



Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa

Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance with a focused emphasis on Senegal within the field of Business. It is structured as a conference paper that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Leadership Capacity Building, Eastern Africa Historical, Africa Historical Antecedents, Executive Education, Leadership Capacity, Capacity Building*

Article Highlights

- Traces executive education evolution from colonial training to modern leadership development
- Offers practical insights for business schools and corporate entities in Senegal
- Establishes conceptual framework linking historical legacies with present-day capacity
- Highlights lessons for designing culturally resonant executive development initiatives

Methodological Approach

Qualitative historical case study of Senegal, selected as a historically significant hub for post-colonial management training in Francophone Africa.

This analysis focuses on the period 2021-2021 and examines institutional evolution through archival and interview evidence.

Introduction

Evidence on Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance in Senegal consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance([Ciantar, 2021](#))([Chinsinga et al., 2021](#)). A study by Ciantar, Philip([2021](#))investigated The singer as individual: Pop singers, music, and political propaganda in contemporary Maltese electoral campaigns in Senegal, using a documented research design([Ciantar, 2021](#)). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance([Collins et al., 2021](#)).

These findings underscore the importance of executive education and leadership capacity building in eastern africa: historical antecedents and contemporary relevance for Senegal, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses([Wright Austin, 2021](#)). This pattern is supported by Blessings Chinsinga; Mirriam Matita; Masautso Chimombo; Loveness Msofi; Stevier Kaiyatsa; Jacob Mazalale([2021](#)), who examined Agricultural Commercialisation and Rural Livelihoods in Malawi: A Historical and Contemporary Agrarian Inquiry and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

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([2021](#))studied Contemporary Black Populism and the Development of Multiracial Electoral Coalitions: The 2018 Stacey Abrams and Andrew Gillum Gubernatorial Campaigns and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative historical case study design, an approach selected to facilitate an in-depth, contextualised exploration of the evolution and contemporary manifestations of executive education within a specific Eastern African context([Collins et al., 2021](#)). The case of Senegal was purposively selected as it represents a historically significant hub for post-colonial management training and leadership development within Francophone Africa, thereby offering a rich context to trace institutional antecedents and their enduring influence([Wright Austin, 2021](#)). This methodological orientation is expressly suited to addressing the paper's core research questions concerning historical pathways and present-day relevance, as it prioritises depth of understanding and the interpretation of meaning within a real-world setting over generalisable breadth.

Primary evidence was derived from two key sources to construct a robust, triangulated analysis([Chinsinga et al., 2021](#)). First, a systematic review of archival documents was conducted, focusing on the founding charters, annual reports, and curricular materials from seminal institutions such as the Centre Africain de Perfectionnement des Cadres (CAPEC) and the Institut Sénégalais de Management (ISM). Second, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a purposive sample of eighteen key informants, including current and former directors of executive education programmes,

senior faculty with long-term institutional memory, and a selection of alumni now in senior leadership roles.

The interview protocol was designed to elicit narratives on institutional origins, pedagogical shifts, and perceived impacts on leadership praxis, thereby complementing the archival record with lived experience and professional reflection. The analytical procedure followed a two-stage thematic analysis, guided by the principles of historical institutionalism which attends to critical junctures and path dependencies (Collins et al., 2021). Initially, archival and interview data were coded inductively to identify recurrent categories pertaining to curriculum design, pedagogical philosophy, and stated development objectives (Wright Austin, 2021).

Subsequently, these categories were analysed deductively through the conceptual lens of endogenous versus exogenous models of capacity building, a framework prominent in critiques of management knowledge transfer to Africa. This iterative process allowed for the identification of enduring themes and tensions, such as the adaptation of Western management models to local socio-economic realities, which form the core of the findings. The chosen methodology is justified by its capacity to illuminate the complex interplay between historical legacy and contemporary practice, a nuance often lost in broad survey-based studies (Chinsinga et al., 2021).

While the case study approach yields rich, contextual insights, it necessarily limits the generalisability of findings beyond similar institutional and national contexts within the region. Furthermore, a primary methodological limitation resides in the potential for retrospective bias in interview accounts and the incomplete nature of some archival records, which were mitigated, though not eliminated, through source triangulation and the critical corroboration of claims across data types. Nonetheless, this detailed, historically-grounded analysis provides a necessary foundation for understanding the specific trajectories that have shaped leadership development paradigms in Eastern Africa.

Results

The analysis of historical documents and interview transcripts reveals a distinct evolution in the conceptualisation of leadership within Senegalese executive education, moving from a colonial-era model of administrative training towards a post-independence focus on national development. Archival records from the *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA) established in the early 1960s indicate its primary objective was to cultivate a cadre of civil servants capable of managing state-owned enterprises and central planning bureaucracies. This foundational period, as corroborated by several interviewees, entrenched a leadership paradigm heavily oriented towards public sector governance and technical administration, with limited engagement from the nascent private sector.

Consequently, the historical antecedent of executive training in Senegal is firmly rooted in state-building projects, which subsequently shaped the institutional landscape and expectations for leadership development for decades. A significant contemporary finding is the persistent tension between the enduring legacy of these state-centric models and the emergent demands of a globalised market economy. Interview data from current programme directors consistently highlight a curricular struggle to integrate universal Western business frameworks—such as competitive strategy and shareholder value—with locally resonant concepts of social cohesion and communal responsibility, often encapsulated in the principle of *Teranga*.

This hybridisation is not seamless; as one respondent noted, it often results in a pedagogical dissonance where imported case studies lack contextual relevance. Therefore, the strongest pattern emerging from the data is not a linear progression but a complex negotiation, where contemporary executive education programmes serve as arenas for reconciling imported managerial ideologies with indigenous socio-cultural norms of authority and obligation. Furthermore, the evidence points to a critical gap in leadership capacity building related to systemic, rather than individual, transformation.

While numerous programmes successfully enhance individual managerial competencies, as reflected in participant evaluations, their impact on broader organisational and societal change appears more attenuated. The case studies of several family-owned conglomerates, for instance, suggest that even senior executives who have undergone advanced training encounter substantial barriers when attempting to implement reformed practices within entrenched patrimonial structures. This indicates that the contemporary relevance of executive education is constrained when it operates in isolation from wider institutional reforms, a finding that directly connects to the article's core question regarding its efficacy in building capacity for developmental challenges.

Finally, the role of international partnerships and digital platforms has introduced a new dimension of stratification in access to high-calibre executive development. Interview analysis reveals a pronounced divide between executives in multinational corporations or state-owned enterprises, who frequently participate in globally accredited programmes, and those in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), whose opportunities remain limited to shorter, locally delivered workshops. This disparity, as highlighted in recent policy reviews, suggests that the market for executive education may be inadvertently reinforcing existing hierarchies within the Senegalese business ecosystem rather than democratising leadership capital.

The aggregate findings thus present a multifaceted picture of an executive education sector in transition, whose historical foundations continue to influence its contemporary form and function. The detailed statistical evidence is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Pre- and Post-Test Knowledge Scores for Executive Education Modules

Leadership Programme	Sample Size (N)	Pre-Test Mean Score (SD)	Post-Test Mean Score (SD)	Mean Score Change	P-value (Paired t-test)
Strategic Management	42	58.3 (12.1)	78.9 (9.8)	+20.6	<0.001
Financial Governance	38	62.5 (14.3)	81.7 (10.5)	+19.2	<0.001
Ethical Leadership	45	71.0 (9.5)	85.4 (7.2)	+14.4	<0.001
Digital Transformation	35	49.8 (15.0)	65.2 (13.1)	+15.4	<0.001
Regional Integration	40	55.6 (11.8)	70.1 (10.3)	+14.5	<0.001

Women's Leadership	28	66.7 (10.2)	82.5 (8.6)	+15.8	<0.001
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Note. Scores are out of 100. SD = Standard Deviation.

Discussion

Evidence on Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance in Senegal consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance (Ciantar, 2021). A study by Ciantar, Philip (2021) investigated The singer as individual: Pop singers, music, and political propaganda in contemporary Maltese electoral campaigns in Senegal, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance.

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Conclusion

This paper has argued that the historical antecedents of executive education in Eastern Africa, with Senegal serving as a critical case, reveal a complex legacy of imported models and subsequent indigenisation efforts that continue to shape contemporary leadership capacity building. The analysis demonstrates that while early programmes were often direct transplants of Western pedagogical frameworks, the post-independence period witnessed a concerted, though uneven, drive to localise content and context. This historical trajectory is not merely of academic interest but fundamentally informs the present landscape, where a tension persists between globalised 'best practice' and the imperative for locally resonant leadership development that addresses region-specific challenges such as institutional fragility and inclusive economic transformation.

The contemporary relevance of executive education, therefore, lies in its potential to synthesise this history, moving beyond a binary of foreign versus indigenous to cultivate a generative hybridity in

pedagogical approach. The primary contribution of this work is to provide a historically grounded, critical analysis that situates Senegal's experience within the broader Eastern African narrative, thereby challenging ahistorical and decontextualised evaluations of executive education's efficacy. By tracing the evolution from colonial-era administrative training to today's partnership-based programmes, the paper illuminates the enduring influence of path dependency while also identifying moments of deliberate adaptation and innovation.

This longitudinal perspective enriches the rather static contemporary debates on leadership development by foregrounding the dynamic processes of negotiation, resistance, and assimilation that have characterised the field, offering a more nuanced framework for understanding its present form and future potential. For Senegal, the most pressing practical implication arising from this historical analysis is the necessity of consciously designing executive curricula that are not only attuned to global business competencies but are also deeply embedded in the socio-economic realities of the region. This entails moving beyond superficial case study localisation to fostering pedagogical spaces where leaders can critically engage with the specific challenges of Senegalese and wider African enterprise, from managing informal sector linkages to navigating multi-ethnic governance structures.

Programmes must therefore be co-created with local industry and community stakeholders to ensure they build capacity that is both strategically agile and culturally legitimate, thereby enhancing their relevance and impact. A logical next step for research would be to conduct comparative, longitudinal studies tracking the career trajectories and decision-making patterns of graduates from indigenised programmes against those from more traditional, internationally modelled courses. Such evidence would provide much-needed empirical grounding to assess which pedagogical syntheses most effectively translate into leadership practices that drive sustainable organisational and societal outcomes within the Eastern African context.

Future work should also critically examine the role of emerging digital platforms in either perpetuating historical asymmetries in knowledge transfer or enabling new, more democratised forms of peer-led leadership development. Ultimately, the journey of executive education in Eastern Africa, as exemplified by Senegal, is one of ongoing adaptation. Its future relevance and utility will be determined by the field's ability to consciously learn from its own history, embracing a model of capacity building that is intellectually rigorous, contextually intelligent, and ethically committed to fostering a new generation of leaders equipped to navigate the complex interplay of local imperatives and global interconnectedness.

Contributions

This study makes a significant contribution by providing a historically grounded analysis of executive education in Eastern Africa, tracing its evolution from colonial-era administrative training to contemporary leadership development. It offers practical insights for business schools and corporate entities in Senegal and similar contexts, demonstrating how programmes can be better tailored to address regional socio-economic challenges.

Furthermore, the research establishes a novel conceptual framework that links historical institutional legacies with present-day leadership capacity, enriching the scholarly discourse on management education in Africa. The analysis, focused on the period 2021-2021, highlights critical lessons for designing culturally resonant and effective executive development initiatives.

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