

Leadership Development among Polytechnic Students in Ghana

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Abstract

Within the last decade, both public and private organizations all over the world have witnessed a great number of top level leaders, who either had to resign voluntarily from their positions or they were fired due to incompetence and weak leadership. Larbi (2011) has observed that there is a sheer dearth of authentic, visionary and skilful leaders in Ghana. Also, leadership development is an aspect that is lacking in higher institutions of education (Morris, 2012). Leadership is shaped by a wide-range of qualities and leaders need to be groomed to demonstrate different skills based on contextual realities as well as the needs of followers. Thus the two questions that this study intends to answer are: How can we give leadership education to students? How can we prepare leaders for this generation and the next? This paper proposes six elements for facilitating leadership development among Polytechnic students in Ghana. The study also expounds on some leadership theories and concepts proposed by prominent scholars on the subject matter. Additionally, the historical and current Ghanaian context is described. The current context provides useful background information for teaching leadership to Ghanaian higher national diploma students. The six critical factors the authors propose and seek to develop among Polytechnic students are: Emotional intelligence, systems thinking, life's vision and mission, critical thinking, teamwork building skills and ability to learn. Applying the background information as well as the proposed six characteristics of leadership, the study then describes a recently developed leadership course which is presently being taught to all students pursuing the 3-year Higher National Diploma (HND) programme in Wa Polytechnic as a component part of the entrepreneurship training module.

Keywords: leadership, leadership development, Ghana, characteristics of leadership

1. Introduction

In the course of carrying out consultancy services for a public organization which has several offices located throughout Ghana, it was revealed by the client that more than 60 percent of the company's middle-level leaders were underperforming (Management Partners Ghana, 2015). The client said this has adversely affected the amount and quality of the output delivered by employees of the organization. Accordingly, it has been observed that more than two-thirds of these underperforming leaders are Polytechnic graduates who were recruited four years ago. Both client and consultant thought that the underperformance of the company's leaders was as a result of the leadership style employed by these young graduates. Thus, the client needed some advice. Consequently, we carried out surveys and conducted interviews with 80 employees of the affected branches of the company that were experiencing low productivity. Ninety percent of the employees surveyed (72) strongly believed that the leadership style of young managers was appropriate and indicated that there was very low motivation at the workplace. It was also realized that a large number of the employees were more or less untouchable due to their affiliation to the company and as such could not be fired from their positions even when their performance output was below expectation. Some hardworking employees did not feel motivated to give off their best (Management Partners Ghana, 2015). Therefore, in this specific circumstance, the strategy to be employed by the branch leaders to change the situation should not be concerned about modifying the leadership style, but rather finding innovative ways for incentivizing and rewarding any extra effort put up by employees.

The above scenario provides an example of the different circumstances that young and inexperienced leaders meet within their employment. This case demonstrates that leadership is not a constant phenomenon and it involves a wide-range of elements based on the nature and needs of the organization (Blanchard, 2007). The case further illustrates the significance of promoting and supporting the development of leadership skills among young people so that they will be able to utilize these skills at the workplace more effectively. Thus the aim of this paper is to recommend six critical elements that should be fostered and developed among polytechnic students who at this time live in a complex world.

2. Concept of Leadership

The concept of leadership is fluid. Leadership is a subject matter which many people talk about but do not actually comprehend fully what it is all about. Leadership scholars and practitioners have made frantic efforts to simplify and make sense of this phenomenon for years. Many of these scholars have conceptualized leadership as based on five distinct approaches: trait, behavioural, contingency, transformation as well as servant leadership theories (Yukl, 2010; Northouse, 2013; Lussier & Achua, 2005; Fiedler & Chemers, 1984). This current study will briefly describe each of these conceptualizations of leadership.

The trait theory accentuates characteristics of leaders such as motives, values, personality and skills (Yukl,

2010). Fundamental to this theory was the notion that certain individuals are natural leaders gifted with some traits which other people do not possess. Thus, early leadership theories ascribed executive success to special and exceptional capabilities including vigour, mystical insight, sharp intuition, personal confidence, interdependence and strong persuasive influence (Lussier et al., 2005; Yukl, 2010). Several of trait studies carried out between the 1930s and 1940s wanted to unearth these mysterious attributes, but these research attempts failed to discover any personality traits that would ensure leadership success. One explanation for the unsuccessful attempts was a lack of consideration for intervening variables within the underlying chain processes that could explicate how personality characteristics can influence a delayed outcome such as leader development or group performance (Yukl, 2010). The most important research approach was to try to find a significant link between particular leader qualities and a measure of leader accomplishment without probing other explanatory processes. But, with time and better designed research projects, academic researchers made great advancements in determining how leader characteristics are connected to the behaviour and effectiveness of the leader. A more current personality trait approach investigates leader values that are critical for describing ethical leadership (Yukl, 2010). In the 1950s, scholars focused their efforts on explicit leadership styles and behaviours that supported high performance in organizational settings (Lussier et al., 2005).

Then in the 1960s, there appeared the contingency theory of leadership. The contingency approach subscribes that the style of a leader should be modified to suit followers' situation and qualities (Armanda, Oppedisano, & Sherman, 2003; Blanchard, 2007; da Cruz, Nunes, & Pinheiro, 2010; Fiedler, 1996; Fiedler & Chemers, 1984; Tirmizi, 2002). It suggests that the effectiveness of a leader counts on how agreeably the leader's style matches with the context (Wu, 2009). Therefore, to comprehend the performance of leaders, it is important to have a better understanding of the situation in which they lead. Outstanding leadership is dependent on matching a leader's style to the appropriate environment. Contingency theory has opened up and expanded peoples' understanding of leadership by encouraging people to consider the influence of the context on leaders.

In the 1970s, Robert Greenleaf came out with the concept of "servant leadership". Greenleaf (1977) suggested that every leader has a primary responsibility to serve followers and that service to others is the heart of ethical leadership. Thus service consists of empowering, protecting and nurturing subordinates. A servant leader is required to address the basic needs and requirements of group members and assist them to grow wiser, healthier, and eager to accept tasks assigned to them. The leader is better able to serve followers and provide for their well-being only when by understanding followers. Therefore, servant leaders have an obligation to carefully listen to subordinates, learn about their desires, dreams and aspirations as well as prepared to share in their anguish and disappointments. The servant leader also ought to champion things that are noble and moral, even when these matters are not in the economic interest of the company. Wherever possible, social inequality and injustice must be opposed (Yukl, 2010). Also, marginalized and weak members of the community are to be treated with honour and respect. Greenleaf (1977) further recommended that offering meaningful job opportunities for employees is as critical as offering a quality service or good to a loyal customer. Greenleaf (1977) encouraged that corporate enterprises should accept social responsibility as an important goal, and that all board of directors must assume fundamental responsibility for appraising and assisting in the realization of this objective. The servant leader is expected to empower all subordinates rather than lording over them. Trust is created when the leader completely demonstrates honesty and openness, matching actions with values. Followers of such exemplary leaders can be motivated and inspired to become servant leaders (Yukl, 2010). Individuals must prepare themselves to serve in leadership positions and when given the opportunity to lead they should accept it. The outcome will be many people will serve their society as moral agents.

Finally, in the 1980s, transformational leadership theory emerged in the leadership landscape. With this leadership approach, the followers experience trust, loyalty, admiration and reverence towards the leader. Followers are motivated to put on extra effort above what they initially were expected to contribute. According to Bass (2000), the leader motivates and transforms subordinates in three ways (a) leading them to become more aware of the value and significance of work outcomes, (b) provoking them to rise above their individual self-interest for the common good, and (3) stimulating their higher-order desires and wishes. Northouse (2013) believes that transformational leaders pay attention to motives of subordinates and makes the effort to assist them to achieve their fullest potential.

Nevertheless, some scholars are of the view that leadership does not only mean possessing certain personality traits, showing particular behaviours or even about being present in the appropriate organizational settings based on their skills; leadership also can involve demonstrating emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2003; Goleman, 2000), promoting change processes (Kotter, 1996) and being authentic with self and others (George, 2007).

Based on the above conceptualizations, it can be observed that leadership connotes several different things to various scholars. In addition, the environment in which the leader leads has suddenly become more convoluted and this has an influence on leadership as well as the competencies leaders need to demonstrate (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). Hence, this paper intends to share six critical elements which are vital to cultivate

among the next generation of leaders within the ever increasing turbulent times.

3. Understanding what Organizational Leaders Need to Do

This section of the paper reviews literature on the work of five prominent scholars (Bennis, 1989a, 1989b; Conger, 1992; Goleman, 2000; George & Sims, 2007; and De Pree, 2000) on the theme of leadership. The underlying motivation for the selection of the works of these scholars was based on the fact that their ideas offer ideal and realistic leadership framework similar to the leadership course curriculum offered in the Polytechnic where the author of this current manuscript was a lecturer. The content of the leadership course encourages effective leadership development and character formation efforts in response to the type of leadership that Ghana needs to be able to come out from poverty and ignorance which engulf the nation.

Many researchers have given different accounts of authentic leadership theory (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & Mayo, 2004; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). However, a precise description of authentic leadership is the one offered by George (2007, xxxi), which states that “*The authentic leader brings people together around a shared purpose and empowers them to step up and lead authentically in order to create value for all stakeholders*”(George & Sims, 2007, p.xxxi). This definition suggests that leaders are authentic people who do not seek to copycat or try to be like another leader. The self-identities as well as self-concepts of authentic leaders are transparent, robust, consistent and stable. Authentic leaders have an extraordinary self-awareness as regards their values, beliefs, values, competencies and emotions. On the other hand, they appreciate the person they are and accept as true, building trusting relationships with other people, passionate about their mission, act based on their heart, show self discipline and act according to their values (George, 2003). Authentic leaders possess many positive core values including fairness, kindness, optimism, accountability, honesty, and altruism (Yukl, 2010). These leaders do not look for leadership positions simply to satisfy a need for power, status and esteem. Rather they want to articulate and pass on what they believe and value. Authentic leaders do not comply with role expectations which are incompatible with what they think is appropriate and essential. Their beliefs and values are solidly internalized more willingly than outward reflections of existing social norms that are subject to rapid change. Since authentic leaders are stimulated by a yearning for self-verification and self-development, they accept their weaknesses and tend to be less defensive (George, 2007). They are also open to learning from their mistakes and constructive feedback from others. In nearly all accounts of the theory, followers also share the leader’s ideas and values, and followers acknowledge that the behaviour of the leader is in harmony with their shared values.

Conger (1992) believes that leaders can be obtained in various sizes and forms. However, all leaders share practically the same fundamental quality and it is that every leader has a personal passion. Passion being the core of a leader, it enables them to develop and articulate a vision for a better future. Effective leaders often make as their duty to listen to people under their care and act appropriately. In this way, effective leaders create and establish meaningful moments with the people they lead. Consequently, the followers believe and trust that their leaders are intensely connected with their deepest aspirations. Moreover, effective leaders know and understand the culture in which they immerse and operate, however, they demonstrate a high sense of discontent and frustration with the status quo. As a result, they produce innovative changes and empower members to accomplish their dreams. Furthermore, Conger (1992) argues that leaders continually exhibit an entrepreneurial spirit that is enterprising and life-giving.

The most effective and successful leaders according to Goleman (2003, 2001, 2000, 1995) possess emotional intelligence. Accordingly, emotions play a critical role in organizational leadership process. Positive emotions in the work environment enable employees achieve favourable results such as success, work enhancement and higher quality collective perspective (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). On the other hand, negative emotions including stress, fear, anger, antagonism, grief, desolation and guilt, nonetheless intensify the aggression at the workplace (Lee & Allen, 2002) and how the outside world perceives the organization. Therefore, leadership requires both the head and the heart. Leadership is analytical, but at the same time it is interpersonal. Effective leaders show empathy for others (Goleman, 1995). Such leaders are intrinsically motivated people. They have deep knowledge of themselves; they take full control of their emotions even when they are confronted with certain challenging and harrowing situations.

For De Pree (1989), leaders define and characterize reality as it is; they serve and enable others to live better lives. By doing so, leaders are communicating their individual set of beliefs, values and principles. These espoused cultural values form the vision of the leader. In addition, leaders create a network of rich relationship with their followers, creating space for the diversity and multitude of talents and gifts. The leadership model of De Pree (1992) offers a consequential difference because it produces change and transformation of people lives.

Leadership and becoming an effective leader requires having a thorough knowledge and understanding of who the leader is, what the leader desires, demonstrating emotional intelligence, knowing the needs of followers and serving them, endowed with critical thinking abilities and desiring to make significant difference in the society.

4. Factors to consider in Leadership Development in Ghana and in the African Continent

For a leader to be effective, the first important thing to do is to have a thorough understanding of the context. Leaders should be interested in knowing and understanding the contextual dynamics under which they live and lead (Bennis, 1989a, 1989b). Much of this knowledge comes from the political history of the country. Therefore, to develop and nurture leaders in Ghana the first critical factor to take into account is Ghana's history. The history of Ghana provides an example of the lack of leaders who have sought to have a positive impact within the nation. When the British colonized the Gold Coast (now Ghana), the indigenous people were subjected to slavery, abject poverty and hardship (Odotei, 2008). Also, colonial rule created autocrats from traditional rulers (Odotei, 2008). Traditional rulers were obliged to serve the interests of colonial authorities and not the interests of the citizenry. As Odotei (2008) has noted, "it was an enterprise seeking interests of the Europeans". Even though cocoa was developed as export crop and became a major foreign exchange income for Ghana, no effort was made to set up manufacturing industries to process the cocoa beans in the country. Later on, when Ghana gained independence from British rule in 1957, leaders ruled with self-seeking interests and did not really work towards the improvement of peoples' lives. Moreover, post-colonial governments have not been able to move Ghana away from over-dependence on the western world (Odotei, 2008). Financial assistance received from the developed world is misappropriated and many times go into the pockets of politicians at the expense of the common good. Many Ghanaians have gone through a series of injustices on daily basis and this has been accepted as part of their normal lives.

Another relevant aspect concerning the Ghanaian context is that Ghana appears to be going through a multitude of harsh social and economic problems. Kwakye (2014, para. 3) has corroborated this observation in the daily graphic news paper (online) that "It is like all imaginable problems have come together simultaneously—power interruptions, water shortages, poor sanitation, poor health care, violent crime, traffic congestion, poor public services, high cost of living and corruption". Each problem has its attendant negative effect on the people and as such urgently requires a solution or in any case, an improvement. Ghana's current needs make it critical for the development of effective leaders who can provide positive leadership and in this way help to transform the nation through creative and innovative solutions to its current problems.

Ghana as well as the entire African continent is witnessing the emergence of a fast growing young population in modern history. Population is fundamental to development and the prime purpose of development is to enhance the quality of life for all people. The African Development Bank Group (2012) predicted that within the next decade, the majority of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa will be younger than 25 years. Equally, Ghana's population according to Sakyi (2013) is rapidly growing at a rate of 2.7% annually and it is predominantly youthful. As the old age adage has it, "the youth are the future leaders". Hence, in the proximate future, the young men and women will influence decisions and the directions that will situate the course of Ghana. It is therefore imperative for Ghana to develop and groom a cohort of leaders among the youth who have the capacity to provide innovative and long-term solutions to problems/needs of society.

When post-independence governments launched into eliminating divergent legal prejudices and societal attitudes with the hope of bringing all citizens into the ordinary structure of development and social transformation, the main purpose was to guarantee equal opportunity irrespective of gender, political affiliation, ethnicity or creed (Ncube, 2010). However, the success of this social transformation has been constrained.

Africa, for that matter Ghana, struggles with many problems which seem to be undefeatable. For example, there are many women who continue to live under similar oppressive conditions that existed prior to independence. The lives of women have not changed much regardless of considerable legal changes introduced. In many parts of Africa, obstacles imposed by certain cultural traditions, capitalism, Christianity and Islam as well as colonialism continue to restrict the rights of women (Ncube, 2010; Jolly, 1994; Schmidt, 1991).

Secondly, the 21st century has opened up a ripple and flood of African government failures, scandals and conflicts. The unrest, complexity, and surprising changes of the new millennium have largely contributed to fast breakdown of good governance in Ghana and on the African continent as a whole. Increasingly volatile and sporadic change has become the order of the day (Suarez & Oliva, 2005). There appears to be a complete disintegration of ethics and the ambiguity, discontinuity, and insecurity ensuing from radical changes, challenge majority of African countries including Ghana (Kessler & Chakrabarti, 1996).

In many countries in Africa corruption is endemic and widespread. Also, ethics is almost nonexistent at various levels of society. Companies and corporations are shuffled by new regulations and economic policies that only favour the rich few. The poor are becoming poorer and the rich richer. The population are derailed or paralyzed by the indecision of corporate governance as they strive to provide leadership in an unpredictable global environment. The apparent lack of existing law enforcement and disrespect and defiance by people who are well networked is an everyday phenomenon (Ncube, 2010), making it extremely hard if not impossible for the ordinary persons who yearn to be ethical and productive citizens of society.

In all of the above, lack of positive and effective leadership is evident. Thus, a pressing need for Ghana and the entire African continent is a leadership that is selfless, visionary, ethical and transformative (Larbi, 2011).

Ghana, in particular needs a leadership that will help it to prevail over the insurmountable contradictions, bringing about some amount of hospitality among people. As a result, this article considers that the immediate future of Ghana exists in search of leadership development among the youth by cultivating and fostering among students the six elements which are discussed below.

5. Six Elements for Promoting Leadership at the Higher Education Level

Taking into consideration the current context needs as well as suggestions offered by leadership researchers, Wa Polytechnic as part of its entrepreneurial study programme has developed a new leadership curriculum which is mandatory for every student alongside the mainstream higher national diploma courses. The initiative is to help develop in students the acquisition of solid personality qualities and leadership competencies (i.e. knowledge, abilities and skills) to enable them become effective leaders at their place of work. To teach any leadership course, emphasis is put on leadership by example. As such, the choice and assignment of the right lecturer and facilitator within the leadership course is of paramount importance.

This study promotes the kind of leadership that aims at making a positive impact on the society among the young people through the development of the following personality characteristics and competencies.

5.1 Emotional Intelligence

This is an attribute that seems to be crucial for successful leadership (Goleman, 2000; Mayer & Salovey, 1995). Emotions are deep-seated feelings which require attention as they are most likely to influence mental processes and behaviour. Fear, anger, sadness, shame, disgust, happiness, love and surprise are all examples of emotions. Even after the power of an emotion diminishes, it is still expected to remain as both a negative or positive mood and this can have an effect on leadership behavior (Yukl, 2010). Emotional intelligence is the ability of individuals to manage their own lives and the lives of others in a more effective manner. An emotional intelligent person is able to integrate reason and emotions in such manner that emotions are employed to aid mental processes. Emotional intelligence is relevant for leadership effectiveness in many ways (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002; Goleman, 1995, 2000; Goleman, Mayer & Salovey, 1995). Emotional intelligence may assist leaders find solutions to complex problems, lead to better decision-making, design how to utilize time efficiently, modify their actions and conduct to the circumstances, and cope with crises. Self-awareness, which is an aspect of emotional intelligence, makes it a lot easier to comprehend one's personal needs and possible reactions if particular incidences take place, in that way aiding the determination of alternative solutions (Goleman, 2000). Self-awareness, according to George (2007) is the gateway for developing and training successful leadership. The ability to comprehend and address feelings, mood and emotions in one's self (Goleman, 1995) and then in followers may contribute to effective leadership at the workplace through goal setting; fostering among employees an appreciation of the significance of work; creating enthusiasm, positive thinking, trust, collaboration; ensuring flexibility in the decision making process and developing a positive organizational image (George, 2000). Furthermore, by applying an appropriate expression of humour a leader can generate positive outcomes including positive emotional process, creativity, interest, innovativeness and joy (Hughes, 2009, p. 426). Self-management helps information processing in tough, demanding situations and aids leaders to uphold their confidence and zeal concerning a project in the midst of impediments and delays. Empathy is related to strong social competencies that are required to cultivate supportive interpersonal relationships. The skill to listen carefully, express position appreciation and communicate effectively, are examples of empathy. The skill to comprehend and influence emotions in people will assist a leader who is making an effort to stimulate interest and confidence for a change or future activity.

5.2 Systems Thinking

It is imperative to understand the complex inter-relationships among the various organizational processes as well as the implications of attempts to make adaptations. According to Senge (1990), this involves conceptual skills and systems thinking. It is necessary to understand that intricate problems usually have manifold causes, which can involve actions taken previously to solve related problems. In large organizations, all actions always have effects, together with their unintentional side effects (Yukl, 2010). Changes frequently have deferred certain outcomes that tend to distort the true character of the relationship. A change which influences one part of an organization will ultimately have an effect on other parts. Thus, reactions to the change can almost certainly nullify the effects. In an event of making decisions or identifying the root cause of problems, it is necessary to understand how the various parts of the system are interconnected (Yukl, 2010). Even if the main purpose is to manage or cope with one type of issue, such as efficiency enhancement, leaders still need to take into account the possible effects for other performance factors and the likelihood that any direct gains will be cancelled out by future events as the consequences of a change or decision in the long run may stream through the system. Even though strategic thinking regarding these problems is evidently more crucial for top leaders than for tactical or operational level leaders, it is pertinent for all leaders at various levels of an organization.

5.3 Vision and Mission

The central task of a leader is to design a *vision*. Many organizational and management writers have made an effort to describe the key elements of a successful vision (Yukl, 2010; Kotter, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Tichy & Devanna, 1986, Bennis & Nanus, 1985). A vision needs to be simple and romantic; an embodiment of an attractive future, not a complicated proposition with measurable objectives and meticulous action steps (Yukl, 2010). The vision must be fascinating to the ideals, aspirations and values of the members of the organization and other constituents whose support is required. The vision must put stress on remote philosophical ideas rather than direct material benefits. The vision must be thought-provoking but down-to-earth. To be useful and trustworthy, the vision need not be wishful, but rather an achievable future rooted in the contemporary reality. The vision must focus on fundamental assumptions concerning what is crucial for the company, how it will match with the setting and also how people will be taken care of. A vision is an idea of what the company should be. Successful leaders usually have sober perspective regarding what they desire, the reasons they desire it, and how they are going to accomplish it. According to Bennis and Nanus (1985) a vision conveys a credible notion which is attractive for the future of the organization. It is also a status that is superior in several important ways than what now is alive. In this sense, successful leaders are effective change managers (Conger, 1992). After a vision has been created the leader needs to communicate this vision to followers. This can be done through written messages, inspirational speeches, pleas to shared values and most of all being exemplary and personally acting in a manner that is in agreement with the vision. Furthermore, the leader must design or at least assist to design an all-purpose strategy for accomplishing the vision (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). The emphasis is on practice and not personality of the leader.

The mission statement generally expresses the function of the organization with reference to the kind of activities to be carried out for stakeholders or clientele (Yukl, 2010). On the contrary, an effective vision indicates what the different activities mean to members of the organization or community as a whole. The heart of the vision is the mission, but various elements of it may be highlighted. An effective and thriving vision indicates not only the activities of the organization, but also the reasons why it is meaningful and stimulating to engage in those activities.

5.4 Critical Thinking

The present and future generation of leaders will be required to scrutinize reality with critical mind, ask difficult questions that will pose a challenge to the powers that be (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001). Leaders need to collect, integrate, and interpret huge amounts of information. These demands are more challenging today than ever before due to rapid technological transformation. Therefore, it is not startling that leaders must be intelligent and knowledgeable enough to devise appropriate strategies, solve problems, and make the right decisions (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). The paper is referring to leaders who have the courage to make “clinical diagnosis” of the existing status quo and come out with innovative solutions to society’s ills and problems through cognitive skills. In the 21st Century where the world is constantly changing, leaders are required to be critical thinkers, creative and innovative. It is no longer acceptable that managers operate employing the same frame of mind that Taylor (1911) used to lead. Being an effective leader and constantly adapting to the culture and environment in which the organization operates is critical for long-term success.

5.5 Teamwork

Today’s leaders do not need to work alone. They need others to become successful leaders. It is essential that they comprehend the power that exists among team and collective efforts (Kouzes et al., 2005). Effective leaders also need to understand how they can increase their abilities by working together and enjoying the benefits for making a difference within their operating environments. Even a gifted, well-organized and disciplined team may not succeed in executing its mission unless there exist mutual trust and high-level of collaboration among team members. When the roles of team members are substantially mutually supporting, it is indispensable for them to share resources and information and assist one another. It has been established that information sharing is linked to group performance, and information flow can be made easy through elements of relations-oriented as well as empowering leadership (Yukl, 2010; Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006). To create a climate that encourages and promotes collaboration, it is important for members to build trusting relationships founded on openness, respect, consistency and honesty (Northouse, 2013; Larson & LaFasto, 1989). The integration of group members’ actions is one of the key features of an effective team. Each team member has certain distinctive roles, where the performance of individual roles contributes to team success. Thus Zaccaro and colleagues (2001) are convinced that the root “causes of team failure may reside not only in member inability, but also in their collective failure to coordinate and synchronize their individual contributions” (p.451). Collaboration is also essential when the mission and vision obliges employees to work in partnership in close proximity for extended periods of time even under demanding circumstances. Collaboration and group effort is more possible when

each member makes an effort to associate with the team, attach great importance to their membership in the team, and each member is inherently encouraged to support the team. Collaboration is also fostered through high degree of mutual trust (Northouse, 2013). Low interrelatedness, weak cohesiveness as well as lack of trust are most likely to come about in newly created teams, in teams which experiences regular changes in membership, teams whose members characterize competing entities, also in teams where members come from culturally diverse settings, and finally in teams where members are emotionally immature (Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, & Mount, 1998; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993). Therefore, an effective leader must learn how deal with the various types of people.

5.6 Ability to Learn

In an unstable and chaotic milieu in which companies must constantly innovate, change, and rediscover themselves, corporate leaders should be adaptable enough so that they will be able to learn from their failings, modify the beliefs and assumptions they hold, and perfect their cognitive models. Several scholars have confirmed that one of the most critical abilities for effective leadership in changing circumstances is the capacity to learn from daily experiences and modify one's behaviour to change (Mumford & Connelly, 1991; Argyris, 1991; Dechant, 1990). This competency entails "learning how to learn" (Yukl, 2010), which means the skill to deeply analyze one's personal mental processes such as the manner problems are defined and solved and to identify ways of improving them. It also entails self-awareness, which is the knowledge and understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses. In a research involving 1,800 senior military officers, this capability predicted self-reported professional accomplishments (Yukl, 2010; Zaccaro, Mumford, Marks et al., 1997). The study carried out by Marshall-Mies and colleagues (2000) offers further evidence that the capacity to adapt and learn is critical for leader success. The competency to learn from one's life experiences and adjust to change entails both skills and personality traits (Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997). These character-traits seem to be identical with social and emotional intelligence. For instance, achievement orientation, self-monitoring, emotional stability, conceptual ability as well as internal locus of control are all found important for learning from mistakes and success experiences. Executive who possess these personality traits are highly stimulated to achieve excellence as these managers are curious and flexible. They also have the curiosity and self-confidence to experiment with novel advances, and they dynamically ask for feedback concerning their positive as well as negative points.

6. Leadership Development in Wa Polytechnic

The Wa Polytechnic is currently running a new leadership development course as a component part of the Entrepreneurship Training Programme which is mandatory for all Higher National Diploma (HND) students. The six characteristics of leadership mentioned above form part of the course content. At the commencement of the course, students are provided with a general overview regarding the concept of leadership and some fundamental theories such as trait approach, skills approach, situational-contingency approach, leader-member exchange, team leadership, culture and leadership, leadership ethics and others. These theories are reviewed and analyzed, giving special consideration to how each theory or approach can be applied in organizational settings. Most importantly, students are encouraged to cultivate a sense of self-awareness. Lecturers guide students to discover their strengths, potentials as well as weaknesses. However, the main focus is enabling students to develop their strengths.

Another important topic in the curriculum is emotional intelligence. Students are encouraged to pay attention to elements of emotional intelligence such as temperaments, self-management, social-awareness, passion and the relevance of discovering what they are zealous about in life as well as the various leadership styles that they could display. The idea is for students to not only study concepts and theories of leadership, but is able to apply and internalize these concepts in their personal lives.

One of the objectives of the course is to guide students to develop group/team leadership skills. To accomplish this objective students are guided to acknowledge and appreciate some important personality attributes and leadership competencies. Lecturers and facilitators first teach students on the relevance of teamwork and how groups function. Students are given the opportunity to form small groups and make team presentations. This supports the practice of teamwork and development of certain leadership skills such as cooperation and working together with others.

To lay a solid foundation of leadership, the Polytechnic has adopted a textbook entitled, "The Leadership Challenge" written by Kouzes & Posner (1995). Students are guided and encouraged to learn how to create an organizational vision and mission statements. Also, students are taught about the importance of building and promoting trust, cooperation and offering support to their group. Besides, students are taught on the importance of exemplary leadership, how to set up goals for the group, team motivation and the celebration of group success. Within the team leadership module, students are asked to identify some current leaders who are exemplary leaders and model a certain quality of a leader. Also, students are challenged to practice sustainable leadership in

their lives.

Furthermore, students are asked to carry out a field research based on a real problem or need within the local community. Students work in small groups, identify a particular need where they can apply their personal and leadership skills in combination with the knowledge they have acquired to improve upon the situation. Students also have the option to decide on a project where it will be possible for them to teach children or young people a specific skill or knowledge that will facilitate the growth and development of these children in a personal way. Through these projects Polytechnic students may have an influence on the next generation of leaders.

Throughout the entire coursework, the critical thinking aspect is fostered through group discussions, group assignment, individual exercises as well as case study activities. For example, for each case study assignment thought-provoking questions are posed to help students to critically analyze and interpret the case problem. A questionnaire is also provided in each module to enable the students apply the approach to their own setting or leadership style. Also, student participation is sought in every lecture through group discussion on specific leadership themes, personal and group reflections, fun-team activities and group dynamics exercises.

The new leadership course has been running on for the past five years and the Polytechnic management thinks the course should continue. The feedback provided by some beneficiary students as well as the observations made by lecturers give sufficient evidence that the objectives of the leadership course are being achieved. To get feedback from students regarding the new leadership course, an open question survey was conducted during lecture periods. Six hundred students (i.e. about three-quarters of student population) took part in the survey. They were mostly second and third year students. All the 600 students surveyed confirmed that they have learned a lot about leadership. They also indicated that the objectives of the course and their expectations were completely realized. In addition, some students expressed that they had learned a lot more than what they originally expected. Over 400 students mentioned that the course had enabled them to acquire team leadership skills and to become more self-aware of their strengths, potentialities as well as their weaknesses. Surprisingly, all of the 600 students surveyed revealed that the final project helped them in two major ways. First, it helped them to grow in their social awareness. Second, it gave them the opportunity to put into practice the leadership skills they had earlier learned within the module. These responses testify that the new leadership course run by the Wa Polytechnic has had many positive results as far as the formation of students is concerned.

Nonetheless, it cannot be concluded that every student that undergoes this leadership course will automatically become an effective leader when offered a leadership position. On the contrary, it can be expressed that every student of the Polytechnic has been taught the fundamentals required of a leader. It is also important to acknowledge that the group projects were fully designed and implemented by each team and as such have been an important means of devoting something back to society or to the teens that benefited from the project.

7. Future Research

Any organization needs leadership and leaders need to possess a certain degree of leadership skill to be able to lead an organization successfully (Wu, 2009). An organization's success relies on its leadership competences in taking advantage of the knowledge, skills and abilities of its employees (Armandi et al., 2003). To become and remain competitive in today's world, organizations should be able to stimulate their employees and promote their initiative. This positive climate requires more than a traditional leader but rather a leader who has the capacity to develop employees, instilling a sense of commitment and effort. Thus for future research, we recommend that educators and researchers should focus on finding answers to the following questions: (1) how can management find an authentic leader who can help employees in an organization agree on and accept the leadership style of a leader?, (2) what critical core competences should a leader possess to be able to lead in today's environment more effectively?, and finally (3) how can higher education institutions develop leadership capacity among polytechnic and university students in Ghana?

8. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that leadership is a multi-dimensional complex phenomenon since it is composed of various diverse aspects which pose a challenge to leadership professors who teach it to others. All the same, leadership is a subject that can be taught (Bennis, 1987, 1995). To teach leadership it is crucial to have a solid knowledge and understanding about leadership. It is also relevant to take into consideration contextual factors, needs of society, the age and background of the student and the ingredients of leadership that should form part of the course curriculum.

Specifically, this article has explored how Wa Polytechnic seeks to promote and nurture six leadership elements among its higher national diploma students. These six leadership elements are: emotional intelligence, systems thinking, life's vision and mission, critical thinking, teamwork skills and the ability to learn. This paper conveys that utilizing a diverse range of teaching methods is critical for leadership development. For instance, in-class group presentations, group-based research and project implementation should be part and parcel of

leadership training methods at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Governments need to consider the important role the professor of leadership plays in developing and forming leaders. A great deal of the positive outcomes and goal accomplishment a leadership course can offer are closely connected to being a personal example of how a leader should be. It is the teacher who takes the final decision with regard to the course activities, teaching methodologies, teaching environment and even how the learning will go on. Educational institutions may have well-designed leadership programs and state-of-the-art curriculum, but none of these will carry weight unless the lecturers who teach the subject and facilitate the learning process are zealous about leadership.

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