TRANSFORMING DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The study updates previous descriptions of higher education leaders and their strategies for improving the learning environment at their institutions with up-to-date information. In addition to discussing the importance and current widespread appeal of transformational leadership and its practical application to higher education, this study also examines the group and individual qualities that people must possess as part of their aptitude in order to create a climate of change using transformational leadership.

Keywords: Distance Education, Transformation, Leadership, Higher Education, Online Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education programs are educational programs that allow students to learn remotely without attending traditional in-person classes. These programs are also known as distance learning, online learning, or e-learning programs. Distance education programs use various technologies such as videoconferencing, online forums, and other digital tools to facilitate learning. Distance education programs offer students flexibility in terms of time and location. Students can access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace and from any location with an internet connection. This type of learning is particularly useful for individuals who are unable to attend traditional classes due to work or family obligations. Distance education programs are offered at all levels of education, from elementary school to graduate school. Some programs may be fully online, while others may require occasional in-person attendance for exams or other activities. Overall, distance education programs are a convenient and effective way for students to earn a degree or certification while balancing other commitments in their lives (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2016; Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2018; Al-Husseini et al., 2021).

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve their full potential and create positive change within an organization or community. In the context of higher education, transformational leadership can have a significant impact on the success of both students and faculty. The following are some key characteristics of transformational leadership in higher education:

1. Transformational leaders in higher education have a clear and inspiring vision for the future of their institution. They communicate this vision to their team and inspire them to work towards achieving it.
2. These leaders inspire their team by providing a sense of purpose and meaning to their work. They create a culture of enthusiasm and motivation that drives their team to achieve their goals.

3. Transformational leaders in higher education are empathetic towards their team and understand their needs and concerns. They listen actively and create a supportive and inclusive environment for their team to thrive (Antonopoulou et al., 2021).
4. These leaders value collaboration and teamwork. They encourage open communication and foster a culture of collaboration and cooperation among their team members.
5. Transformational leaders in higher education are innovative and open to new ideas. They encourage their team to think creatively and explore new approaches to solving problems.
6. These leaders are committed to the personal and professional development of their team members. They provide opportunities for growth and development and invest in the training and development of their team.
7. Transformational leaders in higher education are guided by a strong sense of ethics and integrity. They lead by example and create a culture of ethical behavior and values (Baba et al., 2021).

Overall, transformational leadership in higher education is characterized by a focus on inspiring and motivating followers, creating a positive and supportive environment, valuing collaboration and innovation, and a commitment to personal and professional development and ethical behaviour (McKenzie & University, 2003).

CONCLUSION

Distance education programs are becoming increasingly popular in higher education, providing students with access to quality education regardless of their geographical location. However, to ensure the success of distance education programs, institutions need to implement transformational leadership characteristics. Transformational leadership characteristics such as providing vision, empowering faculty, and encouraging innovation can inspire and motivate faculty to develop innovative teaching strategies that meet the needs of distance learners. In addition, institutions should also prioritize providing adequate resources and support to faculty and students to ensure that they can achieve their academic goals. By implementing transformational leadership characteristics, higher education institutions can ensure the success of their distance education programs and provide students with a quality education that prepares them for the workforce.

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