

Is the Character of Institutional Leadership Central to the Quality of Higher Education (HE) Management?

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ABSTRACT

This study employed a descriptive, empirical and suggestive approach. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the character of institutional leadership is central to the management of higher education (HE). First, the study x-rayed the role of character in institutional leadership and management of HE. Second, it highlights the character of institutional leadership in combination with values, morals, principles and ethics in the management of HE, and third, the implication of the character of institutional leadership on the quality of HE. To address the descriptive part of this study, this article reviewed literature on the relationship between the character of institutional leadership with particular focus on values, morals, principles and ethics, and the quality of HE management. The empirical part of this article included the collection of data from 250 respondents through a structured questionnaire, and data were analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 21. While the suggestive part portrayed the study's findings, which redolent that the neglect of the role of character in institutional leadership as being central to HE management might possibly explain the dysfunctional and poor quality state of HE particularly in Nigeria and perhaps many sub-Saharan Africa countries. Therefore, appointment of institutional heads should be based on technical qualification and character of institutional leaders, and must be a continual effort towards the integration of positive thoughts, both in words and in actions. The target audiences for this article include educational managers and planners, researchers, academics, professionals, students, and leadership practitioners.

KEYWORDS

Character, Ethics, Higher Education, Institutional Leadership, Management, Principles, Morals, Values

INTRODUCTION

Undisputedly, education in general, plays a significant role in the advancement of economic, political, social, cultural and technological development of any country. Higher education (HE), which is also known as tertiary education or post-secondary education, is very prominent in ensuring that these goals are achieved. To attain this height, leaders (e.g., Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts, Deans, Directors, Heads of Department) with good character are expected to manage and direct the affairs of institutions.

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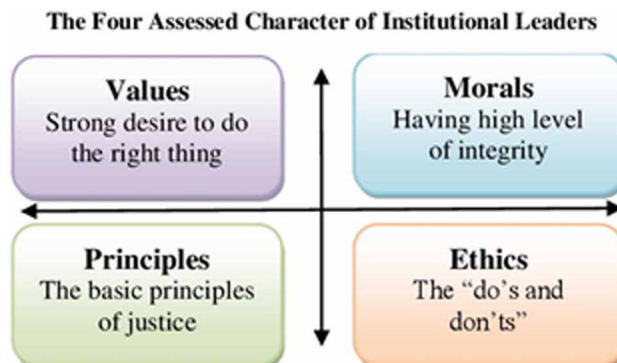
However, in today's world, the crisis of character in leadership is frightening because, to a great extent, leaders determine the direction, safety, and prosperity of institutional cultures and change (Asaju, Arome & Mukaila, 2014; Ololube & Ololube, 2017). Leadership is therefore a key to human and institutional improvement, growth and transformation (Soludo, 2013). No matter what condition institutions, societies or nations find themselves, they did not accidentally arrive there. Leaders led them to where they are and should be held responsible for the situation those institutions find themselves (Munroe, 2014). The evidences (Ololube, Aiya, Uriah & Ololube, 2016) stands firm that nothing happens without effective leadership. And the character of such leaders determines the extent to which they can be effective (Alechenu, 2013; Munroe, 2014).

A pertinent question remains in the mind of people—why are modern leaders so deficient in character? In answering this question, the major reason is that, globally much of the leadership training received have failed to emphasize and include the concept of character (Values, Morals, Principles and Ethics) as indispensable element of leadership characteristics. Many organizational and national leaders are not mentoring their subordinates and employees on the importance of character development especially in third world countries. In its place, leadership traits like power, educational qualification, knowledge, competence, intelligence, skills, gifts, talents, and charisma or other personality traits are emphasized (Munroe, 2014).

Globally, organizations, institutions, societies and nations have leaders, but what they lack are visionary leaders that have respectable character. The character of institutional leaders in the modern higher education environment and the combination of values, morals, principles and ethics of institutional culture of management provides the most resourceful and effective leadership experience the world will ever witness. Character of organizational leadership and institutional management is used to better position HE globally. It is used in this context to explain approaches that combines the values, morals, principles and ethics of several different leadership practices that will be used to better restore the failing HE institutions. It is also used to describe fairness of decision-making procedures and interpersonal treatment including equity and justice in the workplace. It is the combination of leader's values, morals, principles and ethics aimed at advancing the HE globally. Institutional leaders must embrace the challenges and actively seek to change the ways HE institutions are to move away from the mind-set of corruption and compromise to an attitude of principle and good character.

Character (values, morals, principles and ethics) of institutional leaders are perhaps the most narrowly used approach in assessing institutional effectiveness (see summary in Figure 1). However, with the increasing pressure on institutions to do more, character of institutional leaders can help to maintain or improve the quality of products and service delivery, at the same time significantly reduce the cost of ruining organizations and institutions.

Figure 1. Assessed characters



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