

**21ST CENTURY LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTION LEADERS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

Dr. Michael Marttinson Boakye

Senior Lecturer, J. S. Addo School of Business, Marshalls University College, Ghana

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Abstract:

The 21st business environment is characterized by many challenges and opportunities and as such calls relevant leadership capabilities that can help to surmount the challenges and also utilized the enormous opportunities for effectiveness in educational institutions. This contemporary study analyses leadership capabilities needed for effective and sustainable leadership in the 21st century educational institutions. This paper analysed data collected from 130 respondents comprising students, alumni, faculty and administrative staff of private institution of higher education. Analysis was done in descriptive framework using thematic and content as techniques of analysis. The findings revealed Leadership capabilities needed for educational institutions effectiveness consist intelligence, personality and learning and motivation. It was therefore recommended that shareholders organize conferences, seminars and professional development programmes to upgrade leader's capabilities or to scout for leaders with the needed capabilities to drive the sustainability agenda of educational institutions.

Key Words: Leadership Capabilities, Intelligence, Personality and Learning, Motivation

Introduction:

Effective leadership is seen as a success factor in the equation of every thriving business organization and for that matter educational institutions. As the demand and requirement for educational and business leaders continue to metamorphose, it necessary for them to adopt, build and develop as well as possess the relevant 21st century capabilities that can help them navigate numerous complexities that confront smooth operations of business agenda. Delving into existing literature and empirical analysis of respondents perception, this contemporary paper aims to analyse the 21st century leadership capabilities. The objective was to establish the key leadership capabilities needed to drive the success and sustainability of educational institutions in the 21st century.

Review of Literature:

Leadership capabilities are the key characteristics of abilities for which the leader is able to execute leadership functions easily. Abdullah (2020) juxtaposes that leadership capabilities support and encourage the leader in thinking the appropriate ways and means for which to execute leadership functions more easily. They identify six key leadership capabilities to include collaboration and influence, creativity and innovation, empowering and inspiring, motivation and learning, self-leadership and vision.

Capabilities of collaborating and influencing has to do with the leading together with subordinates for better organisational outcome and that is dependent on how leader builds relationship with followers in order to create creative an innovative climate for indiscriminate contribution of all. Creativity and innovation as a capability brings to the leader an open mindset and intelligence in order to see possibilities to create opportunities and to increase the fortunes of organisations.

Empowering as a capability of the leader helps him to develop other talents and followers who have leadership potential and the agenda to support the well-being of the organisation and the leadership activities. Motivation and learning helps the leader to drive others for higher contribution through diverse means of coaching, directing, and controlling among others. Capabilities of the leader comes with personality and self-leadership where the leader is able to recognize, exercise and improve on leadership performance consistent with the organisational objectives. The leader must have the capabilities to develop and set clear vision that serves as a starting point for organisation's success and effectiveness. Formulating clear vision determines the direction of organisations.

In effect, leadership capabilities must embrace broad areas of intelligence, personality, learning and motivation for which are critical variables for developing others and self-leadership.

Leadership Capability:

The Peak Performance Center (2020) juxtaposes that capability is much broader because it covers set of skills, knowledge and abilities needed to accomplish a task. Capabilities are effective application and combination of skills required for organisational success. They indicate that capabilities consist of skills, abilities and knowledge that enables a person to perform effectively on a job. Examples of capability include staff development, problem solving, managing risk, communication, customer service, and decision making.

Boakye (2019) identifies critical leadership capabilities for organisational effectiveness consisting influence and collaboration, strategic thinking, developing others, persuasive communication and team leadership.

Influence and collaboration is leadership capability. Organisational effectiveness is achieved through leadership capability of collaboration and influencing the whole working environment. Leaders must have the skills to coordinate all organisational activities. The capability to influence and collaborate with all stakeholders of an organisation is critical for leadership of organisations. A capability of collaboration and influence on organisational workforce ignites employee loyalty which leads to organisational effectiveness. The influence and collaboration emanate from the leaders' experience, charisma and knowledge in leading others. Strategic thinking is a leadership capability.

The skills and abilities to think in the long term and develop a strategic action plan, sets the direction of organisations development agenda. Strategic thinking that sets direction facilitates the quick implementation and achievement of objectives and goals. Developing others is another leadership capability. Organisational leadership develops others for succession, business continuity, competition and higher productivity though the cost of development may be high. The leader's ability to competently impact employee development drives organisations effectiveness. Developing others entails a lot depending on employee previous experience, previous knowledge and previous competence.

Persuasive communication is also another leadership capability. The leaders' ability to communicate persuasively empowers the vision in the eyes of the employee and the desire to let it happen. Persuasive communicators explain objectives and the exact ways for realizing those set objectives. Persuasive communication becomes a motivating factor that drives dedication and handwork for goals realization. Persuasive communication aids to get attention of employees to stand by and work towards the accomplishment of business objectives whether short or long term. Team leadership is a leadership capability. Leaders of organisations must possess the ability of focusing and building effective groups in an organisation with relevant alignment of skills capable enough to achieve business goals. The ability to focus, align and build teams or group empowers the principle of division of labor which makes people work effectively. Team leadership makes it possible to get the contribution of every employee expertise that are correctly positioned in teams or group. Team leadership ensures the adequate involvement and supervision of task.

Leadership Capability Development:

Developing leadership capability for organisations is such a technical role of leadership who want to gain a competitive advantage. Cherry (2021) defines capability development as approaches, strategies and methodologies used to improve organisational effectiveness and performance. The agenda for capability development is to fundamentally achieve change and transformation at the level of individual worker and the organisation as a whole. This requires long term investment, continuous learning and adaptation of business operations to mitigate environmental threats. Cohen (2004) defines capability development as the process through which individual organisations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time. This implies that capability development takes place at three levels: individual, organisational and society. In capability development, there is retention and strengthening ability to drive development that leads to a good change. Capability development is meant to achieve a good change and organisational effectiveness.

Dimmock (2011) juxtaposes that for organisations to be effective, there must be a challenging human capital with the following characteristics: intelligence, personality, learning and motivation as "turning new ideas into stakeholder benefit". Developing or building capabilities in organisation is dependent on four building blocks which comprise organisational cultures, strategy, talent and process. Culture as a building block tells the systems and operations of behaviour by the people in an organisation. Innovative mindset and thinking with risk taking must be incorporated into the cultural system of organisations. This makes organisational workforce ever prepared and ready for innovation. The next building block is organisational strategy. Innovation plan or strategy must be incorporated into the overall strategy of the business organisation where innovation is made a priority with all necessary resources needed to carry out an innovation plan.

The talent within an organisation must be recruited to support the innovative agenda of organisations. The hiring of human capital must support the innovative agenda of an organisation. The final building block for developing leadership capability as described by Dimmock (2011) is organisational processes. The process must be tailored to increase new product development effort and the processes must support the workforce in new idea generation and usage. Dimmock (2011) identifies five processes in developing leadership capacity. The leadership of organisations must first of all acquire promising new technologies in relation to knowledge and equipment. The leader again must increase new product or service development efforts. The leadership has to then create a climate of innovation where innovative mindset or thinking with risk-taking mentality is imbedded into the cultural system of the organisation. Leadership has a role of hiring workforce with talent for innovative thinking and mindset.

This therefore calls for careful needs assessment and planning before strategizing for capacity development. Cherry (2021) identifies levels at which capability can be developed: individual,

organisational and sectorial and the enabling environment levels. Individuals are seen as social and organisational actors because their skills are harness to achieve performance and organisational goals. Therefore, capability development at the individual level must be planned in a way that can benefit and facilitates that achievement of organisational goals.

Investment in capability development at the individual becomes unbeneficial if it does not translate into good change of organisation. The organisational level of capability development covers changes in organisational structures, resources, processes and leadership management tactics. This capacity development at this level is determined by how organisational structure constraint or support effectiveness.

The sectorial level of capability development centers on improvement of investment results through sector policies and strategy which is achieved through sector policies and strategy. The enabling environment level of capability development is to ensure an equal playground for all to achieve through sound policies, commitment, stable economy and fair equitable distribution of state resources. Morgan (1998) highlights strategies for capability development. He identifies them as follows: eliminate inappropriate capacity, making better use of existing capacity, strengthening up existing capacity, providing climate of innovation and creativity of capacities and creating new capacities.

Morgan (1998) defines capability as the emergent combination for attributes that enables a human system to create development value. He again postulates five core capabilities which cover: capability to act, capability to generate development results, capability to relate, capability to adapt and self- renew and capability to achieve coherence. The strategy to develop leadership capability should be suitable so as to fit the five core capabilities stated above. Harris (2000) juxtaposes that capability building concerns crafting a strategy that promote opportunities for mutual learning. This implies that capability development is achieved through collaboration between superordinate and subordinates as well as mutual learning.

Cox et al (2010) identify that to develop leadership capability, it demands conducting series of monthly workshops to develop the leadership and management skills and competence for improving on the results achievement. They identify associated research studies as another means of developing leadership and management capability which aids in understanding the relationship which frames both leadership and management roles.

Continuous higher education builds capabilities as the educand is endowed with necessary capability for organisational progress. Strategic capability development results in changes in organisational collaboration and alliance, culture, learning and innovation, policy and standards, processes and systems, strategy, structure and technology of the entire organisation. A change in a way that organisations deal with other organisations and institutions, change in attitude, practices and behaviour as the results of new acquisition of skills, knowledge and ideas with application of new technology to impact on organisational performance and effectiveness. The Cohen suggests capability development in key areas: functional and technical capabilities with the third one relating to behavioural capability. The functional capability relate to management capability needed to formulate, implement and review strategies. The technical capabilities cover specific areas of expertise and practice in thematic areas like small business training. Behavioural capabilities raise the awareness for individuals to cause shifts in culture and attitude, and by so doing prompts changes in strategy, policies and culture in an organisation.

Cohen (2004) suggests five steps in the capability building process. First of all, there must be engagement of all stakeholders to ensure full participation which builds trust. Secondly, there is a need of assessment of situation or need for capability development and determining vision and mandate. The third stage is to formulate policies and strategy. This requires skills and strategic thinking, prioritization, planning, feasibility and risk analysis. The fourth step is budgeting, management and implementation of policies or strategies. This again requires special skills in forecasting, participating, budgeting, cost benefit analysis and reporting systems. The final stage is monitoring and evaluating the implementation strategy. This needs skills in setting measurable goals and objectives, defining outcomes and conducive atmosphere for learning.

The capability of leaders is determined by the skills, knowledge and abilities. These are crucial to the success of the leadership equation hence the relevance of the leadership capability development policy in institutions.

Research Methodology:

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data were gathered through face to face interview in order to analyse leadership capabilities. Questions on leadership capabilities were responded to in order to determine the degree of respondent perception. The research design for the study was survey using qualitative technique.

Total population of 130 respondents participated using purposive and convenience sampling technique from a tertiary educational institution in the Accra Metropolis.

Empirical Results:

Leadership capabilities were well discussed by respondents. One academic officer indicated that the university leaders have "intelligence capabilities, well informed about issues in and out of the college.....they understand the priorities of both students and lecturers..."

This assertion was supported by one academic coordinator "...the leaders here have clear view of the future direction because of that they maintain a continuous focus on how to grow the college strategically...."

This statement demonstrates that the university leaders had the needed capability to drive the success of the College according to the College's mandate however, respondents identified several challenges that impeded the capabilities of the university leadership. The identified challenges are grouped into five key thematic areas including cooperation and integration, adequacy of resources, pressure from regulators, financial inadequacies and lower student enrollment.

The challenges found in this study reinforce Elsevier (2020) that university leadership faces key challenges of attracting students, funding, lack of cooperation and enhancing public profile.

Lack of cooperation was a major challenge perceived among respondents which impeded the success story of the university. One senior administrative staff had this to say:

".... you see there is too much autonomy in this place; every department is self- governing and it's like more attention is on the fashion school".

This clearly indicates that the most educational institutions lack integration and collaboration. Each department is juxtaposing to be independent of others thereby giving some departments' undue advantage and yardstick of operation and success than other departments. This assertion is supported by one academic support staff:

"each department is allowed to run the show; you have to look for your own students to feel the department so we are doing more adverts for the hospitality school so that we can get more students like the fashion school"

From the above, it is an undeniable fact that most of the university activities like advertisement, students' recruitment, promotion and planning are done at the departmental levels with no intentional efforts of cooperation and integration and basically that can have an awful impact on the public image of the university. Donchenko (2015) indicates that cooperation and integration promote peace and understanding contributing to the development and efficiency of human resources within universities.

Resource is the engineer and bloodline of every organisation. Both human and material resources are necessary for implementation of objectives and projects of every university. On the adequacy of resources, one administrative office of the university had this to say:

".... though we have enough materials and equipment to work with, you will see one person handling a lot of things especially the academic officer. The same person doing invigilation, helping to take school fees, making sure school fees are paid and making sure our lecturers come to classbecause we are under staffed"

This response implies that human resource or workforce in the administration of the university is woefully inadequate. Again, for one person taking charge of student enrollment, examination and invigilation as well as supervising the payment of fees establishes the fact that the university lacks administrative structures in terms of office of registry, office of admission, student services office, examinations office among others. In relation to the material resources needed for daily operations of the university one senior administrative officer indicated:

".....we want to reach out to potential students and the university official cars are available for such duties..... but we are under staffed so we are not able to do regular students recruitment...."

The above portrays the helplessness of the few workers in the university and how they are frustrated in trying to implement their core mandate due to the lack of personnel. Tamrat (2019) in support of the findings asserts that the quest for efficient personnel is needed to make a significant contribution towards the progress and stability of universities.

Regulatory bodies were perceived by respondents to be unduly harassing and continue to harass the university college. Among the state regulatory bodies identified included Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), Municipal and District Assemblies (MDAs), National Fire Service (NFS). An administrative staff from the Accounts department indicated:

"....there are a lot of pressure from SSNIT and GRA. I know the university owes and have to pay them some money but the pressure and threats from them to close down the university is getting too much; you know what, I wish these state institutions understand what the university is going through otherwise their actions will collapse the university"

The university has to pay statutory fees to state agencies and business regulatory bodies however, the financial strength of the university impedes that obligation and that may be due to the low student enrollment among many other factors which Omane-Antwi (2017) refers to as challenges of multiple oversight which confuses regulatory requirements applicable to private universities such as accreditation, mentorship and affiliation. Fielden and LaRocque (2008) reinforce the view of the respondents that regulatory framework must support private sector education otherwise rigorous and unreasonable regulation as well as check and control can damage the fundamentals of private education provision especially in Ghana.

Financial status was another challenge addressed by respondent. Almost all respondents indicated that the university had financial inadequacy. A junior administrative staff from the marketing department of the university has this to say:

"We haven't been paid for months because the university rely on school fees from students; no other income from elsewhere so the fees that come in, are used to pay taxes and SSNIT people so that they don't harass the university because when they come here sometimes they threaten to close down the university"

This statement agrees with the argument of Omane-Antwi (2017) that financial sustainability is a stringent criterion to improve higher education standards and also to support ongoing university programmes, projects and other activities which are necessary for the university to undertake to achieve their core business agenda. Peprah and Osei Kuffour (2020) indicate that private tertiary institutions with 17.60% income diversification will be able to stand the test of times despite environmental favorableness. This goes to confirm why one respondent noted:

".....we haven't been paid for month because we rely on school fees from students no income from elsewhere that I know of..."

Student population and enrollment was another major theme of concern raised by respondents. This was an issue because it was the major source of income for overall business operations of universities. One academic officer shared light:

"...we have a lot of empty lecture halls but few students. From Monday to Wednesdays our halls are empty and we need to fill these classrooms.... the few students that we have are weekend students.... that is why you see the whole place quiet. We don't have regular students so morning and afternoon from Monday to Wednesday the place is quiet....."

To confirm the assertion of the respondents above, the head of department of Fashion emphasised that: "Student population is far less... only 380 students in all; I think..... we are hoping for increase though....."

Attracting and recruiting diverse students into the wide range of programmes that cater for the needs of society is a major challenge that private university leadership grapple with (Omane-Antwi, 2017). It is therefore important for private university leaders to increase international students' enrollment since the local market is choked (Omane- Antwi, 2017).

Communication failure in organisation and learner disinterestedness was also identified as challenges that in a way affected the operations of the university. One notable student had this to say:

".... communication is very poor, information never got to us on time. Always we get information late, even timetable for exams is not communicated on time as for organisation of events, it is not good at allsome of us lost interest in tertiary education"

Summary and Conclusion:

From the study the relevant 21st century Leadership capabilities needed for educational institutions effectiveness consist intelligence, personality and learning and motivation. University leadership in private institutions of higher learning must develop these key leadership capabilities which can promote and facilitates the quick achievement of organisational effectiveness. It is also expedient that shareholders organize conferences, seminars and professional development programmes to upgrade leaders in educational administration to empower their strategy development, college advocacy and professionalism in their line of duties. These call for special budget allocation purposively for the continuous improvement of leadership capabilities.

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