

Readdressing Situational Leadership in the New World Order through Technology



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INTRODUCTION

To meet the demands of the current marketplace, higher educational programs are providing increasing numbers of distant e-learning courses. With direct competitors seeking to acquire market share within the e-learning segment, many if not all higher education institutions are now offering online degree programs through e-learning. E-learning provides a unique opportunity to reach people across the globe including Indigenous peoples in the most remote locations.

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Our research focuses on the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon rainforest and their ability to provide e-learning opportunities to share their teachings with students across the globe. Through the functionality and accessibility of e-learning, Indigenous peoples are able to participate in teaching and learning to accommodate this hidden market of adult-learners. Indigenous populations, such as those of the Amazon rainforest, make up part of what Marshal McLuam (1989) refers to as the “global village.” By offering convenient online courses, institutions of learning may find opportunities to increase their own competitiveness by collaborating with Indigenous populations and our team to create a network platform for e-learning courses and classes. Doing so is not meant to privilege capitalism, though it seems highly likely that such a collaboration could support aspects of capitalism that may enhance the Indigenous peoples’ lives; however, the main focus is to include Indigenous peoples in the technological progress that the world wide web offers within the e-learning marketplace.

At the same time, if we take into consideration the concept of teams as learners, the Indigenous peoples around the world and specifically for our purposes here, those of the Amazon, have much to contribute to the western world by way of Indigenous natural medicine knowledge. In this way, teaching and learning within the paradigm of e-learning is transactional of information between parties, or teams. However, by facilitating the MIA e-learning platform is a skills transfer within a team-based learning environment built upon relationships for sustainability of cultural indigenous knowledge and additional learning acquired through e-learning.

According to Kasl, Marsick and Dechant (1997) organizational literature values team learning “but doesn’t provide a research-based definition” (p. 227). Team learning as defined by Kasl et al., (1997) “is a process through which a group creates knowledge for its members, for itself as a system, and for others” (p. 229). Working together with Indigenous peoples is likely to transform members both individually and collectively by learning.

The MIA e-learning platform has the potential to be the innovative catalyst for transformative learning through team based learning. According to Wenger (1998), “learning is a social process that occurs when people utilize their relationships to engage in meaningful experiences which are negotiated and shared to create a common understanding” as cited by Koissaba (2014, p. 4). In this spirit, e-learning that encompasses a team-learning model (Kasl et al., 1997) and utilizes collaborative relationships between participants around the world and Indigenous peoples builds bridges between people wherever their global location. The learning transaction must allow for a social process that is respectful of Indigenous knowledge and that is collaborative, conscious and equitable. Reflection with action, or praxis (Freire, 1970) is a step in this direction.

What Is Situational Leadership?

According to modern theories of situational leadership developed by P. Hersey, K. H. Blanchard, and D. E. Johnson in their seminal work, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Leading Human Resources*, there is no one best way to influence people. Situational Leadership studies are done at corporations where they use an organization theory called transaction cost economizing approach. Transaction cost economizing approach (TCE) has played a constructive role in pushing ahead the frontiers of organization theory (Aldrich, 2001). However, its critics point out that TCE draws on an under-socialized conception of humans because individuals are presumed to behave individualistically, as isolated actors. Under-socialized people act without regard to the social damage they do, or the impressions they leave with others. Thus, TCE theorists stress materialistic or self-serving motives, as Aldrich (2001) states about

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