

## Chapter 2

# Leadership in Open and Distance Learning Institutions Within the Scope of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

**Hakan Kilinc**

*Anadolu University, Turkey*

**Hakan Altinpulluk**

*Anadolu University, Turkey*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Leadership is one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century characteristics that everybody involved in distance learning institutions should have. From this point of view, the fact that individuals having a say in the functioning of open and distance learning institutions possess 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as leadership and accountability is seen as an important point in order to correctly carry out the missions of such institutions. The fact that the individuals who operate open and distance learning institutions have 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills such as leadership and accountability will play an important role in achieving the aims of the institution. Therefore, it is important that individuals have the features required by the age in order to reach the goals they aim at. In this study, it has been emphasized that individuals must have 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in order to maintain the functioning of open and distance learning institutions in a healthy manner and the necessity of possessing leadership feature has been argued.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Field experts who have studies on learning environments argue that the traditional roles in the learning process must be broadly reviewed. Issues such as active learning, collaboration, creativity and the use of technology, which can enrich learning, have become a focus of attention with the reviewing of the roles in the learning processes.

With the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), the possibilities of joint learning environments have evolved. As an alternative to traditional face-to-face learning systems, open and distance learning systems have come to the fore in parallel with these developments. The necessity of revising the possibilities and roles of learning environments in a broad manner raises the importance of open and distance learning environments. In open and distance learning environments, the active presence of learners is a key factor. The active role of learners in learning processes can be referred to as instruction activities that involve processes in which learners can think and produce something. With the use of ICTs in learning environments, active learning opportunities have been enhanced and learners have been able to cooperate with each other. In this context, it is possible to say that the roles in the learning environment have changed, the learners have moved to the centre, and the teachers are guides on the side.

Learners who are at the centre of learning processes are now able to access content whenever and wherever they would like to, through the technology they possess. In this context, learners need to have 21st century skills such as technology literacy and information literacy so that they can fulfil the requirements of the digital environment they are involved in. The reason for this situation is that the digital media is integrated with technology. The fact that learners who are involved in open and distance learning environments that remove the limitations of time and space as a result of the development of ICTs have full knowledge of the skills of the 21st century and are able to communicate and interact with each other can be seen as an important point for the learning process to be fruitful. At the same time, it can be said that such open and distance learning environments should be managed by a good leadership.

It is possible to say that with the coming of 2000s, many education institutions have been interested in open and distance learning systems and benefited from these systems. This situation is clearly seen in the graphs of academic studies on open and distance learning institutions according to the years, given in Figure 1. Academic studies were obtained from the Scopus database.

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