

## Cross-Cultural Educational Partnerships to Prepare Global Leaders: Training Teachers, Teacher Candidates, and School Principals to Teach Students in the Multi-Cultural Classroom

Neelofar Ahmed

*Brock University, Catherines, Canada*

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1643-6207>

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### Abstract

With the growing incidents of terrorism, war, and warlike situations around the globe, academic achievements, physical and mental well-being of affected children in schools have become a major concern for the educational stakeholders. This paper discusses three key issues. Firstly, the article discusses the emerging role of school teachers and leadership in supporting students affected by war and terrorism in a cross-cultural context. Secondly, it focuses upon similarities between Canadian and Pakistani classrooms, and the challenges that school teachers and leaders encounter while educating students affected by war and terrorism. Thirdly, the article proposes the establishment of a cross-cultural learning community connecting the school leaders and teachers from both countries through the train-the-trainer model. This paper also contributes to the existing body of literature on the role of school leadership in teaching multi-cultural classroom.

**Keywords:** teachers, school principals, multi-cultural classroom; cross-cultural partnership; train-the-trainer model.

## Кросс-культурные образовательные партнерства в развитии глобальных лидеров: подготовка студентов педагогических направлений и директоров школ к обучению школьников в мультикультурной образовательной среде

Нилофар Ахмед

*Университет Брока, Сент-Катаринс, Канада*

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1643-6207>

DOI 10.26907/esd13.4.04

### Аннотация

В связи с учащением случаев террористических атак и военных действий по всему миру, академическая успеваемость, физическое и психическое здоровье детей, имеющих травмирующий опыт, становятся поводом для серьезного беспокойства среди различных участников образовательного процесса. Данная статья обращается именно к этим вопросам. Во-первых, в статье обсуждается роль школьных учителей и управленцев в процессе работы с детьми, пострадавшими в результате войны или терроризма. Во-вторых, автор отмечает и анализирует сходства между канадскими и пакистанскими школами, а также основные сложности, с которыми сталкиваются учителя во время работы с детьми, пережившими террористическую угрозу и военные действия. В-третьих, статья предлагает установить кросс-культурное образовательное сообщество, которое сможет объединить руководство школ и учителей обеих стран в соответствии с моделью train-the-trainer. Кроме того, автор дополняет существующую литературу по вопросам школьного лидерства в мультикультурном контексте.

**Ключевые слова:** Учителя; Директора школ; Мультикультурные классы; Кросс-культурные партнерства; Модель train-the-trainer.

## 1. Introduction

In the past two decades, mankind has witnessed a series of ruthless events emerging from war and war like situations. The UNHCR (2016) warns that the global population of war affected people has grown substantially from 33.9 million in 1997 to 65.6 million in 2016. This population includes people who are directly or indirectly affected by war, terrorism, armed conflicts, air strikes, as well as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) remaining at the borders of their native countries.

The unfortunate event of September 11, 2001, was the major incident of terrorism that killed close to 3,000 innocent people in the United States (US) and instigated the enduring “War on Terror. Crawford (201) argues that the U.S. led global war on terrorism has produced terrorism, conflicts, wars, and war like situations in many countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan. Since the onset of this War on Terror, approximately 111,000 people have been killed and more than 116,000 people have been injured in the war in Afghanistan. The Afghan conflict was one of the largest human crises in the history until the Syrian crisis overtook it and Pakistan was the top leading country to host Afghan refugees (Borthakur, 2017). It is also reported that more than 5.1 million people are forced to flee from Syria to seek asylum in neighboring European and North American countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Germany and Canada. This population of refugees largely include women and children and it is anticipated that more than half of the world’s refugees are children below 18 years of age (UNHCR, 2016).

With refugee children settling into hosting countries – either in border-locked developing countries or developed countries – their education in schools poses challenges for teachers, principals, educational stakeholders, and policy makers. War and events of terrorism drastically affect children who are reported to suffer from long-term psychological trauma and it is likely that people who are once in their lives exposed to war or terrorism continue to suffer from psychological problems and trauma that may include high levels of anxiety, grief and loss, hypervigilance, depression and, in the most severe cases, suicidality and post-traumatic stress disorder (Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia, 2016).

In school it is at times difficult for teachers to teach students who are exposed to a lifetime traumatic event of either war or terrorism as the socio-psychological needs of such students are often unique and different from the needs of their peers (Feuerverger, 2011). Moreover, the affected students find it difficult to socialize in the community, make friends in schools, communicate with teachers, and achieve academic excellence (Ayoub, 2014). A study conducted at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the most terrorism affected province in Pakistan, reveals that students affected by terrorism feel fear, which eventually leads to lower student academic achievements (Bilal, Inamullah, & Irshadullah, 2016).

Canada and Pakistan being hosting countries to Syrian and Afghan refugees have schooling systems based on multiculturalism. In Canada, the dynamics of diversity have been changing with the inclusion of war-affected children in the schooling system. Correspondingly, the dynamics of diversity within school community in Pakistan has been changed with the inclusion of students directly or indirectly affected by war in Afghanistan or terrorism in Pakistan. In the context of school and teaching, inclusion has become an integral part of contemporary system of education in developed and developing countries. Conventionally, inclusive education was seen to focus on children with special needs. However, this focus has been changed with the onset of United Nation’s vision to make education system ‘inclusive’ by making ordinary school inclusive:

“Education for All must take account of the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, ethnic and linguistic

minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV and AIDS, hunger and poor health, and those with disabilities or special learning needs.” (UNESCO, 2000)

Canada and Pakistan have adopted UNESCO’s education policy. Ontario Ministry of Education launched Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy in 2009, which was legislated in Bill 13 in 2012 and was revisited in 2014. The policy aims to help educators across the province to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers related to racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination and support the achievement and well-being of all students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Pakistan also adopted these guidelines. According to the Federal Ministry of Education, it is the states’ responsibility to provide free and compulsory education to all children aged between 5-16. Pakistan’s education policy aims to provide inclusive and equitable education of all children and to all levels of education including technical and vocational training. The policy also emphasis to remove the segregation of students with special needs in separate schools and promotes gender parity and equality (National Education Policy, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to identify the educational policies and praxis that make teaching more inclusive in Canadian and Pakistani multi-cultural classrooms. In the context of increased incidents of forced migration, this study is important as it provides recommendations to teachers, school leaders, policy makers and other education stakeholders to adopt a holistic approach to teaching, making schools more empowering spaces for students coming from war and conflict-affected countries.

In this paper, I explore the role of Ontarian and Pakistani teachers and school principals in teaching multi-cultural classroom through bioecological (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and transformative leadership (Shields, 2010) lenses. I review the literature on the topic published in the last 10 years and discuss United Nations’ policy guidelines on inclusion and equity in the context of Ontario and Pakistan. I also examine the prospects of cross-cultural partnerships as vehicle of knowledge mobilization for school teachers and principals between developed and developing countries. Although there is an emerging body of literature discussing the challenges faced by war and terrorism affected students and their teachers (Bursztyn, & Korn-Bursztyn, 2015; Kovacevic, 2016; Ratkovic et al., 2017), the role of teachers and school principals in supporting such a population of students have been under-researched (Stewart, 2012). Besides, there has also been limited scholarly attention paid to comparative perspectives on teachers and school principals’ leadership between developed and developing worlds, and to opportunities for cross-cultural learning (Sider, 2014).

## 2. Theoretical Frameworks

To explore the role of school teachers in supporting students affected by war and terrorism, I situated this study in Bronfenbrenner’s (1999) bioecological model of child development and in Shields’ (2010) transformative leadership model. These models emphasize the importance of building bridges and partnerships between schools and students’ family, community, and society.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1999) bioecological model describes child development as a set of complex interactions between multiple stakeholders and environments:

[child development] is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. Examples include such settings as family, school, peer group, and workplace. (p. 39)

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model aims at individuals and their interactions with community or society. The bioecological model is framed in different layers that an individual interacts with in his lifetime. These layers include micro, meso, exo, and macro systems. An individual first interacts with micro system which represents family, teachers, relatives and peers. The next layer is the exosystem which represent the interaction of an individual with larger groups like friends of family, social agencies, and workplaces. The macrosystem represents the community or society having culture and norms that an individual lives in. In the context of students affected by war and terrorism, the interaction between a child or student with his microsystem plays a crucial role. The microsystem is represented as teachers, family, and peers who influence a child morally and psychologically. Considering this interaction, teachers can build strong relationship with students and help them to integrate in schools and community successfully. Their holistic support can help students to thrive academically in the schools as well as to overcome their social and psychological challenges within community.

The second theoretical framework is Shields (2010) transformative educational leadership theory which recognizes material realities of the broader social and political sphere, recognizing that the inequities and struggles experienced in the wider society affect one's ability both to perform and to succeed within a classroom. Transformative leaders act courageously and continuously to ensure more equitable learning environments, pedagogical practices, and societies for all children:

[Transformative leadership] begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others. Transformative leadership, therefore, inextricably links education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded. (p. 11)

In the context of forced migration and multicultural schools, transformative leadership theory provides a perfect model of leadership for school teachers and principals as the leadership traits stem out from the ethic of critique, care, and justice. Bronfenbrenner's (1999) bioecological model and Shields' (2010) transformative leadership model highlight the importance of complex interactions, personal relationships, justice, and democracy in education. Such holistic approach to education has the potential to ameliorate many of the challenges that students affected by war and terrorism experience (Stewart, 2012).

### 3. Methodology

I conducted a systematic review of the literature and policy about the role of school leaders in Ontario and Pakistan in the last ten years. The selected articles were written in the English language and were published in peer-reviewed journals. I searched ERIC and JSTOR databases using the search terms "inclusive education," "refugee students", "terrorism affected students," "educational policies," "teachers," and "school leaders." I also used the Brock University Library's SuperSearch tool, "a web-scale discovery tool that allows users to search the contents of multiple library catalogues and databases simultaneously" (James A. Gibson Library, 2018). Finally, I used bibliographic branching and referrals from other researchers since the literature available on the topic is limited. I review United Nations charter of human rights to education and United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) documents and reports relating to various global initiatives through projects like Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), and post EFA 2015. I also reviewed the inclusive education policies developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Pakistan's Federal Ministry of Education (MOE). I

maintained a research journal while writing this paper. The purpose of maintaining this journal was to develop the themes and findings that were emerging out of the literature and document review. The abstracts of the articles were reviewed to select articles which are more relevant to Ontarian and Pakistani teachers' and principals' perspectives on inclusive education. The articles were reviewed to address the following guiding research question:

1. How to make schools and classrooms inclusive and teaching more cross-cultural?
2. How can teachers become role models, moral and global leaders using holistic cross-cultural educational leadership skills and strategies?
3. Which new directions in teacher leadership and social inclusion theory, practice, research and policy must be considered to enhance social inclusion of marginalized students?

The findings of this review cannot be generalized; however, the findings can be used to inform educational stakeholders of the existing policies and practices which could be successfully adopted in other countries experiencing refugee influx and increased student diversity.

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

With the changing global dynamics, classrooms are becoming more multi-cultural, demanding for a more holistic approach to teaching. Teachers and school principals can become role models and moral teachers once they understand the socio-psychological needs of their students coming from diversified backgrounds. Reflective teaching practices can really help educator to develop a deeper understanding of their students' challenges by questioning their own assumptions, beliefs and values (Bosacki, 2012).

Although diversity in schools and community facilitates newcomers' integration in the society, diversity itself has consequences for students (other than academics) which later in their lives shape their prospects (Ryan, 2016). Accountability however can help to ensure more inclusive, equitable and high-quality education systems, eventually leading teachers and school principals to adopt a more holistic teaching approach (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2017-8). School teachers and principals can develop such holistic approach by considering Bronfenbrenner's (1999) bioecological model and practicing Shields' (2010) transformative leadership model. Together, these two theories highlight the importance of complex interactions, personal relationships, justice, and democracy in education within and across multiple ecological systems, including classrooms, schools, school boards, provinces, countries, and cross-cultural contexts and partnerships.

In the recent past, Canada has successfully collaborated with Haiti. Sider (2014) reports that the project study of Digital Mentoring Project (DMP) reveals that the ten participants from both countries developed a professional learning community. Using digital technologies as a tool or medium of communication, the participants shared their resources and local experiences to 'develop a greater sense of leadership issues beyond their own contexts' (Sider, 2014, p. 75). The outcomes of 'The Digital Mentoring Project (DMP)' between Canada and Haiti suggest that cross-cultural learning improves and strengthens effective leadership skills of local school leaders (Sider, 2014).

Considering the success of the Canada-Haiti partnership, a cross-cultural collaboration between Canada and Pakistan could be developed to improve teaching strategies and pedagogies for students affected by war and terrorism affected. Developing such a partnership might prove successful because in the recent past, Canada has also assisted Pakistan's federal and provincial governments in training their primary and elementary school teachers and education managers (Government of Canada, 2017).

The benefits of Canada-Pakistan cross-cultural partnership in education can be enormous. Such partnership could serve as a learning community for sharing professional and personal experiences and ideas, offering suggestions and resources beneficial for all the stakeholders (Sider, 2014). The cross-cultural partnership develops awareness among people facing likewise situations or challenges. It serves as a platform for participants to share their local knowledge and personal experiences to generate more perspectives and expertise in the area. Partners can learn from each other's experiences, contexts, challenges, and successes. Moreover, such global partnership can generate more knowledge and resources for teachers and principals who work with students affected by war and terrorism across the globe.

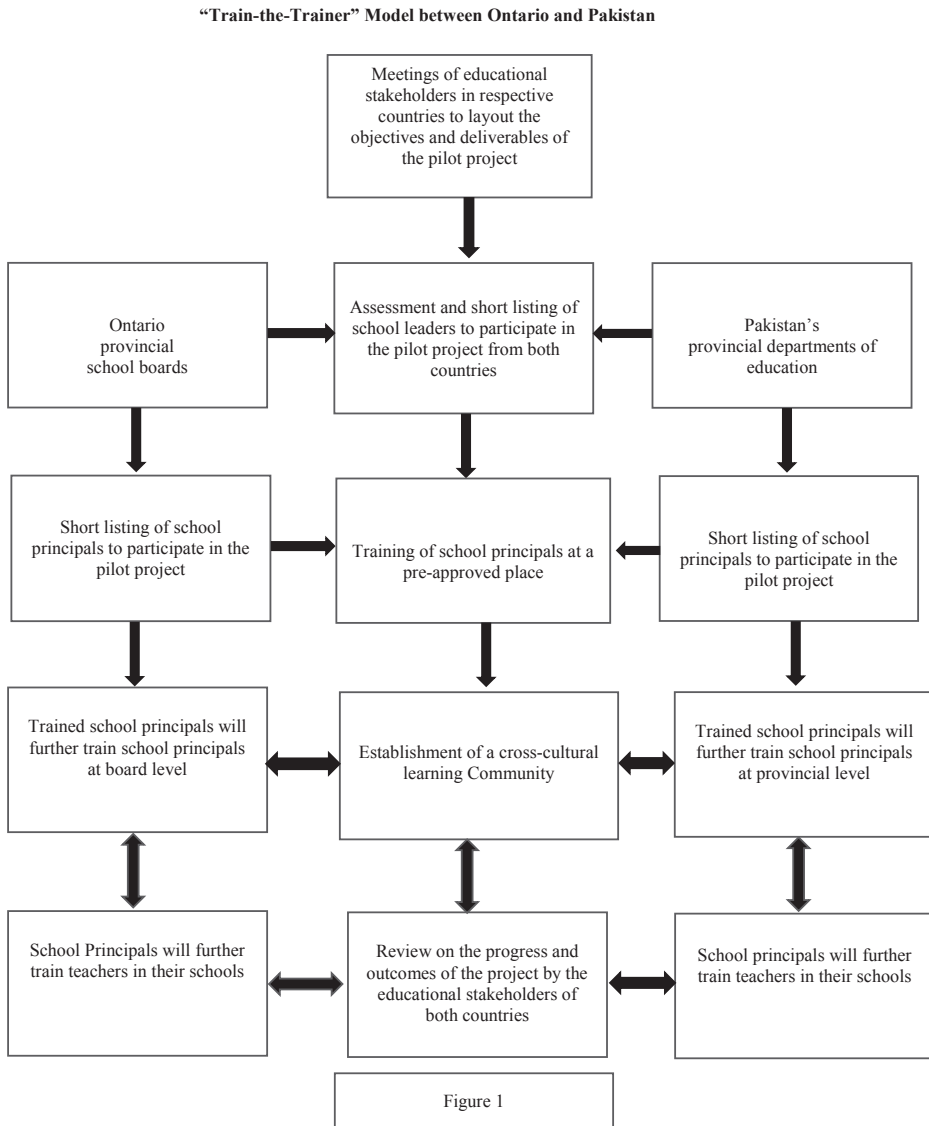
Considering the geographical limitation, cost constraint, and scarcity of resources, the train-the-trainer (TTT) framework of transformative leadership, could effectively work in Canada and Pakistan. Suhrheinrich (2011), mentions that TTT model trains the trainers who further train people in their home agency and it works effectively in the context of schools. The suggested training framework between Ontario, Canada and Pakistan would focus on developing knowledge exchange and problem-solving strategies for school principals and teachers educating multi-cultural classroom. The model suggests that the educational stakeholders from both countries outline the objectives and deliverables of the pilot project (see figure 1). Once the viability of the project is accomplished, the education ministries of Canada and Pakistan could nominate prospective school principals for the training at an approved location. The on-site training will give the participants an opportunity to develop the rapport with each other that will help them later in their virtual learning sessions. The onset of training will establish a cross-cultural learning community for the participants. After the successful completion of training, the participants would go back to their respective countries and further train other school principals and teachers. The training will further continue by providing a virtual platform to trained participants to share their challenges and experiences with each other.

The limitations of cross-cultural partnership could not be overlooked including a lack of partners' readiness, lack of prior exposure to practical cross-cultural and collaborative learning, and limited infrastructure, resources, and commitment. There has been little attention paid to international and comparative perspectives on school leadership therefore it might be difficult to determine the and hence the available literature is limited (Sider, 2014). It will be difficult for both partners to develop and implement strategies that would work best for both countries' school cultures. However, a pilot project to evaluate the viability of this training framework could serve as the starting point using Information and Computer Technology (ICT) as a medium for communication, collaboration, and resource exchange.

## **5. Recommendations**

United Nation's policy guidelines on equity and inclusion are exemplary for schools and classroom which have a diversified student population and is inspirational to school teachers and principals. War affected students in Canada and terrorism affected students in Pakistan encounter similar challenges. Schools should create safe spaces, as students who are exposed to war hazards and terrorism, represent a particularly vulnerable group of students in the classroom and later in their lives (Stewart, 2012). It is important for Ontarian and Pakistani school teachers and principals to adopt transformative leadership model as its ethics are engraved in liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice, which are the fundamental values to welcome war and terrorism affected children in their schools. As mentioned by Shields (2010), school leaders have complex tasks in the multicultural classroom for not only encouraging the students to aim for high academic

Figure 1. Cross-cultural educational partnership through Train the-trainer model



achievements but also to cultivate a learning environment of equity and inclusion. Teachers and school principals can build bridges between conflict-affected communities and other stakeholders in education using the framework of Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological model of learning. (Stewart, 2011)

The subject has a wide scope for the researchers. It would be relevant to implement and observe various developmental theories in schools to build a holistic educational approach. There is a great need for more developmentally informed and informative research into the effectiveness of prevention and recovery strategies for war and terrorism affected children and adolescents, especially with regard to considerations of development, gender

and cultural differences, and the nature of the disaster exposure (Bäärnhielm et al., 2017). Further research is required to fully understand the strategies teachers, policymakers, conflict-affected families, and the community should use “to ease the transition, empower students, and inform policy development” (Ratkovic et al., 2017, p. 19).

The vital concern for the school teachers in Ontario, Pakistan and elsewhere is the academic success of war and terrorism affected students, along with their mental, physical, and social well-being. Ontarian and Pakistani teachers face similar challenges in dealing with such students; therefore, sharing local knowledge and developing cross-cultural pedagogies through the train-the-trainer model could be mutually beneficial for the teachers and their students. It is critical that countries and educational stakeholders collectively develop awareness and strategies for best inclusive teaching practices that cater to the needs of students affected by war and terrorism.

I would recommend cross-cultural partnership as one of the best possible learning communities that Ontario and Pakistan could develop to train their school teachers and principals who work with students affected by war and terrorism. In today's context, UNHCR (2016) also advocates for cross-cultural collaborations to share local knowledge and mobilize resources across the globe:

“The willingness of nations to work together not just for refugees but for the collective human interest is what's being tested today, and it's this spirit of unity that badly needs to prevail”.

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