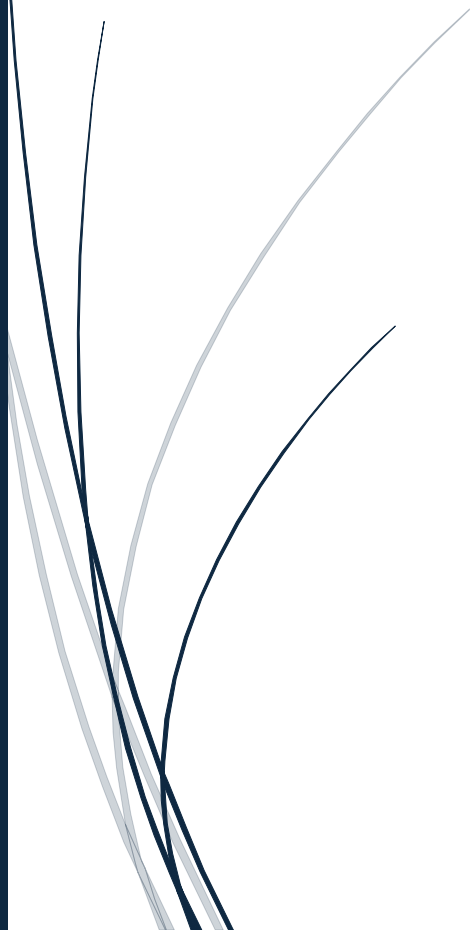10/12/2025

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Assignment 3: Leadership Styles

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Part 1: Understanding Leadership in Context

Leadership is the process of influencing others to achieve shared goals by motivating, guiding, and empowering them (Indeed Editorial Team, 2018). Effective leadership goes beyond authority; it involves creating a vision, aligning people, and fostering a sense of purpose (Kotter, 2012). Leadership styles determine how this influence is exercised, shaping workplace culture, communication, and motivation.

In my role as a Project Coordinator in the Marketing and Student Recruitment Unit of a large South African university, I have observed a leadership style that blends democratic and transformational characteristics. The democratic style, as outlined by the Indeed Editorial Team (2018), encourages participation and values input from team members. Meanwhile, the transformational style inspires through vision, enthusiasm, and a focus on collective growth. My department's leadership encourages collaboration and creativity during campaign design while maintaining accountability for deliverables and deadlines.

This hybrid approach works effectively in a creative, dynamic environment like marketing, where innovation and teamwork are essential. Leaders provide broad strategic direction but allow flexibility in how objectives are achieved, empowering project leads to make context-specific decisions. This approach fosters a sense of ownership among staff and aligns well with the institution's broader mission of innovation and inclusivity.

Part 2: Comparison with the South African Healthcare System

According to Gilson and Daire (2011), leadership within the South African healthcare system has traditionally leaned towards transactional and bureaucratic styles. These styles emphasise compliance with regulations, strict hierarchy, and performance monitoring. While such structure is necessary for accountability in a high-stakes environment like healthcare, it can also limit innovation, responsiveness, and morale among healthcare workers.

Comparatively, the leadership style in my organisation is more participative and values-driven. In contrast to the healthcare sector's top-down model, university leadership within the marketing environment relies on collaboration and open dialogue. This difference reflects sectoral needs: healthcare requires precision, standardisation, and control, whereas higher education marketing depends on adaptability, creativity, and stakeholder engagement.

However, there are transferable lessons. The healthcare sector's structured accountability mechanisms could strengthen reporting and evaluation within university departments. Conversely, the participative and motivational aspects of democratic leadership could help healthcare teams improve communication and staff morale, which Gilson and Daire (2011) identify as ongoing challenges.

Part 3: The Best-Fit Leadership Style for My Sector

For the higher education marketing sector, the most suitable leadership style is transformational leadership. This approach encourages innovation, creativity, and professional growth while maintaining alignment with organisational goals. Transformational leaders articulate a compelling vision, inspire commitment, and build trust (Northouse, 2021). These qualities are crucial in navigating complex and fast-changing communication landscapes.

In my department, transformational leadership supports staff in adapting to digital marketing trends and shifting student engagement behaviours. It creates psychological safety, where individuals feel confident to propose ideas without fear of criticism, an essential element for innovation (Edmondson, 2019). However, to sustain effectiveness, transformational leadership should be balanced with **situational awareness**, adjusting approaches based on team maturity and workload demands.

Part 4: Reflection – Developing My Own Leadership Approach

Reflecting on my professional experience, I aspire to develop a servant–transformational leadership approach. I value leaders who listen actively, support professional growth, and lead by example. My goal is to cultivate trust through authenticity and consistent communication. Servant leadership prioritises empathy and shared purpose, aligning with the collaborative culture I value

To strengthen my leadership competencies, I plan to:

1. **Develop emotional intelligence** by improving self-awareness and empathy through feedback and coaching (Goleman, 2006).
2. **Enhance decision-making confidence** by studying evidence-based leadership frameworks and applying them in project coordination.
3. **Foster inclusive leadership** by ensuring all team members' voices are heard during planning sessions, supporting creativity and belonging.

4. **Embrace reflective practice**, evaluating the outcomes of my leadership choices to identify strengths and growth areas.

If I were to lead the department, I would encourage an even stronger culture of recognition and mentorship, ensuring staff at all levels feel appreciated for their contributions. In my view, effective leadership in higher education must combine vision, empathy, and accountability to nurture high-performing, motivated teams.

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