

The Agency of Black Women Professors in Higher Education: A Critical Consciousness Perspective

Authors : Ncamisile T. Zulu, Nicholas Munro

Abstract : Black women academics in higher education institutions are predominantly portrayed by literature as individuals who usually lack a sense of belonging, progression, and workload management. The oversaturation of this literature can (overtime) perpetuate a stereotypical idea that Black women academics are incapable of coping and succeeding in higher education institutions. The current article explores the agency, motivated by critical consciousness that Black women professors have and utilise in higher education institutions. In order to provide an understanding of how Black women academics can progress, manage their workloads and succeed in higher education institutions, the article considers how these women can take responsibility for their self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal in academic endeavours. As a result, the article presents a line of thought which could help in challenging the stereotype about Black women academics. The study was conducted at two higher education institutions involving Black women professors from different disciplines. A combination of purposive and snowballing sampling was used to recruit nine women participants, while data were collected through interviews. A critical consciousness perspective was adopted to formulate an understanding of the agency of Black women professors in higher education institutions, while thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The results challenge the widely disseminated view that portrays Black women academics as incapable of coping and succeeding in higher education institutions. The findings highlight Black women professors as proactive, flexible, and self-regulating in their academic endeavours. These findings contribute to the literature by adding a more constructive narrative of Black women academics in higher education.

Keywords : agency, Black women academics, critical consciousness, higher education institutions

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