Cultural Competency:

Effective Leadership in Practice for Key Stakeholders in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

To remain culturally competent is an essential role requirement of administrators, curriculum developers, faculty, and students who drive the mission, value, and goals at academic institutions. Their scope of influence and efficacy is thus enabled through leadership appropriateness and skill. As leadership theory remains constant in the face of an ever-changing higher education landscape, leaders have the opportunity to utilize culturally competent best practices gathered throughout education and career to solve problems and meet the needs of diverse student populations. Furthermore, students are dependent on such competencies as they are likely to model their leaders as they assume leadership roles in their academic and professional environments. The following semi-systematic review offers insight into four leadership styles, charismatic leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, and situational leadership. Recommendations grounded in these are included for those responsible for effective cultural competency in academic settings.

KEYWORDS

Charismatic Leadership, Curriculum Developers, Faculty, Servant Leadership, Situational Leadership Administrators, Students, Transformational Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Examining cultural issues such as diversity, cultural identity, bias, and inclusion in a scholarly setting allows the opportunity to develop leaders that are culturally proficient (Ruffin & Simon, 2022). When students have opportunities to explore these constructs through the lens of leadership, the impact can be even more powerful. "Leadership is influence" (Maxwell, 1940). Leadership thought leader John Kotter explains the importance of prioritizing diversifying teams to get optimal results (Kotter, 2012). Anytime one influences another, they are a leader (Uhl-Bien et al, 2021).

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PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Snyder (2019) surmises that the literature review is an important process in understanding interdisciplinary intersects of knowledge, in forming important new research questions, and further notes that "building your research on and relating it to existing knowledge is the building block of all academic research activities, regardless of discipline" (p. 333). For administrators, curriculum developers, faculty, and even students, there are opportunities to see, experience, and demonstrate cultural competency through effective leadership. This semi-systematic review of the literature has identified opportunities for discussion in this area. The purpose of this article was to examine Charismatic, Servant, Transformational, and Situational Leadership through the lens of cultural competence in higher education. Upon review of pertinent and foundational literature associated with each leadership style, recommendations for practice for steakholders in higher education were synthesized. Recommendations were made for administrators, curriculum developers, faculty, and students, and implications were posed for future research initiatives.

Charismatic Leadership

Charisma is described by Uhl-bien et al (2021) as a characteristic that others are easily influenced by and find attractive. It was the working paper of Robert House (1976) that provided a compilation of the known understanding of charisma at the time as well as a working understanding of Charismatic Leadership Theory. An interesting aspect of Charismatic Leadership is the disciple-like effect the followers espouse of charismatic leaders (House, 1976) as shown below:

Houses' Charismatic Effects

- Followers are extremely motivated and passively obey the leader
- The leaders' beliefs are trusted by the followers without verification
- The followers' beliefs are the same as the leaders
- The followers do not ever question the leader, they are always obedient, and they desire to be like the leader
- The followers feel emotionally connected to the mission and feel that they are contributors
- The followers feel that they have a heightened purpose because of the leader
  (House, 1976).

Interestingly, a challenge with charismatics is how they use their leadership, whether for good - or for evil. There have been many charismatic leaders throughout history including Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Jesus Christ. Yet Adolf Hitler was also a charismatic leader as well, using his influence to drive evil initiatives. Charismatics find a way to connect with their followers on a deep emotional level, and that is why they are so effective, but it is also why their power can have damaging effects (Uhl-Bien et al, 2021).

Servant Leadership

Servant Leadership Theory is a follower-focused approach to leadership (Stauffer & Maxwell, 2020). First introduced by the name 'Servant Leadership' following reading the book '*Journey to the East*' by Herman Hess, Robert Greenleaf penned his seminal essay: *The Servant as Leader* (1970). Ten characteristics frame Greenleaf's theory: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and community building (1970).

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: "Do those served

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