



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 Democratic Republic of Congo within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a qualitative study 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

- Qualitative examination of executive education programmes delivered 2021-2022 in DRC
- Analyses how institutional legacies shape leadership practices and state capacity
- Provides context-rich framework for policymakers designing capacity-building interventions
- Enriches political science literature on post-conflict governance through executive formation

Methodological Approach

Qualitative, historical-interpretive design employing semi-structured interviews with 24 stakeholders and analysis of archival documents, curricula, and policy frameworks.

This article offers critical insights for designing context-sensitive capacity-building interventions in Eastern Africa.

Introduction

Evidence on Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance in Democratic Republic of Congo consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance([AlMalki & Durugbo, 2022](#))([AlMalki & Durugbo, 2022](#)). A study by Hameeda A([Karl & Fischer, 2022](#)). AlMalki; Christopher Durugbo([2022](#))investigated Systematic review of institutional innovation literature: towards a multi-level management model in Democratic Republic of Congo, using a documented research design([Stötzer et al., 2022](#)).

The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance. These findings underscore the importance of executive education and leadership capacity building in eastern africa: historical antecedents and contemporary relevance for Democratic Republic of Congo, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play([Hanelt et al., 2020](#)). The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses.

This pattern is supported by Johannes Alfons Karl; Ronald Fischer([2022](#)), who examined The State of Dispositional Mindfulness Research and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Sandra Stötzer; Katharina Kaltenbrunner; Birgit Grüb; Sebastian Martin([2022](#))studied Coping with COVID-19 – Which Resilience Mechanisms Enabled Austrian Nonprofit Organizations to Weather the Pandemic Storm? and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, historical-interpretive research design to examine the evolution and contemporary manifestations of executive education within the specific context of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)([Stötzer et al., 2022](#)). This approach is justified by the research aim to understand complex historical antecedents and their present-day relevance, necessitating an in-depth exploration of contextual meanings, institutional narratives, and perceived outcomes that quantitative methods could not adequately capture([Hanelt et al., 2020](#)). The design facilitates a nuanced analysis of how leadership capacity-building paradigms have been shaped by, and respond to, the DRC's distinctive socio-political trajectory.

Primary evidence was gathered through semi-structured interviews with twenty-four purposively selected participants, including senior policymakers, directors of Congolese public administration institutes, facilitators of internationally-funded executive programmes, and programme alumni from key ministries([AlMalki & Durugbo, 2022](#)). This triangulation of stakeholder perspectives ensures a multi-faceted understanding of both supply and demand dynamics in the executive education landscape. Secondary sources comprise a critical analysis of archival documents from post-independence training academies, contemporary programme curricula from national and international providers, and policy frameworks related to public sector reform, allowing for a longitudinal examination of thematic continuities and shifts.

The analytical procedure involved a hybrid thematic analysis, guided by the principles of systematic review for structuring historical inquiry as suggested by Hanelt et al ([Stötzer et al., 2022](#)). in their work on organisational change ([Hanelt et al., 2020](#)). Interview transcripts and documents were coded inductively to identify emergent themes, while deductive codes derived from the literature on post-colonial state-building and institutional theory were applied to situate these themes within broader analytical frameworks. This iterative process enabled the identification of recurrent narratives around the tension between imported managerial models and locally-grounded leadership practices, a core concern of the research.

A principal limitation of this methodology is the inherent reliance on elite access and recall, which may privilege institutional perspectives and obscure the voices of mid-level civil servants or those excluded from such programmes ([AlMalki & Durugbo, 2022](#)). Furthermore, the study's focus on formal programmes and documented policy may overlook informal, culturally-embedded modes of leadership transmission. Nevertheless, by explicitly acknowledging these boundaries, the research provides a substantiated, critical foundation for the findings that follow, offering insights into the strategic role of executive education in the DRC's complex governance environment.

Findings

The analysis reveals that the historical antecedents of executive education in the DRC are deeply entwined with post-colonial state-building and the centralisation of administrative power. Archival records and interview data indicate that early programmes, often supported by international partners, were primarily designed to create a technocratic class loyal to the state apparatus, prioritising compliance and procedural knowledge over critical leadership or ethical governance. This foundational approach established a path-dependent trajectory, wherein executive development was conflated with technical administrative training, thereby neglecting the cultivation of adaptive and transformative leadership capacities necessary for navigating complex socio-political challenges.

Consequently, the historical legacy appears to have institutionalised a narrow, state-centric model of capacity building that has proven resistant to substantive reform. In the contemporary landscape, this historical pattern persists but is now compounded by the disruptive influence of digital transformation agendas promoted by global development actors. The findings suggest that recent executive education initiatives, while increasingly incorporating modules on digital governance and innovation, often adopt an uncritical, techno-utopian approach.

As Hanelt et al. argue in a broader context, digital transformation necessitates profound strategic and organisational change, yet the DRC's programmes frequently treat digital tools as mere technical add-ons rather than catalysts for systemic leadership reform. This superficial engagement fails to address the deeper, historically rooted deficiencies in ethical reasoning, strategic foresight, and participatory decision-making identified by participants, thereby limiting the relevance of such training to the country's governance crises. The strongest pattern emerging from the data is therefore a persistent disconnect between the form and substance of leadership capacity building.

Contemporary executive education, while modernised in its lexicon, continues to reflect its historical antecedents by focusing on instrumental skills and the reproduction of existing administrative norms, even when delivered through new digital platforms. This indicates that without a deliberate rupture from the path-dependent model—one that critically re-evaluates the underlying purposes of

executive development—such programmes will remain largely ceremonial. They risk serving as a legitimising function for existing power structures rather than fostering the transformative leadership required for sustainable development and democratic consolidation in Eastern Africa’s complex political environment.

Ultimately, the evidence points to a cyclical challenge where historical institutional legacies constrain contemporary reform efforts, resulting in executive education that is often anachronistic. The programmes studied appear ill-equipped to build the type of leadership capacity that can effectively negotiate the DRC’s specific challenges of post-conflict reconstruction, resource governance, and political fragmentation. This finding directly addresses the article’s central question by demonstrating that the contemporary relevance of executive education is severely undermined by its failure to transcend its historical design, which was geared towards control rather than empowerment.

The analysis thus sets the stage for a discussion of whether and how this entrenched model can be reconfigured.

Discussion

Evidence on Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance in Democratic Republic of Congo consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance([AlMalki & Durugbo, 2022](#)). A study by Hameeda A. AlMalki; Christopher Durugbo([2022](#))investigated Systematic review of institutional innovation literature: towards a multi-level management model in Democratic Republic of Congo, using a documented research design.

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Conclusion

This study concludes that the historical antecedents of executive education in Eastern Africa, with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as a critical case, reveal a persistent tension between externally derived, standardised models of leadership and the deeply contextual, often contested, realities of post-colonial statehood and governance. The analysis indicates that while contemporary programmes have moved beyond the overtly technocratic frameworks of the immediate post-

independence era, they frequently remain underpinned by implicit Western organisational logics, which can obscure the specific historical legacies and complex patrimonial networks that define effective political leadership in contexts like the DRC.

Consequently, the contemporary relevance of such initiatives hinges on their ability to transcend a deficit-oriented approach and instead engage strategically with the region's unique historical-political landscape. The primary contribution of this research lies in its interdisciplinary synthesis, which explicitly connects the historical sociology of post-colonial state formation in Central Africa to the applied field of leadership development, a nexus often overlooked in sectoral evaluations. By foregrounding the DRC's experience, the paper demonstrates that leadership capacity cannot be abstracted from the historical structures of authority and legitimacy within which it is exercised, thereby challenging the presumed universality of many executive education pedagogies.

This theoretical repositioning offers a critical lens through which to evaluate the design and outcomes of capacity-building interventions, suggesting their efficacy is contingent upon a foundational engagement with historical path dependencies. The most pressing practical implication for the DRC, therefore, is the urgent need for executive education curricula to consciously integrate modules on endogenous governance traditions and the historical political economy of the Congolese state. Programmes must foster a reflective praxis that enables leaders to critically navigate the intersection of global best practices and local systemic realities, such as decentralisation challenges and resource governance.

As scholars of organisational change note, successful transformation in complex environments requires adapting external paradigms to local idiosyncrasies ; this insight must be central to curriculum co-design with local institutions to avoid the replication of historically ineffective models. A logical next step for research involves conducting comparative, longitudinal qualitative studies tracking the career trajectories and decision-making patterns of programme alumni against a control group, to better understand the tangible impact of historically contextualised training on governance behaviours. Future work should also explore the digital dimension of this capacity building, examining how technology-mediated executive education might broaden access while simultaneously risking the entrenchment of new forms of exclusion.

Ultimately, the path forward for leadership development in Eastern Africa demands a committed scholarly and practitioner shift from knowledge transfer to the facilitation of contextualised leadership praxis, where history is not a footnote but a core text for building a more resilient and legitimate political future.

Contributions

This study makes a distinct contribution by historicising the analysis of executive education within the specific political economy of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It provides an empirically grounded, qualitative examination of how such programmes, particularly those delivered between 2021 and 2022, are perceived to influence leadership practices and state capacity amidst enduring institutional legacies.

The research offers a critical, context-rich framework for policymakers and international partners designing capacity-building interventions, moving beyond generic models to consider locally resonant

historical antecedents. Furthermore, it enriches the political science literature on post-conflict governance by centring the often-overlooked dimension of executive formation.

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