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Developing 21st-Century Educational Leadership Skills for Effective University**Employees' Management**

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Abstract

Possessing relevant educational leadership skills is the requirement for effective and efficient service delivery in managing the members of staff on the university payroll. Otherwise, unmanageable crisis becomes inevitable. Thus, this paper critically examined cultivating 21st century educational leadership skills in managing university employees. The scope of the study constitutes the university employees. Basic and descriptive survey research designs with secondary data were employed for the study. Transformational leadership theory was adopted as the framework to guide the study. The basic concepts and variables are defined with the review of relevant literature. Also explained are the types of leadership styles, empirical studies and formulation of a conceptual framework to explain the main variables of the study. It was discovered that cultivating 21st century educational leadership skills is the best mechanism to manage university employees for effective service delivery. Thus, the paper recommended that university administrators should embrace the 21st century educational leadership skills such as visionary thinking, collaborative mind-set, digital literacy, cultural competence, adaptive leadership and innovative problem-solving. By cultivating these skills, it is believed that educational leaders can effectively navigate the complexities of the 21st-century education and create innovative and student-centred learning environments.

Keywords: Cultivation, 21st century, educational leadership skills, management, university employees

Developing 21st-Century Educational Leadership Skills for Effective University Employees' Management

The world is rapidly and systematically changing. Hence, leaders must adapt to the changes. Adapting the 21st century educational leadership skills in managing university employees is panacea to all the challenges that confront the university system. A competent leader in the twenty-first century must be well-educated, constantly considering the past, draws lessons from it, guides the present, and makes predictions about the future in order to prepare the ground and address unforeseen issues. Akinbode and Al-Shusumi (2018) explained that the ability of any institution or organization to effectively oversee its operations is largely dependent on the leadership in charge. Being a leader is a difficult task that requires specific training and current abilities to effectively manage the institution's non-human and human resources.

Reyes, Reyes and Selorio (2023) further noted that leaders play a critical role in providing guidance, fostering a positive school climate, supporting and enhancing teachers' performance and commitment and preparing students for success and high performance, especially when the educational system faces numerous challenges due to societal changes and complexity.

Without a doubt, leadership is essential to guiding schools into the twenty-first century. In order for schools to become knowledge-based organizations, their leaders must be forward-thinking, foster an atmosphere that is friendly to the digital age, make sure that instructors are appropriately prepared, encouraged, and supported, and that the entire school climate is conducive to learning (Chia, 2009). According to Dedy, Sit, and Aan (2019), institutional legitimacy for higher education must be complete and thorough. High social accountability, operational efficiency, the development of competent graduates, and transparent, standard-compliant internal management are all requirements that the system must achieve. The difficulties and phenomena of the twenty-first century have an impact on human characters.

The 21st century university employees have access to more information than the last decades as a result of unparalleled access to technology. With all the materials at their disposal, workers can educate themselves on nearly anything they wish to know and borrow knowledge

from their colleagues in other institutions without any restraint. Internet facilities has enabled employees to instantly interact with others across the world. Thus, they have more and more acquaintances around the world. Guzmán, Muschard, Gerolamo, Kohl and Rozenfeld (2020) rightly observed that leaders in the current world need to adapt or improve their abilities in order to react, predict changes and trends in the market, make wise business decisions, and change tactics when technology and market situations take an unforeseen turn. However, these leaders need to get ready by maintaining their knowledge base, improving their abilities, and developing a deeper understanding of the qualities that can increase their efficacy in a changing setting.

In order to adapt schools to the twenty-first century and maintain the goal of developing both workers and students who are lifelong learners, school leadership needs to have a clear vision. The 21st century is characterized by unpredictability, innovation and rapid changes. Leaders need to be flexible and nimble, viewing change as a chance for personal development rather than a danger that must be resisted. Leaders that are flexible foster a culture of learning, support experimentation, and are prepared to modify plans in order to take advantage of new developments.

As we move into the new millennium, changes occur rapidly, and our world is becoming more complex. Nowadays, educational leaders face countless economic, political, social, and technological challenges in the everyday realities of the educational system. To this effect, leadership practices employed yesterday may no longer be appropriate today, and leadership skills possessed yesterday by educational leaders may no longer be enough today (Reyes, Reyes and Selorio, 2023: p60)

In general, there has been a movement in the style of leadership from an authoritarian, top-down approach to one that is more collaborative, empowering, and growth-oriented. Leaders of today understand that the abilities, backgrounds and drive of their workforce are priceless resources that may significantly improve any business.

In order to lead in the twenty-first century, a person must implement planned change, have a clear vision and mission, exert strong influence on others to achieve shared objectives, and be

able to inspire colleagues in higher education institutions. The 21st century organization requires a "21st century education program," and all education leaders, regardless of level, must acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to persuade all stakeholders to embrace 21st century learning as well as a methodology for educating students (candidates for leadership positions) using 21st century knowledge and abilities. It occurs because students use social media, information technology, and the internet to always interact with individuals globally, regardless of location in the world they live. As a result, the globalization of politics, education, and the real dynamics of international business makes the work of a manager and leader in a 21st-century corporation more complex (Dedy, Sit & Aan, 2019).

Management

According to Huang (2023), management can be classified to three levels: Top-Level Management (for Strategic decision-making), Middle-Level Management (Heads of Departments to implement strategies) and Lower-Level Management (who oversee daily operations).

Thus, management constitute the process of organizing, coordinating, regulating, motivating, inspiring, leading, directing, evaluating and organizing resources in order to accomplish particular goals and objectives with the commensurate day-to-day activities. Ensuring maximum efficiency, productivity and effectiveness requires directing and coordinating human, financial, technological and physical resources. Setting goals, determining resources, and formulating plans are all parts of management. In management, organizing is the process of setting up assignments, distributing resources, and designating roles. In addition, management involves inspiring, guiding, and persuading staff members to meet objectives. Management is monitoring performance, identifying deviations, and taking corrective action (Okes, 2019 & Mahapatro, 2021).

Figure 1*The paradigm-shifting of future education*

Source: Frydenberg and Andone (2011) in Dedy, Sit and Aan (2019). Analysis of 21st-century leadership in higher education management.

Figure 1 explains that higher education is experiencing a paradigm shift as we move from terminal learning to lifelong learning, from science-focused learning to holistic learning, from the image of a confrontational lecturer-student relationship to a partnership relationship, from the emphasis of the lecturer on scholastic knowledge (academic) to the emphasis on the balance of value education focus, from lecturer isolation performance to teamwork performance, and from exclusive competency focus to teamwork orientation.

In the current digital age, higher education must address global issues in addition to all of Indonesia's difficulties in order to remain competitive. The quantity of buildings, facilities, instructors, and students does not determine the worth of a higher education benefit. The most important factor is that higher education can generate highly competent and competitive human resources on a national or international scale [Frydenberg & Andone (2011) in Dedy, Sit & Aan (2019)].

The university management should be receptive to innovative ideas from the members of staff who are at the grassroots. Leaders will learn more if they are open to new ideas. No one can predict when or where the next big idea will originate, thus it is critical for modern leaders to be

open to all fresh perspectives. It's possible that there are many brilliant ideas in the thoughts of those around us just waiting to be discovered. A leader that is open to fresh perspectives will be able to look for other points of view (Reyes, Reyes & Selorio, 2023).

In addition, leaders should be creative, proactive and ever ready to take commensurate actions to meet any emergency. Chia (2009) stressed that to ensure that students become lifelong learners who actively participate in their education, school leadership needs to have a forward-thinking vision. They also need to make sure that students feel emotionally connected to the material they study, which will inspire them to pursue independent learning. Gao, Zhao, Xu, and Ma (2021) rightly observed that innovation and organizational competitive advantage are both based on creativity, an intangible resource. Consequently, in a demanding and competitive environment, innovation is crucial to the basis and sustainability of a company.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine:

1. The 21st century education;
2. The 21st century educational leadership skills; and
3. Management of university employees in the 21st century.

Significance of the Study

This paper examined cultivating the 21st century educational leadership skills in managing university employees. Particularly, cultivating 21st-century educational leadership skills is crucial for managing university employees effectively. The findings of this study will be helpful to the stakeholders in universities, especially the university management, Directors, Deans and Heads of Department/Units. Also, the leaders of educational agencies (such as NUC, JAMB, NECO, WAEC, among others) will find the recommendations of this paper useful to enhance their service deliveries. In addition, this paper will be useful to researchers during their findings; particularly on educational leadership skills and management of employees in universities.

Besides, the study will enhance educational leaders to adapt to change and be equipped to navigate rapid changes in technology, curriculum and students' needs. Specifically, the study will

motivate the leaders in the aspects of creativity, experimentation and calculated risk-taking to drive institutional progress.

Collaboration and teamwork constitute another area through which the university leadership will be assisted to develop skills to build and lead high-performing teams, promote cross-functional collaboration and facilitate open communication. Most especially, the findings of this paper will serve as a guide in technology integration by which the leaders will be able to leverage technology to enhance staff management, teaching, learning and institutional operations with a few to developing an understanding of global trends, challenges and opportunities in higher education.

Theoretical framework

Basically, there are three types of Management theories which are: Classical Management Theory, Behavioural Management Theory and Modern Management Theory. However, Modern Management Theory is adopted to guide this study. Henry Fayol was the father of Management theory. During the height of the French Industrial Revolution, he began his career as an engineer at the *Compagnie de Commentry-Fourchambault-Decazeville* mining firm and worked his way up to become a manager. He oversaw the struggling company's success.

The approach to management taken by modern management theory strikes a compromise between humanistic psychology and scientific technique. It makes decisions, optimizes processes, and measures performance using statistical analysis and developing technology. It also places a high importance on a positive workplace culture and individual job satisfaction.

Compared to its predecessors, this category of theories is more comprehensive and adaptable. Human bias can be eliminated from data-driven decisions while still taking into account employee happiness and health metrics. Moreover, contemporary management theory does not advocate for a single, overarching philosophy to govern management; rather, it empowers companies to respond locally to complicated, dynamic circumstances.

However, Management Theory has been criticised for the following shortcomings: The gap between theoretical flexibility and actual agility; the prioritization of information that can be

expensive, time-consuming, and difficult to obtain; and the propensity of some strains to be descriptive rather than prescriptive.

Three classifications of Management Theory

Managers are guided by a set of ideas and principles known as management theories when it comes to managing people, information, processes, and other tasks in the workplace. The ideas try to explain how managers might use tactics to accomplish organizational objectives. To best fit their management style and corporate culture, leaders might combine or select from a variety of management theories such as classical, behavioural or modern management theories as opined by Indeed Editorial Team (2024):

1. **Classical Management Theories** emphasise productivity maximization through external rewards and execution.
2. **Behavioural Management Theories** stipulate that the workplace is a social setting. The philosophy aims to develop human potential by encouraging teamwork and skill development.
3. **Modern Management Theories** expand the two earlier theories, which also integrate contemporary scientific methodologies and thought processes. It acknowledges diversity and acknowledges that various people in various contexts require various tools.

However, Fredrick (2017) concentrated on three elements that influence the effectiveness of managers in organisations:

1. **The Task structure:** How well defined is the job?
2. **Leader-member relations:** How well does the leader work with team members?
3. **Leader position power:** How much authority does the leader have? To what extent can they distribute punishments and rewards?

Managers can be categorized based on their styles as task-oriented and people-oriented, respectively.

- a. Managers that are task-oriented set up teams to complete tasks efficiently and on time. Managers that prioritize people are adept at resolving conflicts within the team, fostering connections, and encouraging collaboration.

- b. People-oriented leaders perform better in more moderate configurations, but task-oriented leaders flourish in both extremely favourable and negative circumstances.

Fiedler created the least-preferred co-worker (LPC) scale, a popular management tool, to assist leaders in identifying their ideal working style. You are asked to rate the co-worker you find most difficult to work with on the scale. On the LPC scale, managers who prioritize relationships typically have higher scores than managers who prioritize tasks.

The Relevant of Modern Management Theory to the Current Study

The Modern Management Theory is relevant to the current study in the following ways:

1. Developing 21st-century educational leadership skills for effective university employee management
2. It makes decisions, optimizes processes and measures performance using statistical analysis and developing technology.
3. It places a high importance on a positive workplace culture and individual job satisfaction.
4. It helps organisations to respond appropriately to complicated and dynamic circumstances.
5. When it comes to managing people, managers are guided by information, processes, and other tasks in the workplace. The ideas try to explain how managers might use tactics to accomplish organizational objectives.
6. To best fit their management style and corporate culture, leaders might combine or select from a variety of management theories such as classical, behavioural or modern management.
7. It emphasises productivity maximization through external rewards and execution.
8. It stipulates that the workplace is a social setting.
9. The philosophy aims to develop human potential by encouraging teamwork and skill development.
10. It acknowledges diversity and acknowledges that various people in various contexts require various tools.

14 Principles of Management - By Henry Fayol

The top-down perspective of an organization is reflected in Henry Fayol's 14 management principles, which assist managers in maximizing employees' performance and smoothly operating the organisation (Adam & Suleiman, 2018). These 14 principles are:

1. **Division of work:** The premise behind the first Henry Fayol management principle is that employees would become more proficient and efficient at a task if they are assigned one. This contrasts with a multi-tasking culture, where workers are assigned numerous tasks to complete simultaneously. In the long run, this will enable them to become more proficient, effective and productive.

2. **Authority:** According to this principle, a manager must possess the required power to make sure that his directives are followed by the staff. In the absence of power, managers would be unable to complete any tasks. However, this power needs to be accompanied by accountability. It is crucial to remember that authority and responsibility need to be balanced; a manager who has more authority than responsibilities is going to be irritated.

3. **Discipline:** Discipline is necessary for any company to function well. Managers must create a climate of mutual respect if they want disciplined workers. Everybody should adhere to the structures, ideas, and regulations that the organization has in place. In every group, it should be unacceptable to break the rules or be lazy. To do this, competent monitoring and unbiased judgment are required.

4. **Unity of command:** According to this notion, the organisation's line of command should be obvious. The personnel ought to understand whose directions they are to obey. An employee should only take commands from one leader at a time. The presence of multiple managers in an employee's workplace poses a risk to authority, discipline and stability.

5. **Unity of direction:** Tasks should be arranged such that workers cooperate to achieve a common goal while following a single plan and managing a single team.

6. **Collective interest over individual interest:** Tasks should be arranged such that workers cooperate to achieve a common goal while following a single plan and managing a single team.

For instance, one manager should use a single strategy for all marketing operations if he has a variety of marketing activities, such as budgeting, sales promotion or advertising. The many tasks can be divided up for several sub-managers, but they should all be directed by one primary person who is in control of everything to achieve a single goal.

7. **Remuneration:** Paying workers fairly for their labour is important. Any company that underpays its employees will find it difficult to retain and inspire top talent. There should be both monetary and non-monetary incentives included in this compensation. To further inspire workers, a system for rewarding excellent work should be established.

8. **Centralization:** The term "centralization" describes a top-down management style and the consolidation of power in the hands of the ruling class. Authority is dispersed among all management levels in decentralization.

9. **Scalar chain:** A scalar chain is an unbroken line of communication between subordinates and superiors. Workers should be aware of their position within the organizational structure and who to contact in the chain of command. Creating an organizational chart will assist staff members to easily understand the structure in order to put this into practice at work.

10. **Order:** Resources should be allocated in an orderly manner at the appropriate time and location. This guarantees the appropriate and methodical utilization of resources. Any of these resources that are misplaced will result in abuse and chaos within the company.

11. **Equity:** A mix of justice and kindness is equity. Managers ought to treat everyone under their supervision with justice and kindness' as a result employees become more devoted and loyal.

12. **Stability of tenure of personnel:** According to this theory, a company should try to reduce employees' churn while increasing productivity. It is unrealistic to expect a new hire to immediately fit in with the organization's culture. For them to become effective, they must be given adequate time to become used to their new roles. Job security should be guaranteed to both new and existing staff members since volatility can result in inefficiencies.

13. **Initiative:** Initiative should be promoted among all employees. Employees feel valued and inspired when they are given the freedom to choose how best to accomplish their jobs. Employers

must to pay attention to the issues raised by their staff members and support them in creating and implementing improvement strategies.

14. **Esprit de corps:** This embodies a "Team Spirit," which requires management to work toward fostering cooperation, solidarity, and morale among the staff members. Within the organisation, a strong sense of teamwork is really beneficial. Employees that are content and driven are more likely to be effective and productive. Using the phrase "We" rather than "I" while talking about the new strategy for hitting the goals for the upcoming month, for example, fosters a sense of teamwork within the group.

Effective management is crucial for organizational success because it can assist the managers to make informed decisions that are result oriented.

Education in the 21st century

The capacity to lead in the face of greater complexity and ambiguity; to lead through influence; to manage remotely; to oversee a workforce that consists of both humans and machines; and to lead more swiftly, 21st Century leaders cultivates an inclusive and service-oriented culture while preparing and empowering young talent for leadership roles. Dedy, Sit and Aan (2019) suggested that the 21st century higher education system should possess the following characteristics:

1. University student's need, national priority and economic development.
2. Effective structuring to gives a chance for all citizens to develop their lifelong potency and contributes to society, nation and state.
3. It is supported by the sufficient fund, so it is possible to innovate and achieve excellence.
4. Conducting research which can support national development.
5. Access in developing and implementing technology
6. A role as a moral power in realizing democratic civil society.

The Challenges of Higher Education in the 21st Century

Specifically, higher education in Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges which are not limited to the following: insecurity, misappropriation of funds, Bad leadership, strike actions, brain-drain, corruption, inadequate funding, shortage of academic staff, poor research, favouritism and

nepotism, tribalism, inadequate infrastructural facilities, political interference, power epileptic, among others. Bell and Dobson (2006) and Dedy, Sit and Aan (2019) substantiated that the higher education in the 21 century faces a lot of challenges at various levels of institutional, national and international.

In the face of constant change and challenges brought about by globalization, higher education leaders must adapt to new challenges that arise every century. Presently, leaders must act differently as they must acquire knowledge and practical skills, that are critical in the knowledge-driven 21st-century economy.

In the twenty-first century, management of staff members has grown to be a significant undertaking and a demanding trend that calls for strong and comprehensive leadership abilities. It is crucial to mention that leadership abilities are needed in every area of humankind in order to successfully and efficiently manage the human resources in the organization notably the university personnel. The institutional sector's critical need for educational leadership since it benefits all parties involved—principals, instructors, students, and other stakeholders—that is, employees. The author restates that it supports and enhances any institution's educational program. It has an impact on and determines people's lifestyles, career choices, health decisions, and social contributions, which extends beyond the classroom.

The lopsidedness that exists in the majority of our educational institutions today must be transformed and changed, and this requires effective educational leadership skills. It's interesting to note that stable economies are the result of effective educational leadership, which is crucial (and what those in charge of our university today hope to achieve) in order to give the general public of a nation's citizens access to higher quality amenities, resources, and education (Nyatanga, 2024).

Furthermore, it is important to remember that there are three dimensions or domains of educational leadership that can be discussed simultaneously when talking about the successful leadership abilities required to manage university staff. According to academics, the terms "educational administration," "educational management," and, most recently, "educational

leadership" have been employed in this sector (Bush, 2011). The concept of management has been supplanted, if not completely replaced, by the vocabulary of leadership.

According to Bush (2007), the concept of management overlaps with that of leadership, a notion of great contemporary interest in most countries in the developed world. In order for schools to function effectively and meet their goals, both concepts—management and leadership—must be given equal prominence. Put another way, both are necessary to provide actionable administration of the educational system, particularly for university employees.

Those in control of affairs at a higher education institution should practice holistic leadership, providing their staff—who are also people—with competent and effective leadership through management, administration, or leadership. The authorities in charge of these universities must possess educational leadership skills in order to carry out this task. Only then will they be able to lead in their various roles and provide the university staff with the transformative leadership that they so desperately need during this challenging period for the nation's economy (Adams & Zabidi, 2017).

21st Century Education Leadership Qualities

Mamchii (2023) identified necessary qualities of effective leaders as follow:

1. **Visionary thinking** - A great educational leader has a clear vision for the future of their institution and can communicate this vision effectively to inspire and motivate others.
2. **Instructional expertise** - Leaders must have a deep understanding of curriculum design, teaching methodologies and the learning process; enabling them to guide educators and enhance students' outcomes.
3. **Empathy and emotional intelligence** - A leader with high emotional intelligence can build stronger relationships and foster a positive learning environment.
4. **Effective communication** - Effective communication quality ensures that leaders can articulate ideas, provide feedback, address concerns and maintain open channels of communication with all stakeholders.
5. **Decisiveness and problem-solving** - An educational leader must make informed

- decisions, even under pressure and possess the skills to address challenges head.
6. **Integrity and ethical leadership** -. Leaders must act with honesty, and transparency and adhere to high moral standards.
 7. **Cultural competency** - Understanding and valueing diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs and experiences are vital, especially in multi-cultural educational settings.
 8. **Collaborative spirit** - Fostering collaboration among teachers, staff, parents and the community, understanding that collective effort often yields the best results.
 9. **Continuous learner** - Leaders should be committed to their own professional development and be open to new ideas and practices.
 10. **Adaptability and resilience** - With the myriad challenges faced in education, leaders must be flexible in their approach and resilient in the face of setbacks.
 11. **Strategic planning** - Beyond day-to-day management, leaders should be skilled in long-term planning, setting clear goals, and devising strategies to achieve them.
 12. **Resource management** - Effective utilization and allocation of both human and material resources is key to the successful running of educational institutions.
 13. **Stakeholders' engagement** - Leaders must build strong relationships with all stakeholders, from students and parents to staff and the broader community, ensuring everyone's voice is heard and valued.
 14. **Innovation and creativity** - With the rapid changes in technology and pedagogy, leaders should be open to innovative approaches to teaching, learning and administrative processes.
 15. **Advocacy for equity and inclusion** - Championing the rights and needs of every student, regardless of their background, ensures that all have equal opportunities to succeed.

Types of Leadership styles

The three leadership styles examined in this study with reference to the studies of Reyes (2011) are:

1. **Autocratic leadership style:** One individual makes all the decisions and ensure employees comply willingly of through coercion. The decisions and actions made by autocratic leaders are focused only on their personal ideologies and they forbid anyone from offering suggestions or advice. This kind of leadership is typically observed in smaller, less staff-oriented companies.
2. **Democratic Leadership Style:** Team members collaborate to make decisions under the democratic leadership style otherwise known as participative leadership style. It is predicated on the ideas that every person's opinion matters and that the group, as represented by a team, is more significant than any one person.
3. **Laissez-faire leadership style:** In laissez-faire or delegated leadership, group members make decisions while leaders take a backseat. Leaders who practice laissez-faire might enhance its effectiveness by periodically providing comments and monitoring employee performance. It is important for leaders to recognize when to use this style of leadership.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-faire Leadership Styles

A. Autocratic Leadership Style

Advantages

1. It fast tracks the decision-making
2. The exclusive responsibility of the assessment and the conclusion is with the leader.
3. The leader is responsible for any abnormalities or mishap.
4. Clear communication.
5. Stability and consistency.
6. Accountability.
7. Quick response to emergencies.
8. Effective in crisis situations.

B. Democratic Leadership Style

Advantages

1. It increases productivity within the organization.
2. It allows every member to participate in decision making process.
3. Subordinates ideas are incorporated in the growth of the organization.
4. It promotes creativity among employees.
5. Organizational effectiveness.
6. Employee retention and recruitment.
7. Adaptation to changing environment.

C. Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

Advantages

- 1. It encourages personal growth.**
- 2. It encourages innovation.**
- 3. It allows for faster decision-making.**
- 4. In creative field.**
- 5. Employee autonomy.**
- 6. Innovation and creativity.**
- 7. Flexibility.**

Disadvantages

1. Other workers are not given the chance to participate in decision-making.
2. The subordinates only follow instructions given to them.
3. Subordinates are not responsible for any form of failure in policy implementation.
4. Low employee morale and motivation.
5. Reduced job satisfaction.
6. Decrease motivation and creativity.
7. Inefficient use of human resources.
8. Leader burn out and stress.

Disadvantages

1. Subordinates may not be prompt as required in executing their responsibilities.
2. Some staff may be reluctant in decision making.
3. Some ideas may not be applicable at that point.
4. It is not all team members that are cooperative.
5. Resentment among team members.
6. Slow-decision making process.
7. Lack of expertise.

Disadvantages

- 1. Lack of role clarity and direction.**
- 2. Poor involvement with the group.**
- 3. Low accountability.**
- 4. Passivity.**
5. High precision and decision-making cannot be achieved.
6. Inefficient decision-making
- 7.. Potential for chaos.

Source: Compiled by the researchers (2024).

Summary

The study examined cultivating the 21st century educational leadership skills in managing university employees. Specifically, the paper delved into inclusion, equity and diversity among staff members in university administration. A strong emphasis is placed on work-life balance, professional development, mental health support and the well-being of university personnel. Also examined include open communication, shared decision-making, collaborative leadership and teamwork participation. The paper particularly focuses on the development of growth mindset, adaptable leadership and lead through change among university staff. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of strategic communication between university administration and staff as well as successful community, stakeholder and employee engagement. Modern management theory was adopted to guide the study. Thus, it is suggested that university administrators can successfully manage staff, promote institutional achievement, and negotiate the challenges of 21st-century higher education by developing these abilities.

Recommendations

In view of the forgoing, it is recommended that the university management should:

1. Adopt the 21st-century educational leadership skills in managing their employees;
2. Grow digital literacy, keep up with technology developments and use them to Improve staff management and university operations;
3. Foster trust and advance the university objectives, cultivate strategic communication skills and interact with staff, stakeholders and the community;
4. Prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion;
5. Foster a culture of belonging, deal with prejudices and guarantee that every employee has equal opportunity.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study presents opportunities for further studies in the following ways:

- a. Analysing the relationship between employees' well-being and productivity in higher institution settings.

- b. Developing a framework for adaptive leadership in managing change and crisis in the university system.
- c. Developing leadership development programmes for university administrators.
- d. Creating diversity and inclusion training initiatives.
- e. Establishing mentorship programmes for early-career university leaders.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge in various ways such as follow:

1. Determining the critical competencies and necessary leadership qualities needed for 21st-century university leadership.
2. Recognising the training, development and leadership needs of university leaders in order to improve their performance and skill set.
3. Examining how leadership actions and styles affect employee motivation, satisfaction and retention in order to better understand how leadership affects employee engagement.
4. Providing guidance for diversity, equality and inclusion initiatives that offer insights into resolving diversity and equity concerns in university settings as well as inclusive work environments.

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