THE CHANGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, EMERGING INNOVATIONS AND LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES OF LECTURERS

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ABSTRACT

Given the changes brought on by information and communication technology, a shift from traditional to electronic and online education is gaining acceptance. The majority of students are likewise following technological norms. Therefore, it is important for educators who are regarded as mentors by students to learn technology so that they can teach students who, although having a passion for technology, may not be able to use it effectively. Literature and other sources of evidence were reviewed before drawing conclusions. This paper examined change management techniques for implementing new technology and identified certain strategies to use to guarantee that lecturers are giving the appropriate leadership in the evolving learning environment. Four strategies for change management were considered. They are: Rational-empirical Strategy, Normative-Re-educative Strategy, Power-Coercive Strategy, and Environmental-Adaptive Strategy. Additionally, the crucial areas where faculty must exercise leadership were covered, including team building abilities, cohesion for knowledge creation, emotional quotient, communication abilities, use of ICT for learning, and problem-solving and innovation. The transitional phases of change were also covered in the paper. The Beginnings, the Neutral Zone, and the Ending Stage are these. It was mentioned that lecturers must always update themselves to be relevant.

Keywords: Change Management. Learning Environment. Lecturers. Emerging Innovations. Leadership

INTRODUCTION

The setting for education is evolving quickly. Although Generation Z, often known as the digital natives, and 21st century learners have a passion for technology, they might not be able to fully grasp underlying benefits without guidance and mentoring. Because of their indiscriminate media consumption, insatiable drive to acquire new technologies, and lack of a sense of purpose, lecturers are expected to strive for relevance and show leadership in the evolving learning environment. The availability of educational resources online does not guarantee that students will be able to understand and apply that information for academic purposes.

Since there are a large number of qualified students seeking postsecondary education, open and distant education is also growing popularity. This is because higher education facilities may not be sufficient for this population. According to Wasserman & Migdal (2019), lecturers must take the necessary measures to learn how to use the relevant technologies because the need for education has made it necessary to integrate ICTs into the teaching and learning process. Additionally, Howard & Mozejko (2015) pointed out that lecturers and students need to adopt a new perspective by acknowledging the rapid extinction of the existing educational model. This argument suggests that destroying the status quo in education may be unavoidable.

Aligning with change could be challenging but intentional approach could help initiators of new innovation to surmount opposition and get the desired objectives for introducing the change. The dynamism of technology requires that lecturers choose to take the role of learners why they occupy the office of teachers. Virtual classrooms have been found as alternative conscious efforts at aligning with change in the academic world is embraced by lecturers. The citadel of learning is extending from buildings to the cloud. Virtual world is fast becoming the real world. New ways of thinking, creative approaches to knowledge dissemination and departure from traditional system appear to have become popular issues of discussion at conferences of academics in the 21st century (Wasserman & Migdal, 2019).

CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Achieving real change in the new learning environment requires a number of things, including the administrative or political will of institution management, a willingness to put lecturers through rigorous training, and a commitment on the part of lecturers to provide the necessary leadership and mentoring to students. Teachers must change (change by learning, unlearning and relearning). To get the best results from the change management process with reference to the new learning environment, it is typically necessary for lecturers and students to adjust their lifestyle, behavioral patterns, thought processes, and attitudes. Among academics with diverse opinions and ideologies, resistance to change is not unusual.

The transition from the old to the new learning environment, which is made possible by information and communication technology, could be communicated through persuasion, instruction, and

compulsion when utilized with moderation. These are necessary to make sure that no professors are left behind. Students frequently gravitate toward instructors who are thought of as having a technology bent. Although older professors are technology migrant, they may be more equipped to utilize technology for task-oriented endeavors than younger generations, who have been observed to use it more frequently for communication and for enjoyment.

High acceptance, simple implementation, and change sustenance are essential components of change management. To guarantee that change management is successful, it is important to focus on the unique characteristics of academic institutions. When introducing change, the context is always a crucial factor to take into account. The academic community may not benefit from the change management strategy used in other contexts, necessitating the adoption of a strategic approach.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Four strategies have been recommended for change management. They are as follows:

- **Rational-Empirical Strategy:** This approach is based on the persuasion theory, where lecturers are urged to accept the new learning environment in exchange for rewards. At this point, management plans training, sends employees on overseas training trips, and awards cash and certificates. Extrinsic motivation is used, and this may encourage lecturers to adopt new teaching-related technologies and advances (Kiprotich, Kahuthia & Kinyua, 2019).

Normative Re-educative Strategy: This strategy canvasses that change management process must involve persons that would be affected by the change. The organizational culture must be put into consideration and team approach should be adopted to ensure acceptance of change. It is important to understand that social and cultural values affect how people behave. There are social groups that adhere to particular ideas in every organization, and these groups can influence whether change is accepted or resisted. It is therefore pertinent to ensure that social groups are carried along in change management. They could influence members in the organization to subscribe to the technology being deployed (Beer, 2020).

- **Power-Coercive Strategy:** The fact that employees must carry out their bosses' instructions is the basis for this method. To ensure that the intended change is realized, sanctions, threats, and penalties may be utilized as propellers. This is not typically the case in an academic setting, where the enlightened mind is compelled to inquire about and obtain clarifications regarding the justifications for adopting new advZhang, ances. While forcing technology on kids may be simple for instructors, forcing lecturers to use it is not necessarily simple for management (Stouten, Rousseau & Cremer, 2018).

- **Environmental-Adaptive Strategy:** It is a system based on the idea that workers would adjust to the current circumstances, especially when there is no other option. To make room for the new system, which staff will learn to use, the old one is shut down. This system also accommodates conferences, workshops, and training, but it is deployed with optimism. Banks deployed automated teller machines in the hopes that clients would get used to using them without receiving any training. Students who take online exams are aware that they must get used to using the e-learning

platforms in order to participate in the exams (Fauzi, Harits, Danial & Komariah, 2020).

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

In order for students to take full advantage of the new learning environment's capabilities, faculty members must provide them with direction. Following are the six skill categories that have been determined to be essential for student assimilation.

Team Building Skills: In the digital age, interdependence for knowledge acquisition is crucial. The student's curriculum needs to be revised to incorporate this new way of thinking. Lecturers must foster an environment that encourages student interaction and information sharing. Mentoring amongst students has been proposed as a practical technique of transferring ICT expertise. When they are split up into cohorts for assignments and educational research, students now take on the role of mentors. Teaching is becoming more extensive (Obiekwe, Mobolade & Akinade, 2021).

Cohesion for Knowledge Creation: The ability to perceive transdisciplinary cohesiveness is essential to advancements in the twenty-first century. In order to propose a solution to a specific problem, relationships between students and instructors from various knowledge backgrounds are created. The successful use of drones in agricultural activities in the twenty-first century is based on the cooperation of many disciplines to offer a solution to a particular problem. Students that receive guidance on knowledge production may go on to create novel ideas and technologies that will push the boundaries of knowledge even further (Alghamdi, Ng, Ho & Ramachandran , 2021).

Emotional Intelligence: Future scholars must pay close attention to the five dimensions of emotional intelligence. As components of emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are complimentary to intelligence quotient, which has traditionally been the primary criterion for student evaluation. Students who receive guidance in the development of emotional intelligence will be better equipped to communicate in the virtual world and use technology in the appropriate way. In this setting, students receive mental support for perseverance in learning to conduct independent research. Students receive several comments encouraging them to study diligently. Students' academic maturity is established so they can self-regulate and strive to achieve greater heights despite any distractions (Kurdi & Hamdy, 2020)

Communication skills: Peer bonding is something that teachers and administrators want for in their students, and communication is a key component. The skills of scientific communication in the digital age should be taught to students. Research clusters and academic social media platforms should be introduced to students in order to facilitate contact among researchers and potential collaborations (Azua, Etxebarria, Jauregui & Pinto, 2020).

Use of ICT for learning: Students must be exposed to technology since the use of information and communication technologies for learning is taking center stage. Students who do not take use of these platforms may not be able to enjoy good grooming since e-learning, m-learning, and other terminology have become so widespread. They may be able to master particular fields with the use

of first-hand knowledge. Although the material might not be physically accessible, it might still be relatively simple to get thanks to the use of technology in the classroom (Sanchez, Pazmino & Gamez, 2020).

Problem solving and innovation: Since strategic thinking is essential to academic success, lecturers must take the initiative in teaching this skill to their students. The new learning environment, which heavily relies on technology, would allow students to collaborate on offering a solution to a specific problem. Therefore, professors are urged to make technology investments and be open to updating their subject matter in order to remain useful as mentors (Heliawati, Afakillah & Pursitasari, 2021).

TRANSITION STAGES IN CHANGE

Any kind of organizational change, whether it's for the better or worse, is disruptive. Therefore, it is important to be familiar with potential human behaviors before implementing new technology in a learning environment. These are the three phases: Beginning, Middle, and Ending (Brandon, 2007).

The Ending Stage: Usually, it is challenging to break a "habit." Making sure the old phase can end so the new phase can start is a big task. In this process, the new pedagogical approach is justified, and those who are fixed on a certain system are persuaded to abandon it. If the change managers do not know how to convey change, switching from a traditional classroom to an e-learning platform could be a mammoth undertaking. Therefore, the ending stage serves as a preparation for the new system's acceptance and deployment. It has to do with guiding users along, getting them to recognize the requirements, and motivating them to fulfill those requirements in order to embrace the new system (Palabiyik, Cronin, Roches, Bagnera & Legg, 2021).

The Neutral Zone: The time between an ending and a beginning is this. Many topics are brought up. Denial, resistance, exploration, and commitment are seen at this point. Numerous discussions are held, and people thoroughly research the upcoming new platform. Typewriter users were in denial when computers were first introduced because they believed they would never be able to replace them, yet today it seems as though typewriters have never existed. Some of the objections raised, particularly in Nigeria, were the notion that obtaining electricity and replacement components would be very difficult. However, over time, people have learned to ignore these objections. The second is the idea that transformation happens as a "journey" rather than as a series of events. To effectively transition to the new platform, it is crucial that all potential users receive complete assistance and understanding at all times throughout the neutral zone (Jamal & Tilchin, 2020).

Beginnings: After careful consideration and a choice to adopt, the beginning is the phase that follows. Although there will also be other agitations and criticisms. There are six different categories of users that have been found. They are laggards, innovators, early majority, late majority, and late adopters. Typically, innovators and early adopters gain more from innovations. Higher education lecturers who need to take the lead on e-learning platforms should work to take this position of early adopters (Cummings, Bridgman & Brown, 2016)

CONCLUSION

From the aforementioned, it is clear that the modern learning environment is heavily reliant on technology, and it is crucial for lecturers to continue developing as new technologies are implemented. Because they view professors as mentors, students have high expectations of them. When instructors do not provide students with the appropriate leadership as expected, it may be difficult. Therefore, it is important for lecturers to be prepared to discard or eradicate ideas that are losing their relevance in research and teaching, and to take the initiative to learn about cutting-edge developments.

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