

Transformational Leadership Practices: It's Impact on Teacher's Teaching Strategies in the 21st Century Classroom

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Abstract — Transformational leadership has surfaced as an important variable relative to educational leaders, especially relating to the implementation of innovative pedagogical practices intended for 21st-century classrooms. However, its influence on teachers' instructional practices warrants more empirical study. The current study was a descriptive-qualitative design with 30 senior high school teachers and 2 school heads from three secondary schools in the Uson South District. A validated Likert scale survey measuring transformational leadership practices and 21st-century teaching strategies as measured by a construct was administered. The quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistics. The results showed a moderate to high perception of transformational leadership across the five transformational leadership constructs (mean scores ranges, 3.25-3.55), with decision-making (mean =3.55) reporting the highest mean score. Meanwhile, teachers reported a high implementation of 21st-century teaching strategies (mean scores ranges, 4.15-4.45) based on the five constructs, with student-centered learning scoring the highest (mean =4.45). Furthermore, a positive correlation was noted between transformational leadership and innovative approaches to teaching. The Current study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that transformational leadership resulted in teachers adopting modern pedagogical practices. Therefore, educational administrators are encouraged to provide strong vision communication, improve mentorship on innovation, and improve participatory decision-making practices to promote improved teaching strategies. Further research with larger samples is recommended to contribute to validating the results of the current study.

Keywords — *Transformational Leadership, 21st Century Teaching Strategies, Instructional Innovation*

I. Introduction

"Leadership in education is about influence and not authority-an influence that empowers teachers to grow and elevate their own learning." This quote highlights how educational leaders completely define the direction and quality of the classroom teaching and learning practice in the 21st century. Given the rapid changes educational leaders face, coupled with the always-changing educational demands (technology, diverse learners, the emergence of new pedagogies), the complexity of leading schools is becoming more intricate and requires leaders to inspire, support, and ultimately empower - to do more than lead- today's teachers.

Transformational leadership has emerged as a model to support organizations in enacting change. This type of leadership focuses on motivation, inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The nature of transformational leadership matches the needs of educational organizations, as transformational leadership creates a context where teachers feel valued, supported, and able to innovate and grow in how they teach.

However, schools continue to implement long-standing leadership models, and what that means for teacher growth and transformation to address the 21st century, is that in those types of schools, teachers may not only be lacking self-confidence but also lacking the support system to implement new, student-centered instructional strategies that we see promoted today. This gap

raises questions pertaining to transformational leadership and how it might inform teachers' instructional practice today.

Hypothesis

The study assumes, based on available research, that transformational leadership practices positively influence 21st-century classroom teaching practices. More specifically, we are assuming that schools with leaders who engage in transformational leadership behaviors will inspire their teachers to, through leadership influence, utilize new, student-centered, and technology-enhanced strategies in their teaching.

In this study we explore that connection. More specifically we will answer the following research questions:

1. What transformational leadership practices are evident in the selected schools?
2. What teaching strategies do teachers utilize in 21st-century classrooms?
3. What do teachers notice and feel connected to their leaders and how they impact their teaching?

Approach Used in the Study and Justification

This study takes a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate transformational leadership practices and teaching strategies in selected schools. Specifically, a Likert-scale Survey will be used to collect data on both, leadership practices exhibited and the teaching strategies used in practice. The rationale for using this approach is based on its ability to systematically measure variables and capture descriptions of relationships manipulating the study setting.

Review of Relevant Literature

Transformational leadership (TL), discussed by Burns (1978), emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate followers to be proactive and productive, enabling the development of self and others - as a person and as an organization as a whole. In educational environments, TL is closely linked to school reform and changes for instruction. As Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) indicated, TL is focusing on teacher growth, cohort collaboration, and matching individual goals and organizational articulated goals, which are necessary to improve the quality of teaching in today's classroom.

An important area affected by TL relates to teacher professional development and reflective practice. Gao et al. (2024) found a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and the functioning of professional learning communities (PLCs), which promotes collaborative planning, collective inquiry, and the open exchange of ideas. Anderson (2022) provided evidence through qualitative perspectives of teachers reporting being

motivated to grow professionally and Experiment with new strategies when given support, acknowledgement, and a say in leadership decisions. These contexts allow teachers opportunities to critically reflect on their own practice while continuing to develop that practice to meet the evolving needs of 21st century learners.

Transformational leaders also have a significant impact on technology integration. Vermeulen et al. (2015) found that principals engaging in TL behaviors had an indirect role in digital tool adoption because these principals created firm expectations and professional learning for teachers. Schmitz et al. (2025) supported these findings, demonstrating that TL contributed to formal collaboration and clear direction on technology use, which motivated teachers to use digital and multimedia resources with increased confidence. TLs stimulate professional trust and collective focus and direction, indirectly increasing teachers' capacity and willingness to engage in technology instruction.

Transformational leadership is also cited as being beneficial for promoting differentiated and collaborative instruction. Ninković et al. (2024) stated that TL increases both teacher collaboration and teacher self-efficacy, which encourages differentiated instructional practices. When teachers feel supported and have confidence in their abilities to be successful, they will be willing to design instruction to meet the needs of all learners. Teacher understandings of their leaders are a great influence on their willingness to try something new in their practice. Anderson (2022) and Mansor et al. (2021) stated that when teachers feel valued, Included, and empowered, they are more committed professionally and open to pedagogical change. To conclude, the literature robustly supports that transformational leadership builds a culture of trust, innovation, and continuous learning, and these are the underpinnings for implementing effective 21st-century teaching methods.

II. Methodology

Design. A qualitative-descriptive research method was used in this study to investigate the relationships between transformational leadership practices and teachers 21st century teaching practices. The design allowed the researcher to discern themes and relationships in participants' understanding of leadership and exhibited teaching practices in the school context.

Sampling. The researcher recruited participants using a purposive sampling strategy, which included teachers and school heads from three purposefully selected secondary schools within the Uson South District to ensure representation using diverse leadership and teaching practices. The final sample included (30) teachers, and (2) school heads in the senior high school level across different subjects.

Respondents. The research study included (32) respondents, who were composed of thirty (30) teachers at the senior high school level and two (2) school heads. The participants were chosen to ensure maximum variation in the data collection of pattern of leadership styles and instructional practices at their respective schools.

Research Procedures. The researcher delivered the survey electronically using Google forms and as a paper, with structured survey questions in two sections: Transformational Leadership Practices and 21st Century Teaching Practices. Surveys were distributed in person and electronically and responses were collected anonymously over a course of two weeks and presented to participants as confidential to assist with honest and uninfluenced responses. Subjects were informed that their participation was voluntary, and that consent was required for data collection.

Ethical Considerations. Respectful research roles were adhered to throughout the research study to protect the rights of participants. Participants and confidentiality of their responses were safeguarded throughout the research study. Participants were informed that participating was voluntary and they could discontinue at any time with no penalty.

Research Instrument. The survey instrument was divided into two parts: Transformational Leadership Practices: 7 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree). 21stCentury Teaching Practices: 7 items also measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument was developed and validated by faculty and professors from Masbate Colleges to ensure clarity, consistency, and reliability before it was distributed.

Statistical Treatment of Data. Responses were coded numerically from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Descriptive statistics, mean scores, frequency counts, etc., were computed for each item on the survey to analyze the data.

III. Results and Discussion

The sample consisted of thirty senior high school teachers from a range of specialized disciplines with teaching experience from less than a year through over ten years. Most teachers taught English, which was followed by Mathematics and then many other disciplines. All respondents were only from the senior high school level. There were also two selected school heads who took part in the study.

Teachers evaluated their own perceptions of their school heads' transformational leadership and their use of 21st century teaching strategies, as well as their agreement with the statements, using a five-point Likert scale. The mean scores for transformational leadership items ranged from 3.25 to 3.55, indicating a moderate to high perception of leadership practices, whereas the respondents gave higher average scores to teaching strategy items ranging from 4.15 to 4.45, which indicates a belief that they frequently use modern instructional strategies in their classrooms.

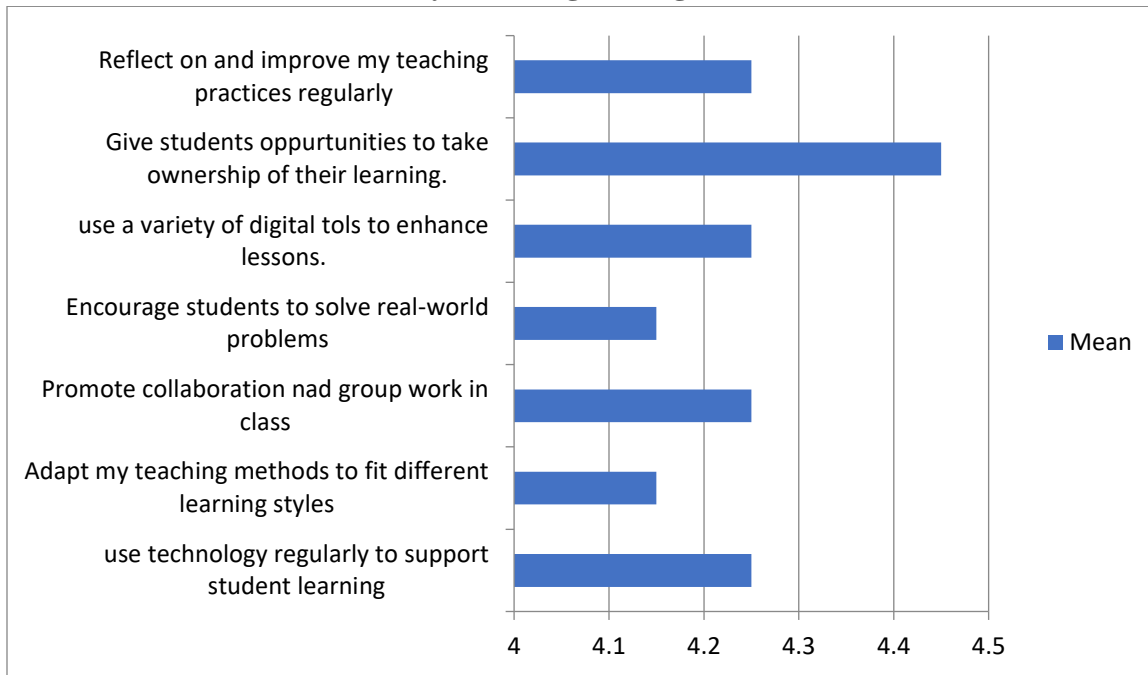
Figure 1.
Perception on transformational Leadership Behaviors of Teachers on their School Heads


The data indicates that teachers' perceptions of their school head's transformational leadership behaviors yielded mean scores between 3.25 and 3.55 on the 5-point Likert scale, meaning teachers tended to agree to moderately agree with the statements about leadership practices related to other transformational leadership behaviors. The highest-rated item was "Involved in decision-making processes (when appropriate)" (mean - 3.55). Thus, the school head does involve teachers in participatory leadership. Teachers also said they felt reasonably supported in their teaching-related roles, and they felt their contributions were recognized (both means -3.4), but there is room for stronger affirmation.

The lowest areas included communicating a clear vision (mean=3.25) and encouraging innovation (mean - 3.3). Additionally, while teachers recognized the school head's efforts to motivate them (mean = 3.35) and model integrity (mean = 3.3), both were in the moderate category, which implies that the process of becoming a transformative leader is still not fully achieved.

Based on the data, the school head engages in transformational leadership practices, but there is an opportunity to strengthen fundamentals, such as communication about a vision, recognition systems, and supports for innovative practice. Improvement in these areas may gain more traction and further the recognition of the school head's efforts, and possibly enliven the teacher-empowered school.

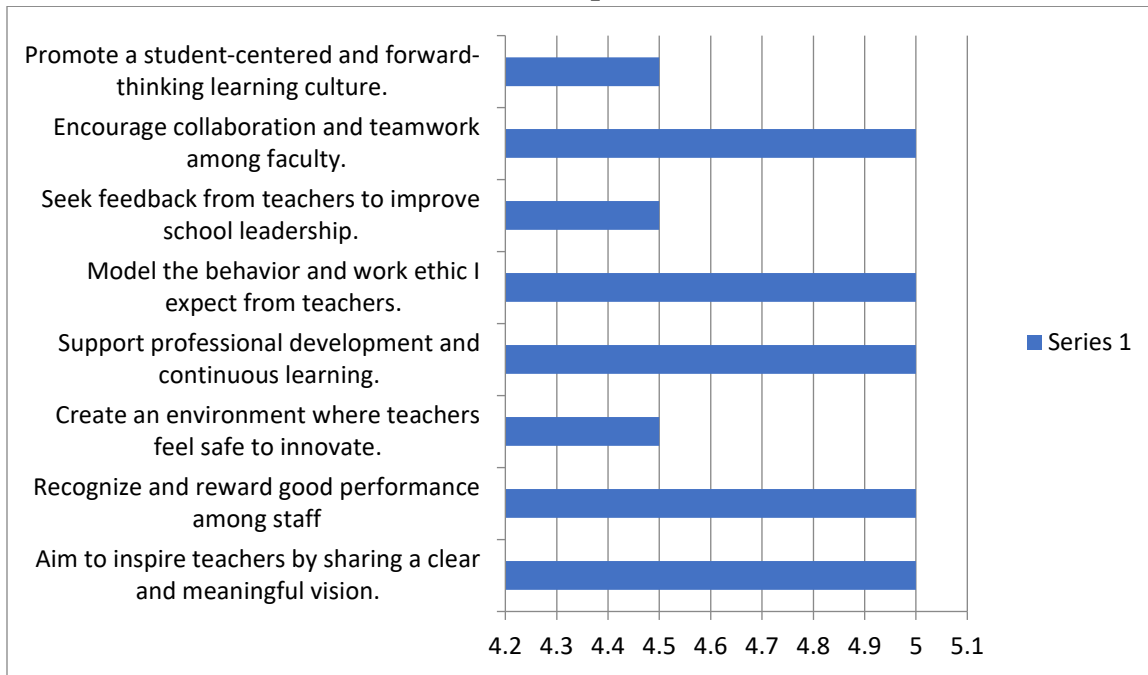
Figure 2.
21st Century Teaching Strategies of Teachers



Teachers' responses indicated that they implemented 21 st-century teaching strategies consistently and to a high degree, with mean scores falling between 4.15 and 4.45 on the 5- point Likert scale. The category with the highest-rated practice was reported as 'Give students opportunities to take ownership of their learning' (mean =4.45), demonstrating strong support for student-centered teaching practices. Other prevalent practices identified by teachers included regular use of technology (mean = 4.25), promoting collaborative group work (mean =4.25), use of various digital tools (mean =4.25), and regularly reflecting on their teaching practices (mean =4.25). This indicates that teachers were purposefully employing methods and practices that support active learning and digital fluency

There were slightly lower, but still highly positive, scores for adapting instruction to different learning styles (mean = 4.15) and encouraging real-world problem solving (mean= 4.15). While these practices are firmly a part of teachers' practice, these two categories could further improve. The similar high scores given by teachers across all items indicate there is an engaged teaching culture that actively pursues relevant and innovative learner-driven practices and pedagogies that align with 21st-century learning attributes. The results demonstrate a faculty not only understanding technology and digital tools but committed to promoting student choice, student collaboration, and real-world context in learning.

Figure 3.
Transformational Leadership Practices of School Heads



In the previous figure, we saw the data show very strong transformational leadership practices; the mean scores for all practices were in a very narrow range: 4.5 to 5. School leaders are performing exceptionally well in a number of key areas of practice especially, in regards to motivating teachers by sharing their vision, recognizing the performance of their staff, supporting and encouraging staff in professional learning, modeling the desired behaviors and promoting collegiality among faculty - all of these areas received perfect mean scores of 5. The study results indicate an excellent approach to leadership that motivates the staff through inspiring vision-setting, positive reinforcement and modeling the expected behavior

The areas with lower scores, while also strong, were: the creation of opportunities to make safe (4.5), soliciting teacher feedback (4.5), and creating a student-centered learning culture (4.5). The areas with lower scores indicate where there may also be greater opportunities for leadership impact, by emphasis on psychological safety for risk-taking experimentation, feedback mechanisms and forward-thinking pedagogical approaches.

The data shows that the lowest-rated leadership behaviors were:

1. Communicating a clear and inspiring vision.
2. Encouraging innovation and creativity.
3. Leading by example and modeling integrity.

For teaching practices, the areas with the most growth were:

1. Adapting teaching to accommodate different learning styles.
2. Encouraging students to develop solutions to real-world problems.
3. Regularly using technology to enhance student learning.

The recommendations for improving teaching practice based on the findings are: (1) Increasing teacher participation in school decision-making (2) Enhancing communication of the vision and innovative ideas (3) Supporting differentiated instruction and real-world learning experiences.

These findings have highlighted the importance of participative leadership and recognition in improving teaching practice. When school leaders engage teachers in decision-making, acknowledge their participative efforts, and communicate a clear educational vision, teachers are more likely to engage in innovative and student-centered teaching practices in their classrooms.

These findings improve our understanding on how school leaders can improve instruction and support the development of their teaching staff.

IV. Conclusion

The research looked at the perceived practices of transformational leadership, and whether they affected the use of 21st century teaching methods. Through descriptive analysis (Likert-scale correlation), it appeared that teachers perceive their school principals as moderate to highly being transformational leaders (mean 3.25 to 3.55), and that one area of strength was involving teachers in decision making. The teachers reported also using innovative teaching strategies frequently (mean 4.15 to 4.45), especially those that are more student-centered. While a descriptive design cannot show statistical relationships, there was a striking parallel between the data, which suggests to the authors that although it was not studied, the nature of leadership had an effect on teachers' use of modern pedagogies. The takeaway for these authors is to encourage school leaders to create vision statements that inspire hope, any recognition systems that help teachers feel valued, and built in professional learning opportunities. The researchers also conclude by suggesting that future research should be larger in sample size and inferential statistical method so that any relationships can be studied.

V. Recommendations

The results from this study reaffirmed the importance of transformational leadership with regard to effective teaching practices in the 21st century classroom. To continue to strengthen this relationship, school leaders should make it a priority to identify and set a clear and inspiring vision; involve teachers in the decision-making process; and develop a collegial environment that supports innovation. When administrators recognize teacher perspectives and support their professional

development, they can improve instructional practices and promote continuous improvement. Teachers must carry on developing their practices by embedding differentiated instruction, real-world problem solving, and consistent use of technology to address diverse student contexts. Future studies should build upon this study by exploring a larger and more diverse sample; through mixed-methods designs explore how leadership practices can impact teacher practices. Incorporating these suggestions will help schools to establish a learning community where leaders and teachers work together to create supportive conditions that lead to positive change in student learning.

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