

Digital Instructional Leadership: Theoretical Framework and Accelerator Role of the COVID–19 Pandemic

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter presents digital instructional leadership. But, to understand digital instructional leadership, it is a must to know what leadership is thoroughly, and how instructional and digital leaderships matters. So, this chapter explains these terms in detail. It is believed that this chapter will contribute to the literature in four ways. Firstly, this chapter will explain what leadership is and what types of theories it has. Secondly, it will address how digital instructional leadership seems in terms of instructional, digital leaderships, and the COVID-19 pandemic. So, this chapter will be an important cornerstone for expanding leadership in such a way that instructional and digital leadership are merged into one type of leadership. Thirdly, it will scrutinize digital instructional leadership in educators' eyes. Fourthly, it presents what to do to improve digital instructional leaders' behavior of educators. In this way, it will pioneer the field of educational administration to review the current leadership types and to merge some of them in the direction of needs.

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO (2020) states that many schools were closed in 191 countries around the world and so many students were affected by Covid-19 pandemic. According to the data presented by The International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2020), the number of teachers affected by the closure of schools worldwide was announced as approximately 63 million. Moreover, data by UNESCO (2021) shows that the evolvement of school closures and learning loss across the world since the eruption of the pandemic are so severe that today there are 56,758,603 affected learners by Covid-19 pandemic. Evidently, education systems have never encountered such a process and get caught unprepared during this modern era.

In many countries, various measures have been taken to get rid of these negative Covid-19 impacts on education, and *emergency remote teaching (ERT)* practices have been implemented.

ERT necessitates situations different from usual circumstances which has been arranged in terms of technical basis, professional improvement, and competence set (Misirli & Ergulec, 2021). For this reason, ERT can be seen as temporal shift for providing instruction during crisis circumstances. It includes purely online teaching, which is normally provided through face-to-face, blended or hybrid methods and will return to its normal format as soon as the pandemic is over. So, the main aim of ERT is not to re-build a resistant educational habitat but rather to form quick and available temporary access to education during an emergent situation (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, & Bond, 2020).

ERT has given the opportunity to students not to be completely detached from instructional period through using technological tools such as TV, online platforms, the internet, and mobile applications. For this reason, Covid-19 pandemic not only has set emergency remote teaching up as a savior to sustain education all over the world, especially in the countries in which face-to-face education was suspended totally or partially because of the pandemic, but also it has re-evoked the value of all types of information and communication technology (ICT)-based education.

ICT-based education is an instructional system including unification of computers and communication technologies. Engaging ICT is crucial in struggling with digital divide, creating digital opportunity and to pass on to learner-centered system (Makewa, Kuboja, Yango, & Ngussa, 2014). Recent developments in infrastructural improvements in technology triggers new facilities for the educational use of technology. For instance, technology-based cooperative learning provides higher levels of perceived competence improvement, self-reported learning, and utility than traditional classroom (Alavi, 1994, Kearsley & Schneiderman, 1998). Therefore, when the developments in technology are transferred in a planned way in educational environments, it offers learners rich learning opportunities and motivates them. However, it is not easy and enough to get a well-developed ICT-based educational environment. Especially, emergency online teaching has allowed schools to provide learning largely undisrupted during the school closures forced by the Covid-19 pandemic, but there are several technological, pedagogical, and social challenges to be faced (Ferri, Grifoni & Guzzo, 2020). It is also extremely important to design, develop and manage teaching learning process to ensure effective, attractive, and efficient learning in ICT-based teaching. The only way to do this is through *leadership in education*.

Education leaders should embrace online learning opportunities since it leads to changes in education, motivates learners to engagement with online learning activities, increases educational access, and triggers learners to behave as self-regulated and independent students (Blau & Shamir-Inbal, 2017; Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021). So, they should set some leadership skills to work. As known, there are many types of leadership skills; however, especially the rapid developments in technology and the severe changes resulted by the Covid-19 pandemic have brought educators' *digital instructional leadership skills* into the forefront.

In the light of the above justifications, this chapter presents its readers what is digital instructional leadership. But, to understand digital instructional leadership, it is a must to know what leadership is thoroughly, and how instructional and digital leaderships matters. So, this chapter explains these terms in detail. It is believed that this chapter will contribute to the literature in four ways. First, this chapter will explain what leadership is and what types of theories it has. Second, it will address how digital instructional leadership seems in terms of instructional, digital leaderships and the Covid-19 pandemic. So, this chapter will be an important cornerstone for expanding leadership in such a way that instructional and digital leadership are merged into one type of leadership. Third, it will scrutinize digital instructional

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