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INTEGRITY: THE FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on integrity: the foundation for effective institutional leadership and management. Integrity, effectiveness, morality, competency, honesty, fairness, and accountability are examples of institutional values. Among other core values of institutional leaders, the value of integrity formed the crux of this paper. Integrity is the value that distinguishes leaders for greatness because in it lies honesty, sincerity, accountability and courage. Apparently, a leader's integrity is overwhelmingly considered to be the most valued by most leaders and followers as it is the foundation of trustworthiness and the standard expected of honorable leaders. Despite its importance for leaders and organizations, integrity is perceived to be lacking in Nigerian institutions, and recent research supports the idea that leaders have difficulty being seen as credible and trustworthy. The paper portrays integrity as being trustworthy and incorruptible to the point where one is unable to betray commitments to loyalty, obligation, and pledge. The paper was anchored on Utilitarian Theory. This paper buttressed the importance of integrity and provides literature that reveals the need for educational leaders to inculcate this unique value as a foundation and pillar for institutional effectiveness. This paper concluded that Nigerian institutions require a strong leadership that is built on the foundation of honesty and good character. Therefore, it is necessary for institutional leadership to shun immoral values such as bribery, dishonesty and greed, fraud, impunity, lying, intimidation, victimization and misinformation and embrace good institutional leadership and management processes and practices that enhance value-based, morally upright, principled and ethically-based institutional leaders that ensures that strong ethical-values like integrity are promoted. The paper suggested among others that institutional leaders should imbibe the conduct of working sincerely without being supervised, adhering strictly to laid down rules without fear, favour or partiality as a way of displaying integrity in leadership.

Keywords: Integrity, Foundation, Effectiveness, Institutional leadership, Management.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the fundamental and universal managerial functions without which management cannot achieve its goal regardless of the type of organization or institution. Leadership is essential because subordinates must be directed and encouraged on what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and where to do it in order to get the intended results. This means that the effectiveness and success of an organization are a result of its leadership. It is important to note that management and leadership work together to shape an organization's operational policy. Whereas management mobilizes human and material resources for the achievement of organizational goal, leadership is a proactive reagent that provides life to management and defines its operational effectiveness since no institution rises above the dynamism of its leaders. Basically, any educational institution needs leaders more than anything else. In addition to ensuring that organizational functions are in alignment with the external environment, it can direct human resources toward an institution's strategic goals. The Nigerian Universities and other Institutions are established within a defined academic culture to promote knowledge, skill, competences and values to all students and ensure effective delivery of the three facets of the universities, namely teaching, research, and community services. Hence, university leadership must manage knowledge production, knowledge transmission, and knowledge dissemination or transfer via research, teaching, and services, respectively, as well as the facilities and resources to ensure effective functioning.

An institution's ability to succeed or fail is mostly a function of how strong its leaders are. Effective leadership results in motivated, committed and high performing followers. It increases an organization's ability to meet its contemporary challenges, fosters ethical behaviours, fair and equitable management of diverse workforce and increases organizational success. Institutional leadership is the ability and capacity to give guidance and direction to university staff in order to achieve the institution's goals (Akegwu, 2019). This suggested that institutional leadership in the context of a university refers to top and middle management that executes management tasks. These leaders mainly include Vice Chancellors of universities or polytechnic rectors. They stimulate staff to be of high performance thereby directing, motivating and communicating with them as well as helping to guide and inspire them towards the realization of the university vision and mission. The Vice Chancellor and other key officers are also in charge of overseeing the day-to-day operations of the university and the implementation of policies. This places high demand for effective leadership skills on the Vice Chancellor as he focuses mainly in establishing and protecting institutional values. These values determine how the institution conduct its educational activities, which will ultimately have an impact on how successfully it relates with its students, employers, stakeholders, partners and host community.

It is imperative to note that for leaders to effectively further the course of leadership on educational institutions, certain potent values are required. Integrity, effectiveness, morality, competency, honesty, fairness, and accountability are examples of institutional values (Ololube, 2021). These values have an impact on the institution's day-to-day behaviors and conduct, and direct it to deliver a fair return for all stakeholders. Among other values as put forward by this renowned leadership scholar, the value of integrity will form the crux of this paper. Integrity is the value that distinguishes leaders for greatness because in it lies honesty, sincerity, accountability and courage (Daerefamama & Ogona, 2022). Most importantly, a good leader must have integrity. The trait that encourages trust in leaders, it is reflected in the institution's standards and values, and it aids in reinforcing the culture created to encourage the spirit of

excellence among the staff of the institution. Any leader with integrity upholds moral standards and inspires others via ethical behaviours. This attribute makes them acceptable to everyone because people won't follow someone unless they have built trust in them. This shows that the essence of leadership with integrity encourages respect for stakeholders, which creates an environment of trust and encourages ethical behavior which is the foundation for future performance.

Apparently, a leader's integrity is overwhelmingly considered to be the most valued by most leaders and followers as it is the foundation of trustworthiness and the standard expected of honorable leaders. Despite its importance for leaders and organizations, integrity is perceived to be lacking in Nigerian institutions, and recent research supports the idea that leaders have difficulty being seen as credible and trustworthy. University leaders and their subordinates who lack integrity engage in unethical behaviours such as stealing from the university, and in an unethical institution, corruption will be unrestricted (Ololube et al., 2018). This makes it necessary to raise awareness of the fact that a university's quality is reflected in the value and character of the people who govern it, and building integrity can be used to lay a worthy foundation for institutional leadership and management.

Theoretical Underpinning

This paper is anchored on Utilitarian theory. Utilitarianism in normative ethics, a tradition stemming from the late 18th and 19th century English philosophers and economists Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill according to which an action (or type of action) is right if it tends to promote happiness or pleasure and wrong if it tends to produce unhappiness or pain, not just for the performer of the action but also for everyone else affected by it (Henry & Brian, 2023). Utilitarianism is a species of consequentialism, the general doctrine in ethics that actions (or types of action) should be evaluated on the basis of their consequences. This implies that Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that determines right from wrong by focusing on outcomes and that the actions are judged right or wrong to the extent they increase or decrease human well-being or utility. Utilitarianism also holds that the most ethical choice is the one that will produce the greatest good for the greatest number.

This theory is applicable to this paper in the sense that it refers to morality and doing right things which borders on integrity. Utilitarianism as a normative principle of leadership avers that leaders ought to act such that their action produces the greatest good for the greatest number. This implies that leaders should act in such a way as to produce most value for their team. It brings some level of consciousness to leadership of institutions to understand the fact that their actions should always increase everyone's utility since it is expected that the decisions they make impact everyone positively, they serve for the interest of everyone and address everyone's wants and needs in order to ensure that their decision creates most value that is aligned with the institution vision. Integrity is the practice that respects the views and values of every other individual within an organization. If organizational ethics and values must be maintained in an institution, this theory is most suitable and relevant.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Leadership

There are numerous definitions of leadership as there are many leaders. Leadership is a complex process with many dimensions (Northouse, 2010). Leadership and management are often viewed as being synonymous. It's untrue. Management is the process of accomplishing task by and with the aid of others, which is only one facet of leadership. Leadership is much more than that. Ololube (2021) asserted that leadership entails a particular kind of responsibility intended to accomplish specific goals by utilizing the resources (both human and material) at hand and guaranteeing a cohesive and coherent organization of the process. Adiele (2020) described leadership as the conscious and deliberate action of influencing others to achieve the present and future goals of an organization or group with a view to optimizing the utilization of organizational resources towards desired and specified goal attainment. Stogdill (1950) in Adiele (2020) defined leadership as the process of directing an organized group's activities toward goal setting and goal achievement.

Okai (2019) opined that leadership entails the accomplishment of an organizational goal through the process of influencing, directing, acquiring personal qualities and power, and also coordinating group activities to make the achievement of predetermined goals with regards to solution to a mutual problem. Also, as explained by Burns in Okai (2019), leadership occurs as leaders induce followers to act for certain goals that represent values, needs, wants, aspirations and expectations of both leaders solely on his big titles, big positions or because a lot of positions of power and responsibility necessarily make one a leader.

However, leadership is undoubtedly one of the most observed but least understood phenomenon in human history (Burns in Ololube, 2021). Self-study, education, training, and the accumulation of appropriate experience all play a continuous role in the development of good leadership. A good leader inspires, encourages, and controls activities to advance group or organizational goals (Ololube 2021). Strong character and unselfish dedication to an organization are also the cornerstones of effective leadership. Yet, leadership roles frequently depend on a person's ability to be trusted because this quality is essential to many types of human organizations especially in education.

Although there are many different aspects of leadership, Munroe (2014) lists three vital areas such as:

- Purpose and vision;
- Potential and ability; and
- Values, ethics and principles.

Purpose and vision show a leader what direction he is meant to go in life. All leaders believe they are on earth to do something for humanity. Purpose keeps leaders focus on why they exist whereas vision aligns them to their goal (Brian, 2013). The understanding of their purpose gives them inner motivation. Effective leaders must focus on purpose to inspire their subordinate, and for their goal to be understood, they must clearly define their vision and communicate it in such a way that will encourage subordinate commitment and willingness in the institution.

Potential refers a leader's innate gifts and qualities while ability include all the skill, expertise, education, knowledge, wisdom and insight a leader developed and acquired as well as

all other resources at his disposal that will enable him to accomplish his purpose. Therefore, leaders must be in their own capacity to fulfill the vision that resides in their minds and heart.

Values, ethics and principles are the standards that a leader sets for himself; and lives according to, in the process of exercising his potentials and ability for the accomplishment of his vision. Values and principles are mostly used as an expression of one's moral position, while ethics are moral principles that govern a person's behaviour. Principles includes; integrity, fairness, honesty, and other such indisputable standards (Ahmed, 2021). Hence, values, ethics and principles relate to a leader's character. Of these three areas, the most important is the third because values, ethics and principles protects a leader's purpose from being destroyed. This implies that, character is the most potent force a leader can have since it safeguards his life, his leadership and his legacy as well as establishes his integrity and enable his growth as a person of ethics and values.

Integrity

Integrity's etymological roots are in the French word "integrite," meaning innocence, purity, chastity, and blamelessness, and in the Latin word "integritatem," which comes from the word "integer," which means wholeness, correctness, or completion (Oxford living dictionaries, 2019). There are several definitions of integrity; the dictionaries define it as a state of being entire, whole, unified or undivided, which is to say the attribute of being honest and having strong moral principles. Integrity entails being trustworthy and uncorruptible to the point where one is unable to betray commitments to loyalty, obligation, and pledge. Munroe (2014) defined integrity as "incorruptibility": the inability to be persuaded to act against your moral principles or out of self-interest by your own impulses or the pressure of others. Being honest and adhering steadfastly and unwaveringly to high moral and ethical standards are examples of having integrity. Integrity can also be defined as aligning you conduct with what you know to be excellent (Ololube, 2021).

From the above definitions, integrity in a leader refers to being honest, trustworthy, accountable, and reliable. A commitment to values and beliefs is demonstrated by leaders with integrity. They try to uphold moral standards and act morally no matter the situation, who is involved, where they are tested, or even if it is private. This implies that leaders with integrity act in accordance with their words and practice what they preach, own up to their mistakes, accept responsibility in performance of their duties to increase workplace performance, foster greater trust and satisfaction from their subordinates who are more likely follow suit (SIGMA, 2022). This attitude will make employees serving under high integrity, leaders to demonstrate workplace behaviours, work harder, perform better and have greater loyalty. People with integrity does to have divided loyalties they don't act in hypocrisy, they can be identified by their single-mindedness and they have nothing to hide and nothing to fear (Maxwell, 2017).

Importance of Integrity

The importance of integrity exemplified in the following:

- **Integrity build trust:** Every leader must have followers, but he must have their confidence. Trust is earned through integrity.

- **Integrity has high influence value:** A leader might impact on the behaviours, attitudes, opinions and choices of others, but a leader with integrity has influence value because he is honest and reliable.
- **Integrity facilities high standard:** Institutional leaders with integrity do what is morally and ethically right and unquestionable practices. For example, when making decision they consider potential consequences on the institution and other people. They work diligently rather than cutting corners, and accepts responsibility for their decisions.
- **Integrity result in a solid reputation not just an image:** Image is what people think we are while integrity is what we really are. We cannot give what we do not have. A good reputation stem from being perceived as honest, responsible, reliable and respectful to other staff. When people find you as a reliable and trustworthy leader, you have a good reputation that will help your image because it reflects so much in who you really are.
- **Integrity makes you lead by example:** As an institutional leader, it is your responsibility to be a good role model, but we cannot lead anyone else farther than we have been ourselves. Employees who lack integrity are more likely to engage in unethical behaviours which may affect both the work environment and the institution. However, leaders who act responsibly, make ethical decisions and uphold institutional values that help set and maintain expectations for employees conduct.
- Integrity helps a leader to be credible
- Integrity makes you a better person
- Integrity makes you have high-quality relationships: having integrity is an admirable trait so others will be drawn to you when you have it.
- It makes you secure and confident in who you are as a person. it helps your self-esteem since you are honest about your morals and values.
- You inspire others.

Institutional Leadership and Management

Leadership in higher institution is not restricted to the Vice Chancellor alone. Institutional leadership in Nigeria and elsewhere are categorized into top management comprising the Vice Chancellor, rectors and provost and other principal officers for university, polytechnic or monotechnic and college of education; middle management made up of deans of faculties and rectors of institutes and junior operational management with heads of department as constituent (Akegwu, 2019). These three leadership categories are essential and have a big impact on institutional leadership. The need for institutional leadership arises from the fact that Nigerian educational institutions have continued to experience significant change in response to a variety of factors, including government policy, the demand for higher levels of academic achievement and credentials, rapid economic development, the pervasiveness and societal-wide effects of information and technology (IT), internationalization, and globalization (Ololube et al., 2018).

However, the chief executives of diverse institutions are the Vice Chancellors, rectors, or provosts. They are the decision-makers in control of the daily operations, and the other senior executives are answerable to them. Institutional leaders perform much more than just overseeing or managing their campuses and systems. Chancellors, Presidents, Provosts, Vice Presidents, and Department Heads take the lead by aiding in the creation of the reform's vision and by facilitating the structural adjustments required for its large-scale implementation (Ololube, 2024). It is therefore for a sound character driven and articulate leadership to give directions to

higher institutions at all levels to modify their goals, visions and methodologies from time to time.

A leader's character is very important factor because it influences the entire organization and this might mar or lead the institution to excellence. Ololube (2021) posited that good leadership is based on basic values and that character development is a priority. He emphasized that Institutional Leadership and Management (ILM) affects institutions' success and that great leaders cultivate critical attitudes, traits, and attributes that are relevant to ILM. Character is integrity, value and doing what is right (Ololube, 2017). It is important to note that integrity is essential to successful institutional leadership and management because integrity builds trust and without trust, people won't respect or follow you as their leader. Good character is built gradually, day by day, through protraction and patience, not in a matter of weeks or months (Ololube, 2021). According to Maxwell (2017), character is more a product of upbringing than of nature. He outlined four key components that form a strong character. These include:

- Self-discipline: This refers to the ability to act morally even when it is difficult. This suggests that you exercise self-control in a way that balances your interests with the needs of others, as well as fortitude to face your anxieties and the risks and hazards that come with standing up for what is right.
- Core values: These are a person's fundamental principles that direct their behavior on a daily basis.
- A feeling of identity: This is having a firm grasp on one's beliefs and self.
- Integrity: It is the act of directing one's actions and ideas in accordance to single value.

Although, integrity and character are used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. Integrity is the fundamental components of strong or good character, it is uncompromising, integrity defines what is right, character is doing what is right. Hence, our character reflects our integrity. Moreover, integrity is a combination of a person's belief, reputation and managing relationship. so a leader is required to be honest regardless of his position or title. The mere fact that institutional leaders frequently have the chance to save money or cut corners does not give them the right to violate moral standards. Say you are in charge of awarding contracts in your organization, and your uncle comes to you asking for a lucrative contract with tears in his eyes. Even though you are aware that he lacks the qualifications for such a contract and that there would be a conflict of interest, you sacrifice your morals and misuse public funds to benefit your uncle. This character is incorrect in ILM because the goal is not achieved. There is no one in the world for whom you should compromise your moral principles; if you do so in order to appease them, they will just use you before leaving you to pick up the pieces (Munroe, 2014) The institution will inevitably crumble as a result because character is sacrificed in the sake of compromise. As a result, character entails making constant attempts to integrate your ideas, words, and actions (integrity); making sacrifices in favor of your principles; and enforcing self-discipline in conformity with your values and moral standards (Munroe, 2014).

It is important to remember that real leadership has always been based on moral integrity. Character building is therefore a top concern for institutional leadership. Regrettably, a lot of Nigerians are so deficient in character that normalizes ILM (Ololube et al., 2018). It becomes imperative that institutional leaders develop critical attitudes, traits, and qualities necessary for enduring leadership and management. Keeping in mind that any leader's ability to develop character starts with realizing how valuable he is as a leader and knowing what his purpose in

life is. With that insight, he may standardize institutional development, improvement, and motivation while also developing a new feeling of self-worth, strength, and hope for the future.

Building Integrity for Effective Institutional Leadership and Management

Integrity in leadership and management inside institutions has grown to be a top priority. This is because people frequently evaluate leaders based on their moral character and technical proficiency. When staff perceives their leaders as having integrity, they link this quality to uprightness, friendliness, and having good intentions as opposed to selfishness. Integrity in institutional leadership strengthens ILM. Institutions with leaders who practice ethically driven management are better able to attract quality and talented professionals. Thus, ethical behavior starts from the top and allows institutions to develop culture that values integrity. According to Ololube (2021), integrity is unquestionably the quality that exemplifies principled leaders because they demonstrate that they cannot be corrupted by their positions. The integrity of leaders has over time become a prominent topic in management studies, particularly in leadership, and everyone tends to believe that their leaders behave themselves in an incorruptible manner (Orim, 2016). This implies that incorruptibility is synonymous to integrity. Incorruptible leaders are consistent with their actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations and most importantly outcomes (Ololube, 2017). They have clarity of purpose, beliefs, priorities and principles; congruency between their internal belief and external action as well as commitment and courage to do what is right even if it is not convenient regardless of the circumstances they find themselves (Orim, 2016).

Integrity is essential for Nigerian universities to pursue knowledge management in learning institutions the same way that western universities do (Ololube et al., 2018). They emphasized that over the years, there have been both recorded and undisclosed instances of leadership and academic integrity violations in the Nigerian university system, making it difficult to achieve the objectives of leadership and academic integrity. This is explained by different viewpoints on what institutional leadership and academic integrity look like in Nigerian universities. Numerous elements have been identified as contributing to this problem. The university management system, institutional policies, pedagogical approach, sociocultural context, economic context, technological infrastructure, leadership style and staff immunity are useful considerations (Orim, 2016).

Integrity deficiencies amongst institutional leaders affects their programmatic integrity, organized operation, interpersonal relationship and matters of leadership trust, morale and insecurity as well as their effectiveness, motivation, and health (Clark & Wallace, 2018). In the Nigerian university system, faculty integrity, student integrity, and leadership principles and behavior are used to evaluate leadership and academic integrity. Leadership and academic integrity in Nigeria are impacted both directly and indirectly by the integrity issue and the extent of corruption (Faniran & Akintayo, 2006). A major barrier to the effective management of Nigerian universities is the lack of integrity among some university leaders (Efanga et al., 2018). This is because these leaders are frequently involved in high-profile corruption, faculty frequently plagiarize research, and students frequently engage in examination fraud and certificate forgery (Ololube, 2017). All these are as a result of lack of the constituents of academic integrity among the stakeholder of most of the Nigeria institute of learning (Orim, 2016).

The consequences of the lack of integrity among institutional leaders are far reaching and can devastate the entire institution. For good university management, integrity is crucial. Before leaders can teach integrity in their subordinates, they must first demonstrate their own honesty. The achievement of institutional goals is fueled by integrity in hard work and dedication to obligations. Leaders must develop the self-control required for effective management if they are to instill integrity in their behavior. Effective management is possible when integrity is developed (Efanga et al., 2018). This implies that the level of dedication a leader has to their job inspires and motivates all of their subordinates to give their all to their jobs. Hence, Leadership is unquestionably by example.

CONCLUSION

This paper vividly looked at institutional leadership and management with specific focus on integrity as a major ingredient for effective institutional leadership and management. We want the most competent and capable individual to lead our educational institutions in order to address a wide range of challenges. Nigerian institutions require a strong leadership that is built on the foundation of honesty and good character. The problem with leadership today is not lack of knowledge or talent but rather a failure to maintain integrity and credibility with populace.

However, a trustworthy and effective institutional leader that can work in both good and bad times requires a solid foundation on integrity. Leaders that can own up to their mistakes rather than covering them up, blaming others or finding an excuse. Although, being honest is not always simple, especially when the leader himself is at fault. Most institutional leaders see it as a weakness, which is not true rather taking calculated chances and making mistakes is the key to success since it enable an institution to pick up new information rapidly.

Institutional leaders are expected to embrace good character that yields trust. Integrity-driven leaders secure effective leadership and management because the approach leadership responsibilities in different perspectives, they lead with honesty and transparency in thoughts, communication, decision and actions. They are also accountable and responsible to themselves and the institutions. And most importantly, they consider the implication of their actions both ethically, morally and physically.

Therefore, it is necessary for institutional leadership to shun immoral values such as bribery, dishonesty and greed, fraud, impunity, lying, intimidation, victimization and misinformation. Instead they should embrace good institutional leadership and management processes and practices that enhance value-based, morally upright, principled and ethically-based institutional leaders that ensures that strong ethical-values like integrity are promoted.

Suggestions

The following suggestions were made to improve institutional leadership and management:

- Institutional leaders should imbibe the conduct of working sincerely without being supervised, adhering strictly to laid down rules without fear, favour or partiality as a way of displaying integrity in leadership.
- Institutional leaders should practice transparency to communicate failures by taking full responsibility for their actions in order to attain effective institutional leadership and management.

- Government should hold educational leaders accountable for their unethical actions to serve as an ethical framework for aspiring leaders.
- Vice Chancellors should show vulnerability by developing genuine relationships with their subordinates/staff/lecturers and also by being sincere and honest, without any restrictions for effective institutional leadership and management.
- Educational leaders should always seek for feedbacks so as to encourage reciprocity from subordinates, colleagues and establish a give and take relationship.

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