p=.00$. Furthermore, analysis shows that transformational leaders have significant role in promotion of collaboration skills among students at secondary level.

Conclusions

On the basis of data analysis, it was concluded that;

- Transformational leaders were significantly better for promoting overall 21st century skills among students as compared to transactional leadership.
- Transformational leaders were also significantly better for promoting communication skills, creativity skills, critical thinking skills and collaboration skills among students as compared to transactional leadership.
- Transformational leaders have significant role in promotion of 21st century skills (communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration) among students at secondary level.

Recommendations

On the basis of conclusions, it is recommended that:

- When hiring school leaders, the higher authorities may make decisions on transformational, transactional, laissez-faire styles as well as diversity of applicants according to the need of 21st century.
- For poor performing schools, higher authorities may investigate any changes in leadership style and continuously train school leaders on best leadership styles to boost performance.
- The head of institutions may adopt transformational leadership style for promotion of 21st century skills among students to promote better learning.

References

- Abukhdeir, A. M., & Park, B. H. (2008). P21 and p27: roles in carcinogenesis and drug resistance. *Expert reviews in molecular medicine*, 10, e19.
- Akinbode, A. I., & Al Shuhumi, S. R. A. (2018). Change management process and leadership styles. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 609-618.
- Anderson, T. (Ed.). (2008). *The theory and practice of online learning*. Athabasca University Press.
- Avolio, B. J. (2004). Examining the full range model of leadership: Looking back to transform forward. In *Leader development for transforming organizations* (pp. 91-118). Psychology Press.
- Ayiro, L. P., & Sang, J. K. A. (2010). Education leadership in a globalized economy: A Kenyan perspective. *Journal of Science and Technology Education Research*. 1(4). 62-72.
- Azorín, C. (2020). Beyond COVID-19 supernova. Is another education coming? *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 5(3/4), 381-390.
- Bellanca, J. A. (Ed.). (2014). *Deeper learning: Beyond 21st century skills*. Solution Tree Press.
- Chalkiadaki, A. (2018). A systematic literature review of 21st century skills and competencies in primary education. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(3), 1-16.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Richardson, N. (2009). Research review/teacher learning: What matters. *Educational leadership*, 66(5), 46-53.
- Davidson, M. (2014). A character education research perspective for the 21st century. *Journal of character education*, 10(1), 77.
- Dede, C. (2010). Comparing frameworks for 21st century skills. *21st century skills: Rethinking how students learn*, 20(2010), 51-76.
- Dole, S., Bloom, L., & Kowalske, K. (2016). Transforming pedagogy: Changing perspectives from teacher-centered to learner-centered. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 10(1), 1.
- Harris, A. (2005). Teacher leadership: More than just a feel-good factor?. *Leadership and policy in schools*, 4(3), 201-219.
- Harris, A. (2020). COVID-19–school leadership in crisis?. *Journal of professional capital and community*, 5(3/4), 321-326.
- Kean, T. H., Kannan, S., & Piaw, C. Y. (2018). The effect of school bureaucracy on the relationship between principals' leadership practices and teacher commitment in Malaysia secondary schools. *MOJES: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5(1), 37-55.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School leadership & management*, 40(1), 5-22.

- Lemke, C. (2002). enGauge 21st Century Skills: Digital Literacies for a Digital Age. *Journal of professional capital and community*, 5(3), 311-316.
- Lunenburg, F. C. (2010, September). The principal and the school: what do principals do? *National Forum of Educational Administration & Supervision Journal*. 27 (4).15-21.
- Moodly, A. L., & Toni, N. (2015). Women's access to higher education leadership: where are the role models? *Journal of Social Sciences*, 45(1), 45-52.
- Mosier, G. G., Bradley-Levine, J., & Perkins, T. (2016). Students' perceptions of project-based learning within the New Tech school model. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 25(1), 2-15.
- Mumford, M. D., Marks, M. A., Connelly, M. S., Zaccaro, S. J., & Reiter-Palmon, R. (2000). Development of leadership skills: Experience and timing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 87-114.
- Netolicky, D. M. (2020). School leadership during a pandemic: navigating tensions. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 5(3/4), 391-395.
- Piaw, C. Y., Hee, T. F., Ismail, N. R., & Ying, L. H. (2014). Factors of leadership skills of secondary school principals. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 5125-5129.
- Pont, B., Moorman, H., & Nusche, D. (2008). *Improving school leadership* (Vol. 1, pp. 1-199). Paris: OECD.
- Pounder, J. S. (2008). Transformational leadership: Practicing what we teach in the management classroom. *Journal of Education for Business*, 84(1), 2-6.
- Snell, J., & Swanson, J. (2000). *The Essential Knowledge and Skills of Teacher Leaders: A Search for a Conceptual Framework*. Solution Tree Press.
- Strimel, G. (2014). Authentic education. *Technology and Engineering Teacher*, 73(7), 8.
- Stuhlman, M. W., Hamre, B., & Pianta, R. (2002). Advancing the teen/teacher connection. *The Education Digest*, 68(3), 15.
- Suto, I. (2013). 21st Century skills: Ancient, ubiquitous, enigmatic. *Research Matters: A Cambridge Assessment Publication*, 15, 2-8.
- Zhao, Y. (2020). COVID-19 as a catalyst for educational change. *Prospects*, 49(1), 29-33.