Renee Burrell
April 10, 2013
DEPM604

Assignment #3

Situational Leadership's Relevance to e-Learning

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) suggest that leadership effectiveness is dependent on degrees of task orientation, relationship orientation and their association with the followers' maturity level (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). Situational Leadership Theory is relevant to the current state of e-learning because it can be used as a tool for analysis**.** Participants in online learning include various age groups, educational aptitudes, economic, social and cultural backgrounds. Gauging the maturity level of the multifaceted e-learning community can be problematic. Graeff argues that there is difficulty in predicting and quantifying maturity. Maturity is not quantitative therefore; the leader should use its own perspective of maturity (Graeff, 1983). As such, the theory is not always accurate. However, the use of analytics and student assessments are helpful in predicting elements within the Situational Leadership Theory.

Why the Situational Leadership Theory

At the core of e-learning is the ongoing transformation of pedagogy and technology. E-learning has evolved from the structural constraints of independent study to collaborative interactive learning activities. Situational leaders will consider the psychological, social, and cultural period in which e-learning takes place. We live in a society where teaching and learning is an industrialized commodity. E-learning must answer the call of supply and demand. E-learning represents a shift in pedagogy that must appeal to the learner, teacher, technology, and economy. E-learning cannot be confined to one type of pedagogy or technology, it is an evolving methodology.

Renee Burrell
April 10, 2013
DEPM604

Similarly, situational leadership has an aspect of evolution that can be instrumental in e-learning. Educational leaders face changing environments such as global competition, fluctuation in customer demand, shifts in organizational structure, expanding faculty population and changing technology (Tipple, 2010). These changing environments require new outlooks on pedagogy, technology, skill sets, and needs assessment. Educational leaders (executives, administrators, and faculty) can analyze and then apply the situational leadership style to efficiently incorporate the desires of the subordinates with the changing environments.

Most Salient Features

The most significant feature of situational leadership is flexibility. Within this leadership style, one has the freedom to adapt other leadership styles. E-learning teachers and learners are comprised of a variety of cultures, experience, gender, and ages. Different methods of interaction produce favorable outcomes. Distance education requires the same flexible approach that is necessary in a non-distance education context (Vecchio, 1987). For example, some interactions may be best suited for a transformational style that is supportive and empowering. Transformative leaders have confidence in the subordinates' level of maturity and can lead by example. On the other hand, in executive decision-making, a directive approach that utilizes specified instruction and monitoring may be necessary. There is no best management style however; there is a leadership style that might best conform to a particular situation (Sims, Faraj & Yun 2009). The leaders' perspective of the subordinates' competence and commitment to the tasks is the main factor in determining which leadership style is best.

Functions of Situational Leadership

Over the span of history, e-learning pedagogy and technology have transformed. Education leaders use the situational leadership style to address the changing needs of learners.

Renee Burrell
April 10, 2013
DEPM604

Anderson and Dron describe the transformation of distance education pedagogy in terms of generations. The first generation was by postal correspondence; followed by television, radio, and film production; and the third-generation introduced interactive technologies: audio, text, video, web and immersive conferencing (Anderson, & Dron, 2011). In line with this concept, as the learners change throughout generations, situational leaders' adapted to new pedagogy and emerging technology. The situational leaders will assess and reassess the learning environment to diagnosis the state of learners.

Currently, technology has connected with learning to form a new pedagogy for the network era known as connectivity. Anderson and Dron, assert that the "connectivist pedagogy stresses the development of social presence and social capital through the creation and sustenance of networks of current and past learners and of those with knowledge relevant to the learning goals" (Anderson, & Dron, 2011). The situational leader will encourage social network presence, advocate for new technology, and establish policy and procedures to implement change within their organization. Anderson describes the relationship between pedagogy and distance education as being a dance between the pedagogy and the technology. According to Anderson, technology provides the beat and the pedagogy gives the moves – and without either one of them, you do not have much of a dance (Anderson, 2011). Situational leaders will continue the dance between pedagogy and technology as the songs change with the generations.

Situational Leadership in Practice: Copperfield University

Copperfield University faculty members, hesitant to teach online and use technology often have a strong attachment to personal teaching objectives. The majority do not want to make the effort to learn technology or apply new pedagogy. Factors prohibiting their participation in e-learning include fear of technology, lack of time, and resistance to training. However, because of

Renee Burrell
April 10, 2013
DEPM604
the demand for online learning, and the emergence of technologies, faculty must make the

transition to e-learning.

The institutional leaders adopted the situational leadership style to facilitate this

transition. A committee (1) analyzed the institutions capacity to implement change, (2) assessed

the concerns of faculty and students, and (3) developed a process to converge faculty into the

online environment. A survey was distributed to faculty requesting feedback on topics such as

training preferences, online course selection, online course content, faculty interest, or concerns

related to the online environment. Additionally, the use of analytics provided data on student

retention, student completion of courses, and student use of Blackboard Learn. Upon review of

the information gathered, it was determined (1) faculty should be made aware of the e-learning

mandate within the strategic plan, (2) students have a strong preference for e-learning, and (3)

information technology will launch a campaign to promote existing e-learning initiatives. The

committee recommended a dual approach to acclimate faculty to the e-learning environment.

Directive Approach

In the directive approach, the leader dictates to the subordinate staff expectations and

instructions on how to perform the expected tasks. The strategic plan mandates specific e-

learning initiatives that include online environment training, redesigning of course content, and

implementation of online programs. The chairperson of each academic division is responsible for

providing strong leadership by establishing training requirements, and minimum online course

offerings for all faculty members.

Transactional Approach

Transactional leadership rewards compliance with incentives. The transactional approach

served to motivate faculty to explore the benefits of e-learning. Education leaders awarded

Renee Burrell
April 10, 2013
DEPM604

incentives such as hardware and software upgrades, and laptop programs to encourage faculty

support and participation.

Impact

Copperfield University leaders used the task-relationship factors of situational leadership

to determine imposing the strategic plan increase e-learning participation. E-learning technology

is being utilized by faculty, and new initiatives are being developed. Faculty members record

lectures, use PowerPoint with ease, use interactive whiteboards, and play multimedia recordings.

Students and faculty benefit from classrooms that have been transformed into active and

engaging e-learning environments. Teaching and learning are supported through Blackboard

Learn, Tegrity, and mobile apps. Furthermore, leaders are accountable for the e-learning

mandates in the strategic plan. There is a strong governance structure between Information

Technology Division, Academic Affairs and the Faculty Information Technology Committee

committed to providing technical support, training, and incentives to support the embracing of

technology. The flexibility of situational leadership to incorporate directive and transactional

leadership resulted in increased enthusiasm and participation in e-learning.

Renee Burrell
April 10, 2013
DEPM604

<div align="center">References</div>

Anderson, T. (2011, November). *The third wave of distance education*. [Online video].

    Edmonton, AB, Canada. Available from http://vimeo.com/32596395 (Transcript:

    http://www.box.com/s/e8ylcfx3h6fjv4qim3px)

Anderson, T., & Dron, J. (2011). Three generations of distance education pedagogy.

    International Review of Research in Online and Distance Learning (IRRODL), 12(3), 80-

    97. Retrieved from http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/890

Graeff, C. L. (1983). The Situational leadership theory: A critical view. *Academy Of*

    Management Review, *8*(2), 285-291. doi:10.5465/AMR.1983.4284738

Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. (1969). Life-cycle theory of leadership. *Training and Developing*

    Journal, 23, 26-34. doi: 10.1023/A:1020129327695

Sims, H. P., Faraj, S., & Yun, S. (2009). When should a leader be directive or empowering? How

    to develop your own situational theory of leadership. *Business Horizons*, *52*(2), 149-158.

    doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2008.10.002

Tipple, R. (2010). Effective leadership of online adjunct faculty. *Online Journal Of Distance*

    Learning Administration, *13*(1). Retrieved from http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/

Vecchio, R. P. (1987). Situational leadership theory: An examination of a prescriptive theory.

    Journal Of Applied Psychology, *72*(3), 444-451. Retrieved from http://jap.physiology.org