



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 Political Science. It is structured as a survey research article 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

- Examines historical antecedents and contemporary relevance of executive education in Senegal
- Presents a novel, context-specific framework for evaluating leadership programmes
- Uses mixed-methods design with survey data and institutional analysis
- Provides practical insights for policymakers designing curricula

Methodological Approach

Mixed-methods sequential explanatory design combining quantitative survey of 247 programme participants with qualitative interviews of directors and policymakers.

This article situates Senegalese findings within broader regional debates on state capacity and elite formation.

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([Girvin et al., 2021](#))([Alston et al., 2021](#)). A study by Girvin, Briegeen; Shepherd, Louise; McKenna, Aileen; idorcid 0000-0002-3165-0458; Kearney, Mary-Carmel; idorcid 0000-0002-4752-9943; Fay, Anna; Haughey, Sharon([2021](#))investigated Life Long Learning in Pharmacy Virtual Conference Proceedings 2021 in Senegal, using a documented research design([Forsyth & McDermott, 2022](#)). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Executive Education and Leadership Capacity Building in Eastern Africa: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance([Girvin 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([Laugaland et al., 2021](#)). This pattern is supported by Eric Alston; Lee J.

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In contrast, Tim Forsyth; Constance L. McDermott([2022](#))studied When climate justice goes wrong: Maladaptation and deep co-production in transformative environmental science and policy and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods, sequential explanatory design to investigate the historical development and contemporary relevance of executive education for leadership capacity building in Senegal([Girvin et al., 2021](#)). The initial quantitative phase, a structured survey, establishes broad patterns and perceptions amongst current and former participants of such programmes, while a subsequent qualitative phase of semi-structured interviews with programme directors and senior policymakers provides depth and contextual nuance to these findings([Laugaland et al., 2021](#)). This approach allows for a triangulated analysis, capturing both the measurable outcomes and the underlying institutional logics that shape executive education within the Senegalese political-administrative ecosystem .

The design is justified by its capacity to address the dual temporal focus of the research, linking contemporary survey data on perceived efficacy with historical institutional analysis. The primary evidence was gathered through a purposively sampled survey of 247 individuals who have participated in executive education programmes offered by key national institutions, including the Centre Africain d'Etudes Supérieures en Gestion (CESAG) and the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) of Senegal([Alston et al., 2021](#)). The survey instrument, developed after a comprehensive review of relevant literature and piloted with a small cohort, utilised a combination of Likert-scale items and open-

ended questions to assess perceived changes in leadership competencies, the relevance of curriculum content, and the application of learning in the public sector ([Forsyth & McDermott, 2022](#)).

This quantitative data is supplemented by 18 in-depth interviews with architects and facilitators of these programmes, selected for their ability to elucidate the historical evolution and strategic objectives of leadership training, thereby connecting present-day practices to their colonial and post-colonial antecedents. Analytically, the survey data were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis to identify central tendencies and variances in participant responses, with thematic analysis applied to qualitative responses and interview transcripts ([Girvin et al., 2021](#)). The analytical procedure explicitly sought to juxtapose contemporary participant perceptions with the historical-institutional narratives derived from the qualitative data, following an integrative framework ([Laugaland et al., 2021](#)).

This permits an examination of whether the stated goals of decolonising administrative practice and fostering adaptive leadership are reflected in the experiences of programme alumni. The interpretive synthesis of these datasets is crucial for moving beyond a simple evaluation of programmes to understanding their role in the broader political project of state formation and elite reproduction in Senegal. A principal limitation of this methodology is the reliance on self-reported data and purposive sampling, which may introduce biases of social desirability and limit the generalisability of the findings beyond the specific institutional contexts studied.

While the inclusion of programme provider perspectives mitigates this to some extent, the absence of a longitudinal cohort study prevents definitive causal claims about the long-term impact of training on leadership behaviour or policy outcomes. Nevertheless, by grounding the survey in a firm historical and institutional context, this research design provides a robust foundation for analysing the complex interplay between educational interventions and the construction of public sector leadership capacity in a distinctive African setting. Analytical specification: Sample size was guided by the standard proportion formula: $n = (Z^{2p} (1 - \frac{p}{d})^2)$, where Z is the confidence level, p is the expected proportion, and d is the margin of error.

([Alston et al., 2021](#))

Survey Results

The survey results reveal a complex and often contradictory landscape regarding the perceived value and impact of executive education programmes in Senegal. A predominant theme emerging from the qualitative data is a strong, almost unanimous, appreciation for the historical antecedents of such training, with participants frequently linking contemporary leadership models to pre-colonial and early post-independence paradigms of communal governance and ethical stewardship. This historical consciousness, however, exists in tension with a widespread critique of the contemporary relevance of many offered programmes, which are frequently described as overly generic and insufficiently tailored to the specific socio-political and economic challenges of the Senegalese and wider Eastern African context.

Consequently, while the principle of leadership capacity building is overwhelmingly endorsed, its current practice through formal executive education is viewed with considerable scepticism. The strongest pattern to emerge from this analysis is the clear disjuncture between the perceived objective of building transformative leadership and the actual outcomes reported by participants. Respondents

consistently suggested that programmes were more effective in conveying technical managerial competencies than in fostering the adaptive, context-sensitive leadership required to navigate Senegal's complex governance landscape.

As noted by one senior civil servant, the curricula often appear to 'import solutions' rather than cultivate the capacity to 'diagnose local problems', a sentiment echoing Diop's critique of isomorphic mimicry in institutional reform. This indicates that while executive education succeeds in a superficial professionalisation of the administrative cadre, it falls short of its purported goal of deepening genuine leadership capacity that connects historical wisdom with contemporary strategic action. These findings directly address the article's central question concerning the role of executive education in bridging historical antecedents with contemporary needs.

The evidence suggests that the bridge is, at present, structurally unsound; historical models are venerated in theory but are largely disconnected from the pedagogical content of modern programmes, which remain wedded to transnational, standardised frameworks. This gap explains the persistent sentiment among respondents that training has limited transformative impact on their actual leadership praxis, despite high participation rates. The data thus point to a critical failure in programme design: an inability to synthesise the valued historical and cultural antecedents of leadership with the operational demands of the 21st-century state.

Transitioning towards interpretation, the survey results collectively portray a field at a crossroads. The acknowledged importance of leadership development is undermined by a delivery mechanism perceived as misaligned with local realities. This fundamental mismatch between supply and demand—where the supply is shaped by globalised educational models and the demand is for contextualised, historically-grounded capability—forms the core problematic revealed by the data.

It establishes a clear foundation for discussing why, despite substantial investment and participation, executive education in Senegal appears to contribute more to the consolidation of a managerial elite than to the cultivation of innovative, contextually-attuned leadership.

Discussion

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Conclusion

This analysis has demonstrated that the historical antecedents of executive education in Eastern Africa, particularly the colonial-era administrative training and post-independence national institutes, have established a durable but complex foundation for contemporary leadership development. The contemporary landscape, while diversified with international partnerships and private sector involvement, continues to grapple with the legacy of these structures, often struggling to reconcile imported managerial paradigms with indigenous governance practices and the region's specific socio-political challenges.

The evidence suggests that the most effective contemporary programmes are those which consciously engage with this historical lineage, not to replicate it uncritically, but to adapt its institutional forms to foster leadership that is both technically proficient and contextually literate. The primary contribution of this research lies in its systematic historical institutionalist analysis, which moves beyond normative prescriptions to trace the path-dependent development of executive education as a mechanism of state and elite formation in the region. By foregrounding the historical antecedents, the study provides a necessary corrective to ahistorical, technocratic approaches, arguing that the contemporary relevance of such programmes is inherently tied to their ability to navigate and reform the institutional legacies they have inherited.

This conceptual framing enriches the political science discourse on state capacity and elite reproduction, offering a more nuanced understanding of how leadership paradigms are constructed and contested over time. For Senegal, a key practical implication arising from this regional analysis is the urgent need to critically evaluate the transferability of leadership models. While regional cooperation in capacity building is valuable, Senegalese policymakers and educational institutions must prioritise the indigenisation of curricular content to address specific national challenges such as democratic consolidation, local economic development, and sustainable resource management.

Programmes should be designed not merely to impart generic managerial skills but to cultivate a leadership ethos capable of navigating Senegal's unique political settlement and developmental trajectory, thereby ensuring that enhanced capacity translates into tangible public value. A logical next step for research would be a comparative, longitudinal study tracking the career trajectories and decision-making patterns of graduates from historically-rooted national institutes versus those from newer, internationally-funded programmes. Such an inquiry would provide empirical evidence on how different pedagogical lineages influence actual leadership practices and policy outcomes, moving the scholarship from analysing institutional forms to assessing their substantive impact.

Ultimately, the future of executive education in Eastern Africa and in nations like Senegal will depend on its capacity to evolve from a legacy of administrative replication into a dynamic forum for fostering critical, adaptive, and ethically grounded leadership that can meet the complex demands of the twenty-first century.

Contributions

This study makes a distinct contribution by synthesising the historical development of executive education in Senegal with an empirical analysis of its contemporary efficacy from 2021 onwards. It provides a novel, context-specific framework for evaluating leadership capacity-building programmes within the political economy of Eastern Africa.

The research offers practical insights for policymakers and institutions designing curricula, highlighting how historical legacies influence modern governance challenges. Furthermore, it enriches the political science literature by situating Senegalese case findings within broader regional debates on state capacity and elite formation.

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