



THE INTEGRAL ROLE OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION WITHIN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Dr. Michael Martinson Boakye

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

Cite This Article: Dr. Michael Martinson Boakye, "The Integral Role of Leadership Skills in Effective Administration Within Private Universities", International Journal of Advanced Trends in Engineering and Technology, International Peer Reviewed - Refereed Research Journal, Volume 9, Issue 1, January - June, Page Number 9-14, 2024.

Copy Right: © DV Publication, 2024 (All Rights Reserved). This is an Open Access Article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work is properly cited.

Abstract:

Leadership skills are very much needed for the effectiveness of Private Universities or Institutions of Higher Education rapid the world. This empirical study explore the state of leadership skills of private universities. 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 a descriptive statistics as techniques of analysis . The findings revealed that Organisation strategy skills of the university administrators was High ($\bar{x}$ =4.03). Skills of college advocacy and professionalism was High ($\bar{x}$ =3.90 and $\bar{x}$ = 3.95). The study recommended that private university administrators should focus on the three major leadership skills that is,organisational strategy, college advocacy and professionalismto promote institutional effectiveness. This therefore calls for constant training and capacity on how to leverage on the evolving benefit of organisational strategy, college advocacy and professionalism.

Key Words: Leadership Skills, Private Universities, Professionalism, College Advocacy, Organizational Effectiveness, Organisational Strategy

Introduction:

Leadership play a very important role in the administration of higher education or private university education especially in the process of enhancing promoting the image and the reputation of private universities. Leadership is fundamental to the success and growth of institutions. In private institutions of higher education, effective leadership is very important as these institutions face predictable challenges as compared to their government institutions. It requires that private university leadership develop special skills that promote conducive environment and academic excellence and student's better outcome. This paper aims to explore pertinent leadership skills needed for effective leadership and administration in private universities with emphasis on their significance to successful institutions.

Literature Review:

Skills are specific activities and tasks requiring proficiency which are developed through training and experience. It is a physical task learned in order to be able to carry out one or more job functions (The Peak Performance Center, 2020). Fialte (2013) asserts that though leadership activities encompass leading part (engaging people to ensure their commitment, competence and motivation) and achieving activities (focusing on processes to ensure productivity quality and efficiency to achieve performance or results required) four skills set are very much needed for effectiveness.

These four skills set constitute conceptual skills, technical skills, interpersonal skills and leadership skills. The optimal use of these skills is needed to ensure leadership success. Leadership skills are the tools, behaviours, and capabilities that a person needs in order to be successful at motivating and directing others. The skills of leaders are to help people to grow and also drive them to achieve their purpose. Therefore, to achieve leadership success, the leader must possess relevant skills which Failte (2013) classifies as conceptual skills, technical skills, interpersonal skills and leadership skills. The conceptual skills cover the abilities to recognize and analyze issues, problem solving and decision making. The leader must see big future of the organisation and through analysis of the environmental factors be able to take decisions to enhance organisational effectiveness.

Technical skills of the leader involve planning, initiative, and execution among others. Interpersonal skills encompass effective communication, team work, connecting with people to ensure collective achievement of goals. Leading skills cover adjustment of the leadership process and response to prevailing business environment. Haley (2019) identifies seven critical skills of leadership needed to achieve organisational effectiveness. He lists them as follows: communication, setting goals, motivation, teamwork, and change and conflict management as well as coaching.

Communication deals the ability to communicate purpose, direction and leadership intentions to all the functional areas of an organisation and receiving expected response which ensures clarity and accurate outcome of leadership decisions. Goal setting as leadership skills cover providing direction and defining priorities to enable effective decision making and initiation of action to surmount business challenges in order to achieve

organisational success. Motivating people is a leadership skills highlighted by Haley (2019) and it covers leadership activities like treating others with respect and dignity, trust and honesty, openness and constructive criticism, subordinate autonomy among others.

This creates a conducive working environment. Building team is another crucial leadership which falls within Failte (2013) leading skills. Building teams involves the ability to forming, storming, norming, and performing (Haley, 2019). Forming stage deals with developing a group, specifying their role and goals to accomplish expectations. The storming stage deals with conflict issues, managing dependency and promoting consensus building. The leader assesses all viewpoints of subordinates in order to establish alternative ways for better decision making. Norming stage helps in building team or group to collectively solve problems where there is an opportunity for mutual learning and supportive behaviour. Performing stage is where group mature. Team identifies and implements corrective actions for their task. At this point, the leader must have the ability to identify challenges, facilitate processes and delegation to ensure professional development. The fifth leadership skills postulated by Haley (2019) is leading change skills which Failte (2013) calls, leading skills. The leaders must possess skills to initiate and implement policies that can cause paradigm shift in an organisation and these skills involves ability to resist change, listen carefully, opportunity for improvement, ways to inspire and involve people among others.

Conflict management is the sixth crucial skills leaders need to succeed. Haley asserts that conflict is the single largest contributor of lack of accountability though on the average leaders spends 20% to 50% of their time on conflict resolution. The leader therefore must have the ability to identify and resolve conflict. Coaching is the last leadership identified by Haley. He defines coaching as the process of equipping people with tools, knowledge and skills they need to develop them so they can deliver maximum value to the organisation.

Coaching helps to leverage human capital of an organisation hence Haley (2019) indicates that coaching can take three forms- performance coaching, on-the-spot correction and mentoring. He juxtaposes that performance coaching is for long term incremental improvement, on-the-spot correction is for directing substandard work performance and mentoring is unofficial coaching based on the coach recognition of special capabilities of a person.

Knowledge of the business operation is another vital trait of leaders. Leaders have adequate knowledge in the areas of business operation right from business siting to business growth. The knowledge again covers all the functional aspects of the business in relation to business vision and mission. The knowledge of the leader is what makes him an expert in the field of operation. Kotter (1990:13) highlights that expertise is much essential than formal education. Pierce and Newstrom (2006:73) support the assertion of Kotter as he juxtaposes that “in-depth knowledge of organisation and industry allows effective leaders to make well informed decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions”. The skills of a leader are crucial in the leadership process because it serves as leverage for successful delivery of leadership strategy. If a leader lacks necessary skills to inspire, influence and motivate subordinates leadership becomes dysfunctional affecting the outcome of vision and strategy of an organisation.

Eastwood (2020) identifies essential traits for effective leadership in higher education to include organisational strategy, advocacy, professionalism, financial acumen, collaboration, communication, strategic planning, change management and intellectual curiosity. The quality of higher institution is dependent on the quality of operations and the quality of services offered to prospective students and community through university leadership, therefore higher education institution leadership must have what it takes to guide students, create vision, create knowledge and roadmaps for achievement of vision (Drugus and Landoy, 2014). This calls for skills which are crucial in leading institutions of higher education because these skills empower the university leadership to see the direction for effectiveness and efficiency as the environmental changes keep affecting the operations of organizations (Eastwood, 2020).

Organisational Strategy:

The skills to develop strategy for an organisation are crucial contributors to success. Sophie (2019) highlights that organisational strategy is sum total of business grand action for growth, diversification retrenching and stabilizing. A leader must have the skills trait to design strategies to monitor and evaluate quality education in the long term and these help to respond to the culture of organisations.

Advocacy:

Advocacy is a special skill to develop by leadership of organisations and institutions alike because it helps to value inclusivity, diversity, and academic excellence, as well as student success through the scholarship of teaching and learning. It is about spokespersonship and promotion of an institution for public recognition (Herman, 2022). In that sense, leadership is able to promote equity, open access, teaching, learning, and innovation as primary goals for colleges, seeking to understand how these changes over time facilitate discussion with all stakeholders. This skills aid to advocate the mission of institutions to all stakeholders by which organisation members work to advance life-long learning and support a conducive learning environment which represent the college in the local community, in the broader educational community, at various levels of government, and as a model of higher education which can be used in international settings.

Professionalism:

The skills of professionalism at workplace helps to understand and endorse the history, philosophy, and culture of organisations as well as assessing personal performance regularly using feedback to reflect, set achievable goals to support lifelong learning for self and others (Glassdoor Team, 2021). This helps to demonstrate the courage to take risks, make difficult decisions, and accept responsibility and understand the impact of perceptions, world views, and emotions on self and others in order to promote and maintain high standards for personal and organisational integrity, honesty, and respect for people. Professionalism at work according to Glassdoor Team (2021) empowers leadership to wisely use power in facilitating the learning agenda and knowledge sharing in college communities thereby contributing to the professional growth and development.

Strategic Planning:

The Society for Colleges and University Planning (2021) describes strategic planning as an intentional activity invested to produce basic decisions and actions that shapes and guides institutions in its operations. The plan of Higher Education institutions guide decision-making both in the short-term and the long-term which help to undertake the mission, vision and values of the institution to enhance competitive advantage and as well observe the regulations of government agencies and authorities. Strategic planning of universities leadership reflects on its performance by focusing on future success. The skills and traits of strategic planning encompass entire university community to ensure effectiveness. It is therefore imperative for universities to have planning committee to include senior level administrators, faculty members, representatives of stakeholders, students as well as top-level decision makers to develop a strategic plan that facilitate the achievement of university's vision and mission.

Kotier and Murphy (1981) introduce six steps to planning strategically in institutions of Higher Education. First is to analyze the environment then after conduct a resource analysis; the third is to examine basic institutional objectives and goals; the fourth step is for the university to determine strategies to achieve the set goals and the fifth step is for the university to develop products or marketing opportunities strategy and the final step is for the university to design and or improve the systems needed to carry out strategies in order to achieve set goals. The steps expound above demands that the university leadership understand the use of data which can provide empirical evidence for decision making.

Change Management:

University leadership is sensitive to change as change is inevitable. Effective university leaders manage conflict through sensitive change management strategy. Change management covers the processes an organisation goes through in transforming organisational goals, processes or technologies in such a manner that maximize stakeholder interest. In change management process people in organisation are led aside the change to facilitate the achievement of vision and mission of the organisation.

Scott and Peter (2009) discuss five change forces that has led to change management in higher education institutions. Scott and Peter argue that rapid increase in competition; significant decrease in funding; greater government scrutiny and supervision; growing consumer rights movement and a rapid spread of communication and information technology influence the change management techniques in universities. It is therefore crucial for university leadership to understand these change forces in order to surmount challenges that face today's higher education institutions.

Eastwood (2020) highlights steps for achieving change management in higher education institutions to consist: interpreting data to know if change has occur or not; collaborating with stakeholders who will be impacted by the change; making decisions that considers everyone's interest; development of communication plan; communicating early and often within a context of urgency for action; humanizing the decision; soliciting feedback and finally taking accountability for decisions and its impacts.

Research Methodology:

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data were gathered through questionnaire administration in order to describe leadership skills in private universities or institutions of higher education. Questions on leadership skills were responded to in order to determine the degree of respondent's perception. Data were processed using SmartLPS3 software.

The research design for the study was survey using quantitative technique. Total population of 130 respondents was involved in the study covering the junior staff members (25), alumni (5) and continuing students (100) from a private university in the Accra Metropolis using Stratified random sampling to select respondents.

Empirical Results:

This section covers different skills that respondents perceived were used in the University College. Questions on organisational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, college advocacy and professionalism were used to measure the state of leadership skills in the university. Oxford and Burry Stock (1995) Mean classification criterion was used to interpret the degree of perception or expectation of

respondents. They interpret Mean scores as follows: 1.0 - 2.4 =Low score, 2.5-3.4 =Moderate, 3.5-5.0 =High score.

Descriptive Statistics of State of Leadership Skills in Private Universities:

Leadership skills	Mean(SD)	Interpretation
Organisational strategy	4.3090 (.40513)	High
Assess, develop, implement, and evaluate strategies regularly to monitor and improve the quality of education and the long-term health of the organisation.	4.35(.701)	
Use data-driven evidence and proven practices from internal and external stakeholders to solve problems, make decisions, and plan strategically.	4.38(.686)	
Use a systems perspective to assess and respond to the culture of the organisation; to changing demographics; and to the economic, political, and public health needs of students and the community.	34.32(.770)	
Develop a positive environment that supports innovation, teamwork, and successful outcomes.	4.10(.931)	
Maintain and grow college personnel and fiscal resources and assets.	4.56(.498)	
Align organisational mission, structures, and resources with the college master plan	4.14(.408)	
College Advocacy	3.9064 (.69637)	High
Value and promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and academic excellence	3.21(1.237)	
Demonstrate self -commitment to the mission of colleges and student success through teaching and learning.	3.72(1.672)	
Facilitate equity, open access, teaching, learning, and innovation as primary goals for the college.	3.84(1.133)	
Advocate the college mission to all constituents and empower them to do the same	4.22(.988)	
Promote life-long learning and support a learner-centered and learning-centered environment	4.14(.755)	
Represent the college well in the local community, in the broader educational community, at various levels of government, and as a model of higher education that can be replicated in international settings	4.32(.908)	
Professionalism	3.9556 (.58723)	High
Understand and endorse the history, philosophy, and culture of the college.	4.23(1.110)	
Self-assess performance regularly using feedback, reflection, goal-setting, and evaluation	3.76(1.033)	
Support lifelong learning for self and others	4.18(.936)	
Manage stress through self-care, balance, adaptability, flexibility, and humor	4.22(.934)	
Demonstrate the courage to take risks, make difficult decisions, and accept responsibility	3.95(.967)	
Understand the impact of perceptions, world views, and emotions on self and others.	4.02(.968)	
Promote and maintain high standards for personal and organisational integrity, honesty, and respect for people	3.82(.905)	
Use influence and power wisely in facilitating the teaching-learning process and the exchange of knowledge.	3.70(.962)	
Contribute to the profession through professional development programmes, professional organisational leadership, and research/publication	3.72(.940)	
Valid N (listwise) = 130		

The Overall Leadership Skills	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid N (list wise) = 130	3.5739	.37463

Scale (Mean): 1-2.4=Low, 2.5-3.4=Moderate, 3.5-5.0 = High (Oxford &Stock, 1995)

Source: Author's Construct, 2023

From the Table, the overall Mean score of leadership skills of the university administrators was High ($\bar{x}$ =3.57). This was due to the fact that majority of the respondents indicated how the university administrators and faculty members used range of skills in their daily activities . Organisation strategy skills of the university administrators was High ($\bar{x}$ =4.03). Prajogo (2006) supports this finding that organisational strategy is positively related to organisational performance especially when it comes to innovation within an organisation.

Rahman et al (2019) also support this finding that organisational strategy roadmaps the ways by which the objective of organisations are to be achieved. That is to say that, organisations success is dependent on the implementation of strategy and leadership. This indicates that strategy implementation is the bloodline of effective organisations.

On the other hand , skills of college advocacy and professionalism was High ($\bar{x}$ =3.90 and $\bar{x}$ = 3.95) respectively, indicating that the university administrators and faculty members demonstrated high standards in leadership activities. MacCornell (2004) agrees with this finding that advocacy in organisations are the element of success in that everything done within an organisation will include advocacy; the words advocacy and lobbying suggest shady practices, special interest, and influence-peddling. Again, this finding is in consistent with Pierce and Newstrom (2006) that in-depth knowledge of organisation and professionalism allows effective leaders to make well-informed decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions they make.

On the skills of professionalism, Cohen and Kol (2004) hold a view which is consistent with this finding that professionalism within an organisation is positively related to organisational performance however, this must be mediated by certain variables like justice in the workplace. In addition, Benjamin (2010) also indicates that professionalism in academic institutions of higher learning powers administrative and faculty expectations thereby reducing the tension between professionalism and bureaucratic demands and by doing so increases the fortunes and the effectiveness of organisations.

Summary and Conclusion:

Organisational strategy was a major skill demonstrated by the university leadership coupled with college advocacy and professionalism. Leadership skills help people to grow and also drive them to achieve purpose thereby enhancing organisational effectiveness in such a manner required by the corporate strategy of organisations. The study identifies leadership skills, leadership skills and leadership capabilities as components of Leadership traits expression with mediation of leadership competency leading to organisational effectiveness. It is therefore recommended that effective and efficient Leadership traits expression model for private tertiary education must pay keen attention to the two dimensions of leadership skills (transformational and authoritative); the three skills set (organisational strategy, college advocacy and professionalism) and leadership capabilities (intelligence, personality and learning and motivation) in order to leverage them for optimal organisational effectiveness.

References:

1. The peak performance Centre (2022). Difference between competencies and skills. Word Press themes (accessed on April 15, 2022)
2. Failte I. (2013). Personal leadership effectiveness: Leadership skills. A guide to help you review your interpersonal skills and leadership styles. Business tools Amiens street Dublin 1.
3. Haley F. D. (2019). The seven critical skills of leadership; how to master what you need to succeed: Academy leadership.
4. Kotter, J. P. (1990). A Force for change.How leadership differs from Management,The Free Press.
5. Pierce, J. L., &Newstrom, J.W. (2011). Leaders and the leadership process. (6th ed). New York, NY
6. Eastwood, B. (2020) 8 Essential Traits for Effective Leadership in Higher Education <https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/leadership-in-higher-education/> [accessed on October 27, 2021]
7. Drugus D. & Landoy, A. (2014). Leadership in higher education: Research Gate
8. Glassdoor (2022). What job seekers really think about your diversity and inclusion? Stats glassdoor.com (accessed 21st April, 2022)
9. Kotier, P. & Patrick E. Murphy, E. P (1981) Strategic Planning for Higher Education, Journal of Higher Education 52 (Sept–Oct. 1981): 473-487
10. Scott, M. H and Peter, W.(2009). Empirical Investigation of the Effects of Transformational and Transactional Leadership on Organisational Climate. Journal of Applied Psychology, 4, 16-18.
11. Oxford & Burry-Stock (1995). Assessing the use of language learning strategies worldwide with the ESL/EFL version of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (JHSS), ISSN: 2279-0837, ISBN: 2279-0845. Volume 4, Issue 4 (Nov. - Dec. 2012), PP 01-05
12. Prajogo, D. (2006). The relationship between organisational strategy and total quality management and organisational performance. European Journal of operational research (accessed: on 20th February, 2021)
13. Rahman H.M, Dey, T. & Al-min (2019). Relationship between organizational strategy and leadership style in performance efficiency. Asian business Review (accessed: 14th May 2022)

14. MacConnell S. (2004). Advocacy in organisations the element of success. Journal of the American Society on aging. Volume 28 Number 1
15. Cohen, A. and Kol, Y. (2004), "Professionalism and organisational citizenship behaviour: An empirical examination among Israeli nurses", Journal of Managerial Psychology, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 386-405. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940410537945>
16. Benjamin, E. (2010). Building foundations of academic freedom and professional integrity: implication of diminishing proportion of tenured faculty for organisational effectiveness in higher education. AAUP Journal of academic freedom (accessed: 17 August, 2021)