

## EFFECTIVE DIGITAL LEADERSHIP: A PANACEA FOR EMPLOYEES MOTIVATION

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examined how effective digital leadership can motivate the employees and focused on the effectiveness of digital leadership on employees motivation. Digital leadership is the process of utilizing digital technologies to attain the desired organizational goals. This includes the acquisition of digital skills, abilities, strategy, innovation and change in management. Digital leaders need to understand the trend in digital technologies and how they can be used to achieve needed goals. The knowledge in digital technology adopt the strategies that can help in motivating the employees which will in turn propel their commitment towards the achievement of organizational goals and the sustainability, growth and productivity of any organization cannot be attained without the employees contribution. Therefore it becomes imperative that the employees must be motivated. Digital leadership can inspire effective communication, foster development of a solid school system, encourages digital literacy and helps to develop the ability to delegates' responsibilities to subordinates. The study therefore recommends the following: employees should be encouraged to be digital technology compliance, good performance should be rewarded, and the welfare and development of the employees should be paramount.*

**Keywords: Effectiveness, digital leadership, employees, motivation**

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### **Introduction**

The presence of leadership in every organization is inevitable due to its importance in the attainment of organizational goals. There are numerous resources that are available in the organization which need to be optimally utilized for the attainment of the organizational goals. Thus, there must be a responsible person (leader) at the helm of the affairs to organize,

supervise and co-ordinate the activities in the organization. Ogbouvbu (2007) "leadership in a school involves how school heads who give directions to staff, help define school heads status, distribution of power between school head and teachers, to utilize the different forms of power to influence staff behaviour and maintain the values of the school". Leadership involves the motivation of a group of people (employee) in an organization

to act towards attaining stipulated organizational goal. The success of a structured organization depends on effective leadership. Executive leaders are responsible for determining and guiding the direction and purpose of an organization by setting and achieving goals. (Indeed editorial Team, 2019).

In this era of digital technology, the leaders have no choice but to imbibe and develop their digital skills and knowledge. Digital technology will make leaders more agile and productive through efficient and effective digitized process (Texem, 2021) A successful leader must embrace digital technology in order to attain the organizational goals. All over the world, leaders in different organizations who have embraced and invested in digital technological skills for themselves and their organizations are experiencing and witnessing excellent employee engagement, improved productivity, improved staff retention and staff motivation. With knowledge in digital technology, the leader is able to maximize performance, build impactful relationships and expand professional network as an effective and strategic leader. It is mandatory that leaders should harness the power of digital technologies in order to create school cultures that are transparent, relevant, meaningful, engaging, motivating and inspiring.

### **What is Digital Leadership in Education**

Digital leadership is seen as establishing direction, influencing others and intimating sustainable change through the access of information, and establishing relationships in order to anticipate changes pivotal to school success in the future (Sheninger, 2022) he listed 7 pillars of digital leadership in education which include; communication, public relations, branding, student engagement/learning, professional growth/development re-envisioning learning spaces and environments and opportunity.

Digital leadership can also be viewed as a leadership style which emphasizes the implementation of digital transformation within an organization. It enables school organization to digitalized the work environments and learning cultures. Digital leadership is the ability to lead a team or organization through digital channels. These channels include social media, email marketing and website design (Edureka, 2022). Characteristics of digital leaders include: Inspiring others, leverage technology, encourage collaboration, drives innovation and manages risk (Hindi, 2022). There numerous benefits of being a digital leader' a new outlook to work, enhanced productivity, increased return, boost in customer loyalty, (Quixy, 2022). Some advantages of digital leadership are; Better connection, enhanced experiences, stronger leaders through stronger teams etc.

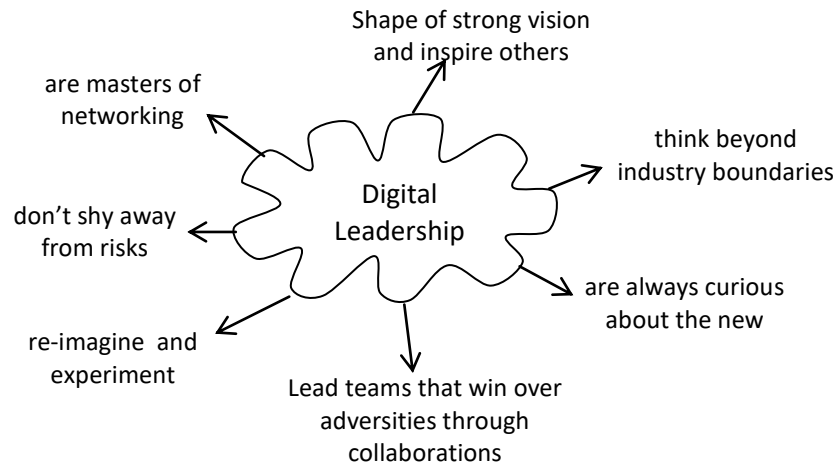
### **Digital Leadership Skills**

There are many digital leadership skills that can be possessed by the leaders which can help in achieving educational goals. They include digital literacy, communication, adaptability, innovation and risk-taking, education and guidance, strategy and vision. Good digital leadership requires resources, information security and staff support (Evor, 2022).

Digital leadership is very important in educational system, because digitalization will create a new normalized organizational culture with all the necessary tools that lead to the attainment of educational goals. It can also improve productivity in the school system. It can help the leader to create value in the school, it can also help to identify new opportunity and relevant innovative solutions in school

### Importance of Digital Leadership

#### Conceptual Framework



### Meaning of Leadership and Qualities of a good leader

Leadership is the process of influencing the activities and behaviour of people within an organization so that the goals of setting up the organization may be achieved. Leadership involves the relation between the leaders, the followers and the tasks of the

organization (Whawo, 1991 in Nwaham 2020).

Indeed Editorial Team (2019) Leadership is the act of guiding a team or individual to achieve a certain goal through direction and motivation. Leaders must encourage other people to take actions that can lead to goal actualization. Pratt (2017) "Leadership is the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to influence and

guide followers or other members of an organization”. Leadership is not an easy tasks, it involves decision, creating and articulating a clear vision and establishing attainable goals, then provide the followers with the skills knowledge and tools which are necessary for actualizing the stipulated goals.

Leaders have enormous task before them, hence there is need to possess some good qualities which include; knowledge, welfare of staff, self-confidence, open mindedness, availability, sociability, humility, prudence, sound health, communication skills, management skills, creative, innovative, unwillingness to take risks, courage, integrity, generosity, honesty, inspiring, compert and resilience.

### **Leadership Theories**

There are many leadership theories, these theories are classified into different categories based on the ideas each theory professes (Pratt, 2017).

- The Great man theory is of the opinion that traits of leadership are intrinsic. (Leaders are born and not made) Those who were born to be leaders were believed to have important physical and intellectual traits, which make them to be superior personalities than any other persons around them. (Nwaham, 2020).
- Another group is the Trait Theory, which dates on the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and also centres on the idea that some people are born with the trait that make them great leaders, such as integrity and self-confidence.
- The third category is the situational leadership theory. This is where the leadership style is adjusted based on the readiness or skill level of followers in a given situation.
- Contingency Theory: This is an organizational theory that claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. Contingent leaders are flexible in choosing and adapting to succinct strategies to suit change in situation of a particular period in the time in the running of the organization (Wikipedia, 2023).
- Transactional Leadership Theory: Transactional leadership involves motivating and direction followers primarily through appealing to their own self-interest. The power of transactional leaders comes from their formal authority and responsibility in the organization. The leader believes in motivating through

a system of rewards and punishment.

Kendra (2022) states that “Leadership theories seek to explain how and why certain people become leaders, such theories often focus on the characteristics of leaders, but some attempt to identify the behaviours that people can adopt to improve their own leadership abilities in different situations. These theories include: Great Man” theories, Trait Theories, Contingency Theories, Situational Theories, Behavioural Theories, Participative Theories, Management Theories, Relationship Theories and Transformations Theories.

Karl (2020) “to fully understand where we are on our leadership journey, it is important to see how far we have come in our thinking about leadership. He there listed 10 of most common leadership theories: the Great Man theory (1840s) the Trait theory leadership (1930s – 1940s), the skill theory of leadership (1940s – 1950s), the style theories of leadership (1940s – 1950s), the situational leadership theory (1960s), transactional leadership theory (1970s), leader-member exchange theory (1970s) and servant leadership theory (1970s).

## LEADERSHIP STYLES IN MANAGEMENT

Leaders abound in every organization, thus, a leader is a person that affects a group of people in organization towards the attainment of stipulated goal. Leadership styles are methods/procedures which the leader adopts to provide direction, implement plans and motivate people. There are many leadership styles which will result in different impact to organization. The leader is at freedom or liberty to choose the most effective approach of leadership styles depending on situation.

Goleman (2021) listed and explain the following leadership styles. “Transactional leadership, Autocratic leadership, Transformational leadership, Servant leadership, Charismatic leadership, Democratic leadership or Participative leadership, Laissez-faire leadership and Bureaucratic leadership”.

- **Transactional Leadership:** These leadership is referred to as managerial leadership and it is a leadership style which relies on reward and punishments.
- **Autocratic Leadership:** Under the autocratic leadership styles, all decision-making powers are centralized in leader. Autocratic leadership is an extreme form of transactional leadership,

where a leader exerts high levels of power over his/her employees or team members.

- **Transformational Leadership:** Transformational leadership is a leadership style that is defined as leadership that creates valuable and positive change in the followers. A transformational leader focuses on transformation
- **Laissez-Faire Leadership:** This is also called delegate leadership. It focuses on delegating initiative to team members. The leader has no authority over the subordinates. There is no defined code of regulation, hence there is no way of determining whether someone is wrong or right in a given activity. The productivity of the organization operating this type of leadership styles is bound to be low.
- **Democratic/Participative Leadership:** This is characterized by the sharing of ideas and respect for every person in the organization. This requires leaders to be inclusive, utilize good communication skills and responsibility as shared.

## RATIONALE FOR LEADERSHIP

Leadership training is necessary to both employer and employee. So by promoting the employee to leadership roles means he/she has the abilities, work ethic and professional drive to succeed. Cabs (2015) enumerated the following reasons your business/organization needs leadership training: increase productivity, increase employee engagement and reduce staff turnover, nurture future leaders, improve their managerial skills and abilities, improve risk management, achieve better project leadership, improve corporate culture, effectively manage change, build effective work teams and enable decision-making. Brown (2021) states that “collaborative leadership is the most positive and productive way to function” Collaboration means to “to work together”. This happens when members of the organization super-ordinate and subordinate recognize the value to jointly examine their challenges, seeking out each leader’s opinion, and then making decisions based on the informed consensus of the entire group. “Collaborative leadership creates a strong alchemy in groups, fostering a sense of unity whereby they join hands and tackle their challenges as a team”

Indeed Editorial Team (2022) leadership is important for the success of an organization because it provides guidance, purpose, and helps others understand the long-term strategies and goals of a business. They listed the following as reasons to value effective

leadership:- vision, communication, decision making, passion, guidance, commitment, integrity, confidence, morale, growth and co-ordination.

Other importance of leadership includes:

- **Provision of Guidance:** It beholds the leader to grant the subordinates good leadership by properly guiding them towards to actualization of the organizational goals.
- **Encouragement of creativity:** Creativity and innovativeness are keys to the success of every organization.
- **Motivation:** The leader must strive to motivate the subordinate to boost their productivity
- **Communication Skills:** The leader needs to coordinate the work of the subordinates through effective communication channels and good communication skills
- **Fostering Good Values:** A good leader must lead by example. He must be respectful, humble, high integrity among others to foster good values among the subordinates.
- **Resolution of conflict:** An effective and

productive leader should be able to manage conflicts in the organization. This can be done by avoiding conflict, accommodation of other and by collaborating with the subordinates

### Meaning of Motivation and Types

Every organization has task that must be done by the workers. These works need morale boosting through motivation to enhance productivity. Motivation is the stimulation of individuals to actions towards accomplishment of the desired goals. The psychological factors that stimulate individuals include; desires to fund, success, recognition, job-satisfaction, team work among others. MBA knowledge Base (2021) sees motivation as “stimulating, inspiring and inducing the employees to perform to their best capacity”. It is the willingness of the worker to do work without being forced.

Motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Motivation is intrinsic when tasks are willingly and interestingly carried out and extrinsic when external rewards are given or expected. Intrinsic motivation is of more benefit than the extrinsic motivation. Motivation is actually an important factor that encourage worker to put in their best in terms of performance and helps in improving productivity in the organization. Every administrator should encourage positive motivation than negative motivation because negative motivation will definitely

reduce the output of the workers, while positive motivation will increase the output of the employees. Odor (1995) in Nwaham (2020) motivation is the force or condition within the organization, that impels workers to act willingly for the progress of the organization. While Hoy and Miskel (1987) defines motivation as the complex forces, drives, needs, tension, states or other mechanisms that start and maintain voluntary activity directed towards the achievement of personal goals.

### Theories of Motivation

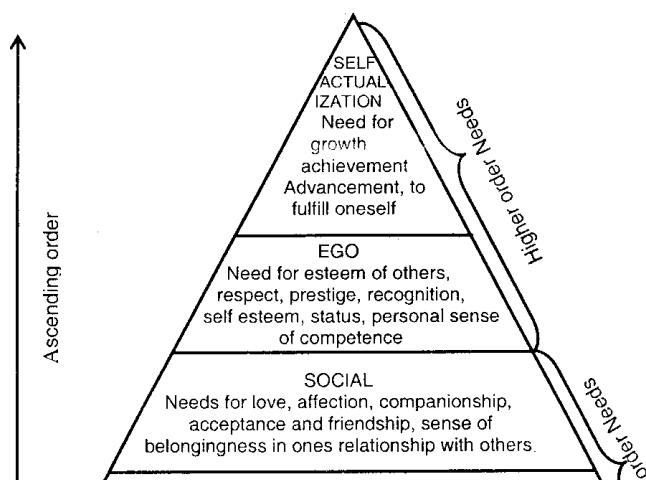
#### Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs

The most recognized content theory of motivation is that of Abraham Maslow, who explained motivation through the satisfaction of needs arranged in a hierarchical order. As satisfied needs do not motivate, it is the dissatisfaction that moves us in the direction of fulfillment.

Needs are conditions within the individual that are essential and necessary for the maintenance of life

and the nurturance of growth and well-being. Hunger and thirst exemplify two biological needs that arise from the body's requirement for food and water. These are required nutrients for the maintenance of life.

Competence and belongingness exemplify two psychological needs that arise from the self-requirement for environmental mastery and warm interpersonal relationships. These are required nutrients for growth and well-being. Needs serve the organism, and they do so by: Generating wants' desires and strivings that motivates whatever behaviours are necessary for the maintenance of life and the promotion of growth and well-being and generation a deep sense of need satisfaction. From Maslow's legacy is the order of needs progressing in the ever-increasing complexity, starting with basic physiological and psychological needs and ending with the need for self-actualization. While basic needs are experienced as a sense of deficiency, the higher needs are experienced more in terms of the need for growth and fulfillment.





### **Reinforcement Theory**

The most well-known process theory of motivation is the reinforcement theory which focused on the consequences of human behaviour as a motivating factor. Based on skinner's operant conditioning theory, it identifies positive reinforcement as promoters that increased the possibility of the desired behaviour's repetition; praise, appreciation, a good grade, trophy, money, promotion, or any other reward (Gordan, 1987).

It distinguished positive reinforcement from negative reinforcement and punishment, where the former gives a person only what they need in exchange for desired behaviour, and the latter tries to stop the undesired behaviour by inflicting unwanted consequences.

### **How Digital Leadership inspires staff productivity**

The digital age is supposed to inspire leadership based on culture, communication, technology and data. Digital leadership can help staff perform better at their assigned duties in the following ways; (Holton, 2022). It inspires effective communication: Ineffective communication is one of the biggest problems in the work place this is because lack understanding between the various departments. Social media tools have help to reduce communication gaps in the system. Digital leadership fosters the development of a solid school system vision. It helps the leaders to take decision that will positively affect the school system. It encourages digital literacy. Digital leadership encourages employees to adopt new technology from top-down. If the leadership is

already acquainted with the technology and use it regularly, then employees will have an easier time adapting to the technologies. It helps to develop the ability to delegate. The leaders have the opportunity to delegate power and responsibilities to the subordinate who perform the duties on his behalf. Decision that affect employees are based on performance: To increase employee productivity, every decision should be a collaborative process. The first step is to prepare a plan. To do so, you need to measure every employee's current productivity. This will serve as a baseline to ensure that the strategies you follow have a positive impact on performance. It encourages leadership to provide feedback: A 'thank you' or 'good job' can go a long way towards promoting employees morale and performance. When people are appreciated this can empower them to do more work

### **Leadership and Motivation**

Leadership and motivation are widely used terminologies in the management of people. The leader motivates the workers to spur them to be more productive. Motivation is a goal-oriented characteristic that enables individuals attain their goals. It makes an individual to work hard in order to achieve his/her goals. There is need for the leader to have the right leadership traits which can influence the subordinate. The welfare and development of the workers should be paramount to the leader because the staff can only put their best when they are comfortable in the organization. The leader has the needs of the

organization and the staff at heart. The following guidelines can help both the leader and the subordinate harmonise and match the subordinate needs with the organizational needs, appreciate and rewards, being a role model, encouraging individuals, developing moral and team spirit, a leader should step into the shoes of the subordinates, and a meaningful and challenging job accomplished inculcates a sense of achievement among employees. The executive must make their employees feel they are performing an important task and become an efficient and effective superordinate, you must be self-motivated (Juneja, 2015).

### **The impact of Digitalization and Technology on Leadership**

Educational systems are adapting to changes due to the increasing necessity of digital technologies. The introduction of digital technology has enhanced transparency and accountability across all levels of the educational system, leaders, especially those in high levels are responsible for assisting their employees adapt the changes in digital transformation (Marlia, 2020).

The leaders must create enabling environment which include a positive, connected and highly collaborative work environment that does not leave the employees behind in terms of participation in digital technology. The leader must encourage the employees to adapt and accept totally the global trend in digital technology whose relevance are inevitable.

## Conclusion

Effective digital leadership positively influences the productivity of the employees directly and indirectly through the intrinsic motivation. The type of leadership style adopted by the leader also affects the disposability and commitment of the employees. The transactional, transformational and democratic leadership of the leader, motivate, and create behaviour that is important in fostering the potential for creativity and innovativeness. So motivation and job satisfaction play major roles in encouraging employee's creative behaviour.

Digital leaders use digital technologies to create value, shape, strategy and improve the performance of employees. It beholds on the digital leader to use the digital skills, to motivate the employees who will invariably spur the employees to perform diligently and productively. And digital and transformational leadership strategies can be collaborated to produce positive change in the school system through the motivation of the employees. Therefore, it is important to embrace and incorporate digital leadership regardless of the leaders roles, duties, status, or experience because it will enhance employees motivation and increase their productivity.

## Recommendations

Based on the discourse, the following recommendations are made:

- The leaders should encourage digitalization in the school system
- The employees should be trained to acquire digital technology skills
- Motivation is inevitable to increase the productivity of the employees
- Good leadership styles should be adopted by the leader to create conducive environment.
- The leaders should not create communication gap in the organization

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