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Leadership Qualities and Practices for Effective Leadership: Evidence from Africa Renewal University, Uganda

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ABSTRACT: Effective leadership is important to the functioning and development of private higher education institutions. This study analyzed leadership experiences and perceptions at Africa Renewal University (AfRU), focusing on the qualities and practices perceived to contribute to effective leadership. A mixed-method case study design was used, combining structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, management and senior leaders. The study obtained responses from 133 participants out of a target population of 200, representing a 66.5% response rate. Transformational leadership was the most frequently identified leadership style across all respondent groups, reported by 86.96% of students, 77.5% of teaching staff, 66.67% of non-teaching staff, and 70% of management and senior leaders. Among the leadership qualities examined, integrity and ethics received the highest number of responses, followed by effective communication, problem-solving and decision-making. Empathy and emotional intelligence and visionary thinking were also identified, although their emphasis varied across respondent groups. The findings indicate that perceived leadership effectiveness at AfRU was associated with a combination of ethical conduct, effective communication and practical leadership capabilities within a predominantly transformational leadership context. The study highlights the importance of developing leaders who can combine ethical character with effective communication, decision-making and problem-solving in private higher education.

KEYWORDS: Leadership effectiveness, leadership qualities, transformational leadership, private universities, higher education, Uganda

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays an important role in how higher education institutions establish direction, coordinate people and resources, make decisions and respond to institutional demands. In universities, leadership extends beyond formal administrative authority because leaders influence organisational relationships, institutional priorities and the way decisions are communicated and implemented. Effective leadership is therefore not determined only by the position held by a leader but also by the qualities and practices demonstrated in everyday institutional work (Bryman, 2007; Day et al., 2014; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

The importance of these qualities and practices is particularly evident in higher education, where institutions have to respond to demands for academic quality, accountability, innovation and stakeholder engagement. University leaders work with academic and non-academic staff, students and other stakeholders whose responsibilities and expectations may differ. They are consequently required to communicate institutional direction, make decisions, address problems and maintain relationships across the institution. Leadership research has identified qualities such as integrity, communication, decision-making and problem-solving as important dimensions of leadership, although the emphasis placed on particular qualities may vary across organisational contexts (Day et al., 2014; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

Leadership practices and styles provide another way of understanding how these qualities are expressed. Transformational leadership emphasises vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Hoch et al., 2018). Ethical leadership gives greater attention to moral conduct, fairness and responsible use of authority, while servant and inclusive approaches emphasise relationships, participation, openness and attention to followers' needs and contributions (Bedi et al., 2016; Eva et al., 2019; Randel et al., 2018). These perspectives suggest that leadership effectiveness is better understood through the combination of leaders' qualities and the practices through which those qualities are demonstrated than through reliance on a single leadership style.

Communication provides an important link between leadership qualities, leadership practices and how leadership is experienced by stakeholders. University leaders need to communicate institutional priorities and vision while also listening to staff and students and providing opportunities for feedback. Communication that clearly conveys institutional direction may help create a shared sense of purpose, but effective leadership also requires opportunities for members of the university community to express concerns and contribute to institutional processes (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017; Men, 2014). Similarly, integrity, sound decision-making and problem-solving can shape how stakeholders perceive the credibility and responsiveness of those in leadership positions (Bedi et al., 2016; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

The issue is relevant to private higher education in Uganda, where institutions operate within a higher education system concerned with quality assurance, governance and institutional development. The growth and diversification of higher education have increased the responsibilities placed on institutional leaders, including the need to maintain academic standards while responding to organisational and stakeholder demands (National Council for Higher Education [NCHE], 2020). However, evidence from other institutional and national contexts cannot automatically establish which leadership qualities and practices are regarded as important within a particular Ugandan private university. Context therefore matters when examining how leadership is understood and experienced.

Africa Renewal University (AfRU) provides a relevant setting for examining this issue. The study on which this article is based investigated leadership experiences and perceptions within the university, drawing on the views of management, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students. It focused on the qualities and practices that members of the university community associated with effective leadership. The study therefore provides an opportunity to examine leadership through both the qualities demonstrated by leaders and the practices and styles through which those qualities are experienced by different stakeholder groups.

The findings identified integrity and ethics, effective communication, decision-making and problem-solving among the most frequently identified leadership qualities. Transformational leadership was the most frequently identified leadership style across the respondent groups. The study also found that management frequently communicated the university's vision and mission, while some staff and students perceived opportunities for feedback as limited or insufficiently open. These findings indicate that perceptions of effective leadership at AfRU involved more than the identification of a particular leadership style; they also reflected ethical conduct, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, institutional direction and opportunities for stakeholder participation.

The article therefore addresses the following research question: What leadership qualities and practices are perceived as contributing to effective leadership at Africa Renewal University?

The study contributes case-based evidence to research on leadership in private higher education by bringing together perceptions from management, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students. It examines how leadership qualities and practices are perceived within one private university in Uganda and provides context-specific evidence on the aspects of leadership that stakeholders associate with effective leadership. The study also considers the relationship between communicating institutional direction and providing opportunities for stakeholder feedback, thereby providing a more complete view of how leadership is experienced within the university.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective leadership in higher education extends beyond occupying a formal position of authority. It involves the behaviours through which leaders provide direction, make decisions, solve problems, communicate institutional priorities and work with members of the university community. Universities are complex organisations in which academic and non-academic staff, students and administrators have different responsibilities and expectations. Leadership effectiveness is therefore shaped not only by what leaders do but also by how their actions are experienced by those within the institution (Bryman, 2007; Day et al., 2014; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). This perspective provides a useful basis for examining leadership qualities and practices within a private university context.

Leadership qualities are particularly relevant because they influence how leaders exercise authority and relate to others. Integrity and ethical conduct, for example, are associated with fairness, honesty, responsibility and appropriate use of authority (Brown et al., 2005). Evidence from meta-analytic research indicates that ethical leadership is associated with trust in leaders, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and positive employee behaviour (Bedi et al., 2016). In a university setting, these qualities are important because leaders make decisions that affect staff, students, academic programmes, resources and institutional processes. Ethical conduct can therefore shape how stakeholders interpret the fairness and credibility of leadership.

Effective communication is another important leadership quality in higher education. Leaders need to communicate institutional priorities, explain decisions, clarify expectations and convey the direction of the institution to different stakeholder groups.

However, communication is not limited to transmitting information. It also involves listening and creating opportunities for interaction between leaders and members of the organisation. Research on organisational communication has linked leadership style and internal communication with employee satisfaction, suggesting that communication forms an important part of leader–employee relationships (Men, 2014). In higher education, where professional roles and interests differ, clear communication can help establish a shared understanding of institutional priorities while providing opportunities for stakeholders to express their views (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017).

Decision-making and problem-solving also form important components of effective leadership. Leaders in higher education regularly make decisions concerning academic programmes, staff, students, resources, administration and institutional development. Effective decision-making requires judgement and the ability to respond appropriately to organisational circumstances, while problem-solving involves identifying challenges, considering alternatives and implementing appropriate responses (Day et al., 2014; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). These qualities are therefore relevant to the present study because they represent practical aspects of leadership that stakeholders can observe through leaders' responses to institutional issues.

Other qualities included in the present study are empathy and emotional intelligence and visionary thinking. Empathy and emotional intelligence relate to the ability of leaders to understand and respond appropriately to the experiences and needs of others. Such qualities are relevant in universities because leaders work with people who differ in professional responsibilities, experiences and expectations. Visionary thinking, on the other hand, concerns the ability to provide direction and communicate a sense of future purpose. These qualities complement communication, ethical conduct, decision-making and problem-solving by recognising that leadership effectiveness involves both how leaders relate to people and how they guide the institution.

The literature also indicates that leadership effectiveness cannot be explained by personal qualities alone. Leadership practices and styles determine how those qualities are translated into everyday leadership behaviour. Transformational leadership emphasises vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Meta-analytic evidence has associated transformational leadership with a range of positive leader and follower outcomes, although other leadership approaches provide additional perspectives on effective leadership (Hoch et al., 2018). Servant and inclusive leadership similarly emphasise relationships with followers, although they differ in their particular emphasis. Servant leadership places considerable attention on serving and developing followers (Eva et al., 2019), while inclusive leadership emphasises openness, accessibility and recognition of individual contributions (Randel et al., 2018).

These perspectives are relevant to higher education because effective leadership requires both institutional direction and engagement with the people responsible for achieving institutional goals. A leader may communicate a clear vision, for example, but effective leadership also requires opportunities for staff and students to contribute ideas, raise concerns and participate in institutional processes. Participation therefore provides an important link between leadership practices and stakeholders' perceptions of leadership effectiveness. In this sense, transformational and participatory practices can be considered alongside the leadership qualities of integrity, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, empathy and visionary thinking rather than treated as separate explanations of leadership.

The relationship between communication and participation is particularly important. Communication of institutional vision and mission can provide a shared sense of direction, but communication that is largely one-way may not provide sufficient opportunity for stakeholders to influence or respond to institutional decisions. Inclusive leadership research emphasises the importance of openness and accessibility, while servant leadership gives attention to listening and responding to followers' needs (Eva et al., 2019; Randel et al., 2018). This suggests that perceptions of effective leadership may depend not only on whether leaders communicate institutional direction but also on whether members of the university community consider available channels for feedback and participation to be accessible and meaningful.

The literature therefore supports an understanding of effective leadership that combines leadership qualities and leadership practices. Integrity and ethics provide a basis for responsible use of authority; communication supports the sharing of institutional direction and interaction with stakeholders; decision-making and problem-solving enable leaders to respond to institutional demands; empathy and emotional intelligence support relationships with members of the university community; and visionary thinking provides direction. Leadership styles and practices, particularly transformational and participatory approaches, provide ways through which these qualities may be expressed in practice. Together, these dimensions provide a basis for examining how leadership is perceived within a particular university.

Despite the growing literature on transformational, ethical, servant and inclusive leadership, there remains a contextual gap concerning how these dimensions are experienced within private higher education institutions in Uganda. Much of the established literature has examined leadership in broader organisational settings or has focused on particular leadership approaches and outcomes. Less attention has been given to how different groups within a private university including management, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students perceive the qualities and practices associated with effective leadership within the same

institutional setting. The present study addresses this gap through a case study of Africa Renewal University (AfRU). Rather than assuming that one leadership approach explains effectiveness, the study examines the qualities and practices identified by members of the university community and considers how these perceptions relate to communication of institutional direction, decision-making, problem-solving, stakeholder participation and feedback. This provides the basis for the conceptual framework used in the study, which links leadership qualities and leadership practices/styles to perceived effective leadership at AfRU.

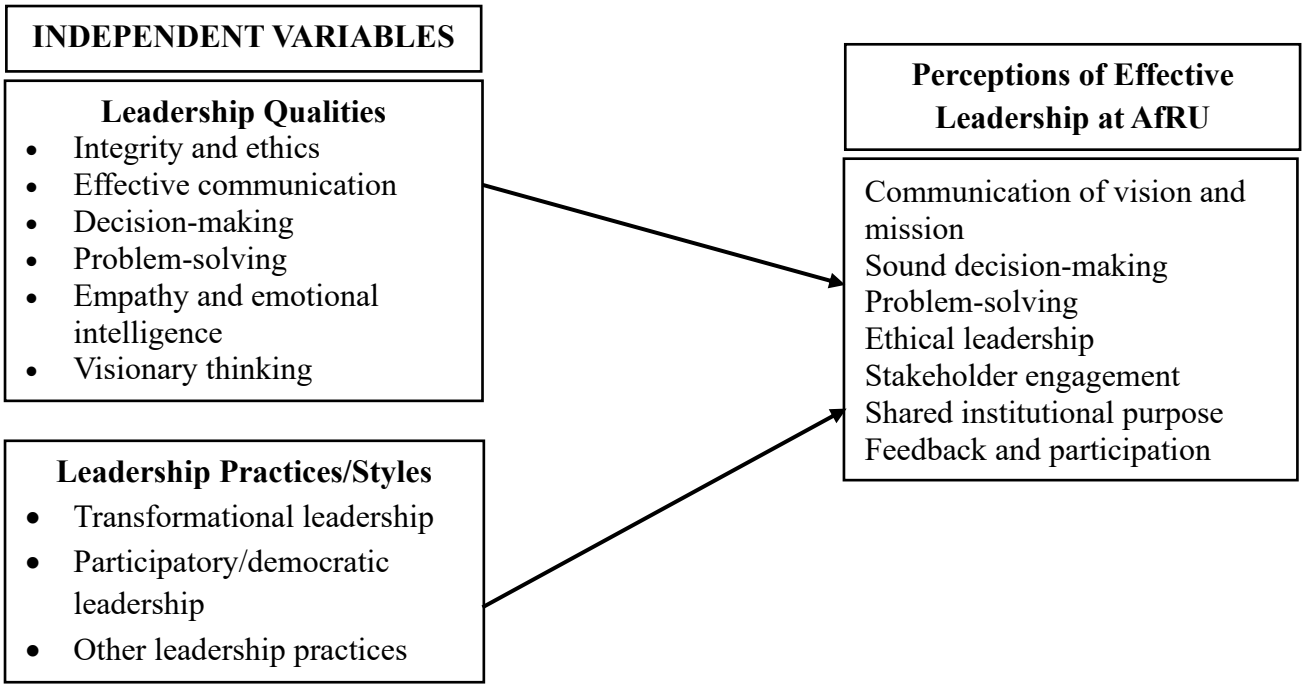
3. CONCEPTUAL / THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The article is informed by Trait Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. The two perspectives provide complementary explanations for understanding effective leadership at Africa Renewal University (AfRU). Trait Theory focuses on the personal qualities associated with leadership, while Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes the practices through which leaders influence, motivate and engage others.

Trait Theory provides the basis for examining the qualities that respondents associated with effective leadership at AfRU. These included integrity and ethics, effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, empathy and emotional intelligence, and visionary thinking. The findings showed that integrity and ethics, effective communication, decision-making and problem-solving were particularly prominent across the respondent groups. These qualities were therefore treated as important elements through which stakeholders perceived effective leadership within the university.

Transformational Leadership Theory complements this perspective by focusing on what leaders do in their interactions with followers and how they provide direction, communicate a shared vision and encourage commitment to institutional goals. In the AfRU study, transformational leadership was the most frequently identified leadership style across the respondent groups, while the findings also pointed to participatory or democratic practices. These practices were considered alongside the personal qualities identified by respondents because effective leadership was not viewed only in terms of leaders' personal characteristics, but also in terms of how those characteristics were expressed through everyday leadership practices.

The conceptual framework therefore links leadership qualities and leadership practices/styles to perceptions of effective leadership at AfRU. Leadership effectiveness was not treated as a separately tested statistical dependent variable. Rather, it was understood from respondents' perceptions of how leaders communicated the university's vision and mission, made decisions, solved problems, demonstrated ethical conduct, engaged stakeholders, promoted a shared institutional purpose, and provided opportunities for feedback and participation.



The four respondent groups that is management/senior leaders, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students provided the perspectives through which these qualities, practices and indicators of effective leadership were examined.

The framework recognizes that leadership effectiveness is perceived through both who leaders are and what leaders do. Desirable leadership qualities may provide a foundation for effective leadership, but their significance is also reflected in how leaders

communicate, make decisions, solve problems, engage stakeholders and respond to feedback. The framework therefore guided the analysis of the leadership qualities and practices that respondents associated with effective leadership at AfRU.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine perceptions of leadership qualities and practices at Africa Renewal University (AfRU). Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The mixed-method approach enabled the study to identify patterns in respondents' perceptions and to obtain fuller accounts of leadership experiences within the university.

The study was conducted at Africa Renewal University, a private university in Uganda. It focused on leadership within the institution and included four respondent groups: management and senior leaders, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students. The study considered leadership practices developed over approximately five years, while data collection and the wider research process were undertaken between May 2024 and March 2025.

The target population comprised 200 participants, including 30 management and senior leaders, 60 teaching staff, 40 non-teaching staff and 70 students. The study obtained usable responses from 133 participants, comprising 20 management and senior leaders, 40 teaching staff, 27 non-teaching staff and 46 students, representing an overall response rate of 66.5%. Management and senior leaders were selected purposively because of their direct involvement in institutional leadership and decision-making, while teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students were selected using simple random sampling.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire examined respondents' perceptions of leadership qualities and leadership styles, while the interviews provided additional information on leadership experiences and practices. The research instruments were pre-tested, and their validity was considered before the main data collection. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages. Qualitative interview data were examined thematically to identify recurring views concerning leadership qualities, practices and experiences. The quantitative and qualitative findings were considered together to provide a fuller account of leadership perceptions within AfRU.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, their participation was voluntary, and they were assured of confidentiality and their right to withdraw. Questionnaires were administered anonymously, while interview participants provided informed consent. Information obtained from participants was treated confidentially and used for the purposes of the study.

5. RESULTS

The findings for Objective 1 focused on respondents' perceptions of leadership styles and qualities associated with the management of Africa Renewal University (AfRU). The analysis covered four respondent groups: students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and management and other senior leaders. The groups comprised 46 students, 40 teaching staff, 27 non-teaching staff and 20 management and other senior leaders.

Transformational leadership was the most frequently identified leadership style in all four respondent groups. Among students, 40 of the 46 respondents (86.96%) identified transformational leadership. Among teaching staff, 31 of 40 respondents (77.5%) identified it. Among non-teaching staff, 18 of 27 respondents (66.67%) selected transformational leadership, while 14 of 20 management and other senior leaders (70%) selected the same style.

Servant leadership was identified by 4 students (8.70%), 1 teaching staff member (2.5%), 2 non-teaching staff (7.41%) and 6 management and other senior leaders (30%). Democratic leadership was identified by 2 students (4.35%), 8 teaching staff (20%) and 3 non-teaching staff (11.11%); no management or senior leader selected this style. Autocratic leadership was selected by 4 non-teaching staff (14.81%), while no student, teaching staff member or management/senior leader selected it. Laissez-faire leadership received no selection from any respondent group.

Table 1: Leadership styles identified by respondent group

Respondent group	Transformational	Servant	Democratic	Autocratic	Laissez-faire	Total
Students (n = 46)	40 (86.96%)	4 (8.70%)	2 (4.35%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	46
Teaching staff (n = 40)	31 (77.5%)	1 (2.5%)	8 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	40
Non-teaching staff (n = 27)	18 (66.67%)	2 (7.41%)	3 (11.11%)	4 (14.81%)	0 (0%)	27

Management and other senior leaders (n = 20)	14 (70%)	6 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20
Total responses	**103**	**13**	**13**	**4**	**0**	**133**

Source: Field data, 2025.

The study also examined seven leadership qualities: effective communication, decision-making skills, integrity and ethics, empathy and emotional intelligence, visionary thinking, problem-solving skills, and other qualities. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Leadership qualities identified by respondent group

Leadership quality	Students (n = 46)	Teaching staff (n = 40)	Non-teaching staff (n = 27)	Management/senior leaders (n = 20)	Total responses
Effective communication	30	35	20	40	125
Decision-making skills	25	30	18	35	108
Integrity and ethics	40	38	25	45	148
Empathy and emotional intelligence	20	25	15	28	88
Visionary thinking	15	20	10	25	70
Problem-solving skills	28	35	18	38	119
Other	5	2	4	3	14

Source: *Field data, 2025.*

Integrity and ethics recorded the highest total number of responses, with 148 selections. Effective communication recorded 125, followed by problem-solving skills with 119 and decision-making skills with 108. Empathy and emotional intelligence recorded 88 responses, visionary thinking 70, and other qualities 14.

At group level, effective communication received 40 responses from management and other senior leaders, 35 from teaching staff, 30 from students and 20 from non-teaching staff. Integrity and ethics received 45 responses from management and other senior leaders, 38 from teaching staff, 40 from students and 25 from non-teaching staff. Decision-making skills received 35 responses from management and other senior leaders, 30 from teaching staff, 25 from students and 18 from non-teaching staff.

Empathy and emotional intelligence received 28 responses from management and other senior leaders, 25 from teaching staff, 20 from students and 15 from non-teaching staff. Visionary thinking received 25 responses from management and other senior leaders, 20 from teaching staff, 15 from students and 10 from non-teaching staff. Problem-solving skills received 38 responses from management and other senior leaders, 35 from teaching staff, 28 from students and 18 from non-teaching staff. The category of other qualities recorded 14 responses in total.

The qualitative component also examined the attributes considered important for management leadership. The interview findings reported views from administrators/management, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students. The findings identified effective communication, integrity and ethics, and problem-solving skills as recurring attributes across the groups.

The qualitative findings further reported differences between respondent groups in the attributes they emphasised. Management and teaching staff gave relatively high ratings to decision-making, empathy and visionary thinking, while students and non-teaching staff placed greater emphasis on integrity and ethics and effective communication.

The results show that transformational leadership was the most frequently identified leadership style, while integrity and ethics, effective communication, problem-solving skills and decision-making skills recorded the highest numbers of responses among the leadership qualities examined. The qualitative findings also showed both common and differing perceptions of the attributes associated with management leadership across the four respondent groups.

6. DISCUSSION

The first objective examined leadership experiences and perceptions concerning the traits and practices associated with effective leadership at Africa Renewal University (AfRU). The findings show that respondents understood effective leadership in multidimensional terms. Integrity and ethics, effective communication, problem-solving and decision-making were among the qualities most frequently identified across the respondent groups, with integrity and ethics recording the highest number of responses. These findings indicate that perceptions of effective leadership at AfRU were not based on a single personal

characteristic or leadership behaviour, but on a combination of ethical conduct, interpersonal competence and the practical ability to respond to institutional issues.

The prominence of integrity and ethics is consistent with leadership scholarship that places ethical conduct, fairness and trust at the centre of effective leadership relationships. What is particularly evident in the AfRU findings is that the importance attached to integrity and ethics was not limited to management and senior leaders. The quality was also strongly identified by students, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. This suggests that leadership effectiveness was experienced partly through the conduct of those occupying leadership positions and not simply through their formal authority. In the university context, where leaders interact with different groups on academic, administrative and student-related matters, ethical conduct can therefore form an important part of how leadership is perceived.

Effective communication was also strongly associated with leadership effectiveness. It was identified across all four respondent groups and recorded the second-highest number of responses after integrity and ethics. This finding is consistent with the view that communication is central to leadership because leaders must convey expectations, coordinate activities and maintain relationships with people working at different levels of an institution. At AfRU, the emphasis placed on communication by students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and senior leaders indicates that respondents regarded the ability to communicate effectively as an important part of day-to-day leadership practice.

The findings further show that problem-solving and decision-making were important qualities associated with effective leadership. Problem-solving recorded 119 responses, while decision-making recorded 108. These qualities were particularly evident among management and teaching staff. The pattern is understandable within a university environment in which leaders are required to respond to academic, administrative and organisational issues while coordinating the interests and responsibilities of different stakeholders. The findings therefore extend the understanding of leadership effectiveness beyond personal character and communication to include the practical capacity to make decisions and address problems.

The leadership style findings provide a further dimension to these perceptions. Transformational leadership was the most frequently identified style in each respondent group, with 86.96% of students, 77.5% of teaching staff, 66.67% of non-teaching staff and 70% of management and senior leaders identifying it. The consistency of this pattern across the four groups indicates that transformational leadership was the leadership approach most readily associated with the management of AfRU by the respondents in this study. This is compatible with the emphasis of Transformational Leadership Theory on vision, motivation, commitment and the development of followers.

However, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating that transformational leadership is inherently more effective than other leadership approaches. The study examined perceptions within one institutional setting and did not test the relative causal effectiveness of different leadership styles. Other styles were also identified, although less frequently, including servant and democratic leadership. Management and senior leaders, in particular, identified both transformational and servant leadership, while teaching and non-teaching staff also identified democratic and, in a smaller number of cases, autocratic leadership. The pattern therefore reflects a range of leadership experiences within AfRU rather than a single uniform approach.

The qualitative findings reinforce this interpretation. Respondents across the four groups repeatedly referred to communication, integrity and ethics, and problem-solving when describing leadership qualities associated with effectiveness. At the same time, differences between respondent groups were evident. Management and teaching staff placed relatively greater emphasis on decision-making, empathy and emotional intelligence, and visionary thinking, while students and non-teaching staff placed greater emphasis on integrity and ethics and effective communication. These differences are relevant because they show that leadership effectiveness may be experienced differently depending on a stakeholder's position and interaction with university leadership.

Taken together, the findings indicate that perceived leadership effectiveness at AfRU was associated with a combination of ethical character, communication competence and practical leadership capacity, expressed within a predominantly transformational leadership context. The results therefore support the study's conceptual framework, which brings together leadership qualities and leadership practices in examining perceptions of effective leadership. They also demonstrate the value of obtaining views from multiple stakeholder groups. Rather than relying only on the perspectives of those holding formal leadership positions, the study considered how students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and management perceived leadership within the same institutional setting.

The contribution of the study is consequently contextual rather than universal. The AfRU case shows that stakeholders associated effective leadership with integrity and ethics, communication, problem-solving and decision-making, while transformational leadership was the most frequently identified leadership style. The findings also show that these perceptions were broadly shared across respondent groups, although the relative emphasis placed on particular qualities differed. This provides context-specific evidence on how leadership effectiveness is understood within a private university in Uganda and demonstrates that leadership is experienced through both the qualities of leaders and the ways those qualities are expressed in institutional practice.

7. CONCLUSION

The study examined the leadership qualities and practices perceived to contribute to effective leadership at Africa Renewal University. The findings indicate that respondents associated effective leadership particularly with integrity and ethics, effective communication, problem-solving and decision-making. Transformational leadership was the most frequently identified leadership style across all four respondent groups.

The findings also show that perceptions of effective leadership were broadly shared across students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and management and senior leaders, although the emphasis placed on particular qualities varied between groups. This demonstrates that leadership effectiveness at AfRU was understood through both the personal qualities of leaders and the practical ways in which leadership was exercised.

Overall, the study provides context-specific evidence that perceived leadership effectiveness in a private university in Uganda is associated with ethical conduct, communication competence, practical judgement and problem-solving within a predominantly transformational leadership context. The findings also highlight the value of considering multiple stakeholder perspectives when examining leadership effectiveness in higher education.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

First, private universities should strengthen leadership development programmes that emphasise integrity and ethics, effective communication, decision-making and problem-solving. These were among the qualities most frequently associated with effective leadership by respondents in the study.

Second, leadership development at AfRU and similar institutions should combine transformational leadership practices with strong interpersonal and ethical competencies. Since transformational leadership was the most frequently identified style, leaders can build on this orientation while ensuring that vision, motivation and engagement are supported by ethical conduct and effective day-to-day management.

Third, university leaders should recognise that different stakeholder groups may experience and assess leadership differently. Leadership development and institutional engagement should therefore consider the perspectives of students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and senior leaders rather than relying solely on management perspectives.

Fourth, universities should provide opportunities for continuous development of practical leadership competencies, particularly decision-making and problem-solving. Such development can help leaders respond more effectively to the academic, administrative and organisational issues that arise in higher education institutions.

Finally, future research could examine leadership effectiveness across several private universities in Uganda using larger samples. Comparative and longitudinal studies could also explore whether the leadership qualities and styles identified at AfRU are evident in other institutional contexts and how perceptions of leadership may change over time.

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