

## The Characteristics Of Leadership Among Leaders In The Higher Education System: Developmental Socio-Psychological Factors

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### Abstract

Leadership in higher education plays a crucial role in shaping academic institutions and influencing their growth. Effective leadership is driven by a combination of personal traits, socio-cultural influences, and psychological development. This article explores the key characteristics of leadership among higher education leaders and examines the socio-psychological factors that contribute to their development. It highlights the significance of vision, adaptability, ethical leadership, and emotional intelligence in educational leadership. Furthermore, it discusses how socialization, cultural background, and psychological resilience impact leadership styles and decision-making in academic institutions.

### Introduction

Higher education institutions are complex organizations that require effective leadership to navigate challenges such as policy changes, technological advancements, and student diversity. Leadership in this sector is not only about administration but also about fostering innovation, academic excellence, and institutional integrity. The developmental process of leaders in higher education is influenced by a variety of socio-psychological factors that shape their approach to governance and management.

### Characteristics of Leadership in Higher Education

Successful leaders in the higher education system exhibit several key characteristics that enable them to guide institutions effectively:

#### 1. Visionary Thinking

A strong leader in higher education possesses a clear vision for the institution's future, focusing on academic excellence, research development, and student success. They anticipate trends in education and prepare strategies for sustainable growth.

#### 2. Strategic Decision-Making

Higher education leaders must analyze data, consider multiple perspectives, and make informed decisions that align with institutional goals. They must balance academic priorities with financial sustainability and policy requirements.

#### 3. Emotional Intelligence

Leaders with high emotional intelligence build strong relationships with faculty, students, and stakeholders. They demonstrate empathy, self-awareness, and the ability to manage interpersonal conflicts effectively.

#### 4. Adaptability and Innovation

With rapid technological advancements and changing educational demands, higher education leaders must embrace innovation and adaptability. They should encourage digital transformation, curriculum modernization, and new teaching methodologies.

### **5. Ethical Leadership**

Integrity, transparency, and fairness are fundamental to academic leadership. Ethical leaders foster an environment of trust, ensure academic freedom, and uphold institutional values.

### **6. Collaborative Leadership**

Higher education institutions function through teamwork and shared governance. Effective leaders engage faculty, administrative staff, students, and external partners in decision-making processes.

### **7. Student-Centered Approach**

An ideal leader prioritizes student success by improving learning experiences, creating inclusive environments, and addressing student concerns proactively.

### **Developmental Socio-Psychological Factors Influencing Leadership**

Leadership development in higher education is not solely based on personal ambition or academic achievements. Several socio-psychological factors contribute to shaping a leader's approach and effectiveness.

#### **1. Cultural and Social Influences**

The cultural background of a leader affects their leadership style, communication approach, and decision-making processes. Social norms and institutional traditions also shape leadership expectations.

#### **2. Educational and Career Background**

Leaders in academia often rise through the ranks as professors, researchers, or administrators. Their academic discipline, research experience, and previous leadership roles influence their leadership perspectives.

#### **3. Socialization and Mentorship**

Mentorship and professional networking play a crucial role in leadership development. Exposure to experienced leaders helps individuals develop leadership skills, confidence, and strategic thinking.

#### **4. Psychological Resilience and Stress Management**

Higher education leadership is demanding, requiring resilience to handle stress, conflicts, and institutional crises. Leaders who can maintain emotional stability under pressure are more effective in their roles.

#### **5. Motivation and Leadership Drive**

Personal motivation, whether intrinsic (passion for education) or extrinsic (recognition and career growth), influences leadership effectiveness. Leaders with strong motivational drives are proactive and committed to institutional progress.

#### **6. Communication and Interpersonal Skills**

Effective leaders communicate clearly, listen actively, and foster positive relationships within their institutions. Strong interpersonal skills help in conflict resolution, teamwork, and stakeholder engagement.

### 7. Perceptions of Authority and Power

How a leader perceives and exercises authority determines their leadership effectiveness. Some leaders adopt an authoritarian approach, while others promote shared governance and participatory decision-making.

### Conclusion

Leadership in higher education is a dynamic and multidimensional process influenced by both individual characteristics and socio-psychological factors. Vision, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership are key traits of effective leaders. Meanwhile, cultural influences, career backgrounds, mentorship, and psychological resilience shape leadership development. As higher education institutions continue to evolve, understanding and enhancing leadership capabilities will be crucial for academic success and institutional growth.

### Recommendations

1. Leadership Development Programs – Institutions should invest in leadership training programs that enhance strategic thinking and emotional intelligence.
2. Mentorship and Networking Opportunities – Emerging leaders should be mentored by experienced academic administrators to refine their leadership skills.
3. Psychological and Emotional Support – Providing mental health support and stress management resources can improve leadership effectiveness.
4. Encouraging Inclusive Leadership – Leaders should adopt inclusive decision-making practices that involve faculty, students, and stakeholders.
5. Continuous Learning and Innovation – Higher education leaders should engage in lifelong learning to stay updated with emerging trends and technologies in academia.

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