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Workplace leadership development for young professionals through continuous, inclusive and low cost strategies: a case study of a financial institution in West Africa

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Abstract

Title: Workplace leadership development for young professionals through continuous, inclusive and low cost strategies: a case study of a financial institution in West Africa

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In today's complex organizations, it is no longer sufficient for employees to do predictable jobs relying only on artefacts like policies and standard operating procedures. They need to be able to manage complexities and changes occasioned by internal and external environments (Turesky and Gallagher, 2011). This action research investigation focused on the development of everyday leadership through continuous, inclusive and low-cost strategies. The research is based on the context of organization faced with challenge of time and resources required for the development of its members.

The research adopted a view of leadership as something available to every member of the organization. In line with this, the investigation revolves around the development of everyday leadership practice through action research. A qualitative research approach was employed under the overarching tradition of action research. Empirical data was generated via semi structured interviews and participants' observation at distinct phases of the investigation.

Findings revealed that by leveraging on the events happening in the organization, participants at all levels of the organization developed four broad leadership capabilities.

There are numerous contributions to knowledge from my study. First, the study maintained that if in-house and work embedded leadership development interventions based on distributed perspective are to be successful, employees across all levels of the organization must think of themselves as leaders, be seen by others as leaders and willing to develop capabilities to earn the trust to lead effectively. Second, there is no significant difference in the leadership development needs and learning of the employees at different strata of the organization. The participants across levels expressed the same needs and reported development along the same paths. The responses from the interviews remain the same among participants at different levels in the organization. Third, successful leadership development required leaders and organization to focus on supporting mindful engagement of their employees on their own experience (DeRue and Ashford, 2010); as well as provide platforms and support systems that enable them make sense of their experience.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been duly acknowledged.

Acknowledgement

I enjoyed excellent support from my thesis supervisors. I am grate to Dr Hardy Pascale, my initial first supervisor. I am also grateful to Dr Victoria Hanna for investing time to review the initial thesis work at different stages and the insightful feedback from the reviews. Furthermore, I benefitted immensely Dr Lucia Morales, my supervisor. Thank you for the time, understanding and excellent support. I extend my gratitude to the management of my organization and participants for volunteering to take part in the study.

I dedicate this work to Rihanat Ajani-Lawal (MBA), Abdulsalam, Abdullah and Aisha Ajani-Lawal (my wonderful wife and children) for the support throughout the DBA programme. Thank you for the sacrifice and support. You all are wonderful.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In today's modern organizations, it is no longer adequate for employees to do predictable jobs relying only on artifacts like policies and standard operating procedures. Employees need to be able to manage complexities and changes occasioned by internal and external environments (Turesky and Gallagher, 2011). The need for organizations in this 21st century to embrace a people-centered leadership against heroic leadership will be a welcome development. Embracing a people-centered leadership is necessary because, vast and swift changes are redefining; how we view good customer service, work, jobs, and careers (Balakrishnan & Prathiba, 2011). As an illustration, Customers in the financial institution now have online/real-time access to their accounts and back-office representatives via handheld and electronic devices. This online access implies that customers will more than ever expect prompt response should they need the help of the financial institution representative at any time. It is common knowledge now that through data gathering at point-of-contacts with customers and information technology, employees now have access to information that used to be the exclusive reserves of top-level management. Technological advancement has made it possible for employees to access information that his or her superiors lack.

The demands on employees in my current employment align with emerging trends, in the sense that we expect workers to take initiative in handling routine tasks and managing complexities. Operating a people-centered leadership ensures that employees take ownership of their work, act as leaders and entrepreneurs regardless of their level, and also gives them latitude to surpass organizational goals innovatively.

To motivate employees to take initiative, our organization established a reward system that includes: capacity development, frequent promotions, training, and involvement in strategic projects amongst others. Rewarding employees for

taking initiative increases the productivity level of the worker and impacts the organizational effectiveness.

Our organization observed in the last five years an ugly trend. We noticed that unproductive employees without recourse resign from the organization. The major challenge of high staff turnover is the huge cost of training and retraining workers. The lack of a pool of job seekers who have the required skills to fill vacant roles is yet another challenge.

The challenge with our relatively new organization is that the majority of our employees are greenhorns with little work experience. Also, our organization's lack of capacity-building systems has resulted in employees lacking the capacity to take initiative in executing organization tasks. Though leadership development training is urgently needed, it is hard to embark on the traditional (usually externally facilitated) leadership development training programmes. Apart from the increasing pressure organizations are facing to reduce costs associated with training (Orvis and Leffler, 2011), it is difficult to ascertain whether the objectives for embarking on training are realized because employees' performance does not reflect the realities in most cases.

To address the problem of employees' inability to take initiative at all levels, this action research work will focus on understanding the leadership problem, explore and implement continuous, inclusive and cost-effective leadership development interventions that fit the organization's need.

In addition, it is important to understand what people-centred or everyday leadership consists, determine the platforms available and suitable to develop leaders, ascertain the focus of leadership development, and how to implement it in everyday work. The second chapter of the thesis will dwell extensively on the common issues inherent in leadership development. Also, I shall focus on the leadership competencies required by the participants, the willingness of members

of the organization to participate in the leadership development programmes considering existing work pressure and individual characteristics, the willingness of the members to take ownership of their development and participant's eagerness to reframing the way they engage with and think about leadership. The consideration and focus on the issues discussed in this paragraph may significantly enhance the likelihood of a successful developmental intervention (Day and Harrison, 2007).

1.1 Background of the study

Formal Leadership development has been carried out traditionally at the home office of my organization through local and overseas training programmes and is usually facilitated by external training institutions. Historically, the capacity-building programmes of our organization focus on the development of skills and capacities of individual managers. While the training programmes expose the trainees who are usually middle and senior management employees to contemporary concepts that may help to build effective leadership skills, this training offers next to nothing with respect to the specific need of manager and trainee leaders. Furthermore, trainee selection criteria for the leadership development programme are largely dependent on the human resource (HR) department or executive management discretion. The discretion of the HR department in most cases is perception based. HR team could nominate trainees as a result of perceived leadership potentials, the nature of employee tasks in the organization, or training cost. A critical reflection on the existing approach revealed a lack of systematic development of leadership skills and capacities of employees. The approach is ad-hoc, incoherent, ignores the fact that leadership exists at every level of the organization and fraught with hazards of subjectivity and politics (Alimo-Metcalfe and Lawler, 2001; Edmonstone, 2002).

My organization task criteria for selecting middle and senior management employees for leadership development programmes are currently being carried

out by young professionals with no prior experience or leadership training. Some of these young professionals were employed immediately after graduating from the university and are currently in formal 'leadership positions. From the traditional view of leadership, these graduates are assigned very important leadership roles meant for experienced leaders. Apart from the fact that these employees have not reached the level that they will be considered for formal leadership training, as a new business with limited resources, the organization cannot at this time fund expensive leadership programmes. The implication of this is that these employees have been handed responsibilities that are beyond their capacities.

1.2 The context of the study

In this study, I am going to show that the outcome of leadership development happens in; our daily interactions between leaders and the led, the result produced by them, the context in which they work, the learning that occurs in daily task, and the time spent on reflecting on the learning that is taking place.

I facilitated the development of participants by creating and monitoring the platforms that facilitate interactions, accountability, feedback, learning in and on action and reflection on the learning taking place. Figure 1.1 illustrates the interrelated dynamics of how I aided the development of the leadership capacity of the participants not forgetting the context and leveraging Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (KELT).

Reviewing relevant literature and leveraging insights from theory while focusing on the context in this research aided me in developing the desired leadership capabilities in participants. The review of the context of the research focuses on the following five perspectives: (a) my organization (b) my position in the company and my key roles; (c) individual employee's characteristics; (d) job characteristics; (e) internal environment characteristics; and (f) external environment characteristics.

Stakeholders		Context
▪ Management of the institution who desires that all employees behave act as leaders ▪ Research participants who are all members of the organization ▪ Internal and external customers who interact with various members of the organization	**Leadership Development Outcomes**	▪ Employees lacked capacity of required leadership behaviours ▪ Organization has lean resources to embark on traditional external leadership training ▪ Lack of formalized leadership development programmes ▪ Elements of external environment do not support some of the required behaviour

Principal Researcher		Theoretical Understanding
▪ Identitified the problem ▪ Collaborate with the members of the organizations to explore and implement actionable solutions ▪ Established initiatives that formalize leadership development ▪ Facilitates the development of desired capability		▪ The Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (KELT) posits that learning is a cognitive process which entails continuous adaptation to and engagement with one's environment ▪ Individuals create knowledge from what they experience, rather than just from the instructions they received ▪ The learning process is driven by differences, conflicts, & disagreements as individuals shift between modes of action, reflection, feeling and thinking

Figure 1.1 Overview of context, theoretical understanding & stakeholders

(source: Kolb, 1984)

1.2.1 My organization

My organization is a commercial bank operating in Cote d'Ivoire and a subsidiary of a banking group with subsidiaries in 10 countries. Over the 27 years of its existence, the group has established a reputation of high performing and merit-driven environment where excuses are not acceptable for failure or mediocre performance. The continued stay of an employee in the organization will be at stake if performance is consistently poor over a period (Maklan and Knox, 2009). Leveraging the pool of leaders across functions and levels within the organization, the group has continued to record excellent success.

The Côte d'Ivoire subsidiary, my practice environment, commenced operation in mid-2012 with about 30 employees, as the first subsidiary to be set up in a non-English speaking country. This has grown to about 140 over five years. The network of business locations has also grown from one to five.

As a subsidiary of a fast-growing banking group, the organization requires employees to be creative, innovative, behave as if they own the business, perform assigned tasks with a continuous improvement mindset and work harder all through the year. In line with this, the group office requires my subsidiary to achieve breakeven profit within 24 months of operation. At the commencement of this research in 2015, the subsidiary has been in existence for more than 36 months and breakeven is yet to be achieved. However, break-even was eventually achieved towards the end of 2017.

1.2.2 My position in the company and key roles

I am one of the two executive directors of the subsidiary of Guaranty Trust Bank Côte d'Ivoire (GTBank CI) and the Chief Operating Officer. My main responsibilities include:

a) The direct supervision of IT, Risk Management, Financial Control, Human Resources, E-Business Operations, International and Domestic Settlement, Transaction Services, and Systems and Controls;
b) Formulation of policies towards efficient management of the bank; and
c) Role of the acting Managing Director whenever necessary.

To maintain efficient operation which will enable us to achieve our business objectives, my responsibility is to; attract, develop and retain a pool of employees with desired capabilities. Upon engagement, we equip newly recruited employees with suitable hard and soft skills which will enable them to function effectively. After 5 years of existence, it is expected that we should have created a stable middle management team with desired leadership capabilities. This has not been the case because of high staff turnover. Frequent voluntary staff exits

have made it difficult to achieve our business objectives. Lack of proper delegation strategy, workplace support, non-inclusive decision-making process, the inability of an employee to work in line with the company's expectation, and lack of success-driven structures are responsible for the high staff turnover rate in my organization.

Eighteen workers report to me directly at the moment and having to attend to these workers daily is energy-sapping and brain-draining, affecting my ability to fully engage in strategic roles in the organization.

As a senior officer, I have been an active player in seeking lasting solutions to the identified problem in my organization. My quest led to my taking up insider action researcher roles such as; acting as a consultant, working with the action research team and the action learning team, anchored data generation, handled data analysis and discussion, managed identified risks and provided feedback about the research findings to the relevant stakeholder.

1.2.3 Individual employee's characteristics

Over 85 full-time and part-time employees of my organization participated in this research. The average age of employees in the organization is 30. 80% of the employees engaged by the organization are young school leavers without prior work experience. They are passionate about learning new things and show the desire for increased responsibility and belief in their ability to achieve what they set their mind on. Research findings show a significant relationship between individual characteristics and leadership development. Employees with high learning goal orientation are usually motivated to learn with a view that their skills are malleable and can be improved upon with conscious efforts (Orvis, Fisher, and Wasserman, 2009; Orvis and Leffler, 2011). Consequently, there is the likelihood that employees with high learning goal orientation will naturally commit to leadership development programme with or without the organization's support.

Employment into the organization is mainly through recruitment into the first career level. About 85% of the full-time employees were recruited through the entry-level programme. Employees recruited into the entry-level are usually exposed to various technical training as part of the measures to equip them for assignments in various functions existing in the bank. The pre-employment training focuses on concepts in accounting, economics, banking and finance, the legal aspect of banking, customer service, etc. The challenge with this training is that it does not adequately equip employees with the relevant skills for the job. To fully equip the employees for the job and the work environment, there is a need for structures that allow everyone to develop the capabilities required to succeed. Putting structures in place will not only help employees with the personal drive to develop their potentials but will also inspire others to start desiring leadership capabilities. So, employees who believe in themselves are more likely to engage in self-development regardless of the support from the workplace, (Maurer, Weiss and Barbeite, 2003), but the reverse is the case with the unmotivated employees. For such employees, the managers and organization need to provide support for self-development to enable the employees to realize their growth potential. However, self-motivated employees (personal characteristics including intellectual curiosity and preference for variety) are generally predisposed to learning new things and are more likely to choose to actively participate in self-development for personal learning and growth. Whereas, employees that are not self-motivated are less likely to be motivated to learn new skills. Thus, they may require support to appreciate the value in self-development (Maurer, Lippstreu and Judge, 2008).

1.2.4 Job characteristics

The organization operates using a team structure such as; support teams and profit centers. Our organization team structure compels every employee to belong to a team that is headed by a team lead that reports to a group head

who manages several other teams. The group head reports to the divisional head and sometimes directly to a member of executive management. Based on the team structure, employees naturally handle assigned tasks and activities following the directive from the authority that compels everyone to look in the direction of the team lead for solutions to all workplace issues. Ironically, the organization expects employees to be decisive, entrepreneurial and outspoken in a system with bottlenecks. Developing the right mindset and capabilities is only possible with a structure that encourages employees' initiative. Boyce, Zaccaro, and Wisecarver (2010) insist that when a job represents a leadership position in an organization, individuals with high levels of work orientation will most likely attach high value to developing their leadership capability. Thus, the current structure which places job and people in a leadership position is beneficial to the leadership development goal.

1.2.5 Internal environment characteristics

While it is normal to expect that employees will voluntarily embrace learning and development opportunities, the potential participants might prefer to avoid any additional tasks that could place further pressure on them or on their time considering the current aggressive drive towards meeting organization target knowing that the organization has zero-tolerance for mediocre performance. As pressure mounts from the organization on how to break even, employee performance is under this heat. Furthermore, employees are members of informal groups in the organization that is driven by factors like age, desire for informal power, nature of the job and the employee's duration in the organization. Employees value membership of the informal group and would avoid actions that could result in a sanction that might affect one's participation in the group. Any attitude not acceptable in the group regardless of whether it is productive or counterproductive to the organization would be sanctioned.

An emerging stream of research suggests that work pressure is beneficial as it founds a positive relationship between employment outcomes and increases job demand. Consequently, empirical evidence supports that work pressure provides the motivation needed in a career networking mindset. On the other hand, the career networking mindset is positively related to skill development (Blustein, 2011; Ren and Chadee, 2017)

1.2.6 Theoretical Context

Leadership has traditionally been conceptualized as individual-level skills. In line with this perspective, development is considered possible by focusing on individual intrapersonal skills and abilities (Campbell, Dardis and Campbell, 2003). Recent and complementary perspectives focus on leadership as a social process and how individual's capacities could be developed to enable them effectively engage in leadership roles (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012). These theories maintain that both individual and social-relational perspectives are important elements of leadership development.

For this research work, I drew my learning from these theories; the theory of leadership, the theory of understanding a leader, the theory of leadership development and the theory of learning from experience. The first aspect of theoretical leadership relies on the theories of leadership vis-à-vis what constitutes leadership and highlights what leadership develop ment programme should be. This research particularly leverages the skills approach and distributed theory of leadership. The skills approach maintains that leadership capabilities can be developed over time through training and learning from experience (Campbell, Dardis and Campbell, 2003; Sternberg, 2008). The distributed leadership theory views leadership as an activity that could be shared instead of the view as leadership as a role (Stoll and Louis, 2007). Leadership development from the shared leadership perspective comprises capabilities such as group learning,

team creativity, and mutual leadership skills. These theories will be discussed extensively in the literature review section.

The second aspect of the theoretical background draws on the theory of learning by leveraging theoretical principles and practices that make it possible to optimize the learning aspect and ensure that optimal learning occurs as quickly as possible. In this phase, I leveraged Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory – KELT (Kolb, 1984) which suggests that individuals can learn from their experience. The KELT model portrays that learning occurs in a cycle, starting from concrete experience to observations and afterward moves from reflections to the formation of abstract concepts, followed by generalizations and finally to testing implications of concepts in new situations. In other words, learning is considered a cognitive process that entails continuous adaptation to and engagement with one's environment. Specific details about how the KELT is leveraged in this research work is provided in chapter three.

1.3 The research problem

The focus of this research is on the lack of leaderful attitude among employees of my organization despite the responsibilities assigned to them and the sensitivity of the tasks they handled. This problem captured as follows; how does my organization increase its leadership base by motivating every employee to function as a leader wherever he or she may be found within the organization using continuous, inclusive and low-cost leadership development strategies? The lack of leaderful behavior occurs mainly due to a lack of the requisite knowledge and capabilities to influence thoughts, actions, decisions and manage relationships. From observation, this problem manifests in several ways. First, some of the employees that left the organization attribute their exit decisions to the nasty experience they had working with their supervisors. As an illustration, one of the concerned employees stated that the assigned team leader of his unit considers opposing views as rebellious acts. Their relationship became cold due

to accumulated unpleasant encounters arising from what should ordinarily be inoffensive. As a result, the employee decided to leave for the same job in another organization. Secondly, some employees with a better solution to a specific task take no action because they feel it's the responsibility of the assigned leaders to provide a solution to all problems. Thirdly, there are observed cases of counterproductive work behavior arising from poor relationship management, communication skill or other people management skills amongst leaders and the led. The institutionalized structure that expects everyone to act like a leader from everywhere within the organization is challenged by the existing work culture which focuses on supervisors as the core business drivers. Based on this culture most people look up to the next man up in the hierarchy as the leader and as such leadership is elusive to everyone.

Every member of the organization wants the problem solved and therefore looks forward to executive management resolving it. Leveraging on action research traditions, I will work with members of the organization to design and implement actionable solutions which will equip all employees with everyday leadership capacities required to deliver their assigned tasks, handle unplanned job demands and effectively work with others.

The qualitative research approach was employed under the overarching tradition of action research to achieve the research objective. For this investigation, a working definition of action research adopted leverage on the work of Altrichter et al. (2002) which emphasize three key characteristics of action research including:

a) A group of people working together;

b) Who is engaged in the iterative cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting on their work with a degree of consciousness than usual; and

c) Generating a public report of the experience.

The design and the implementation of the actionable solutions to the problem under this research follow the iterative cycles explained with the aid of figure 1.2.
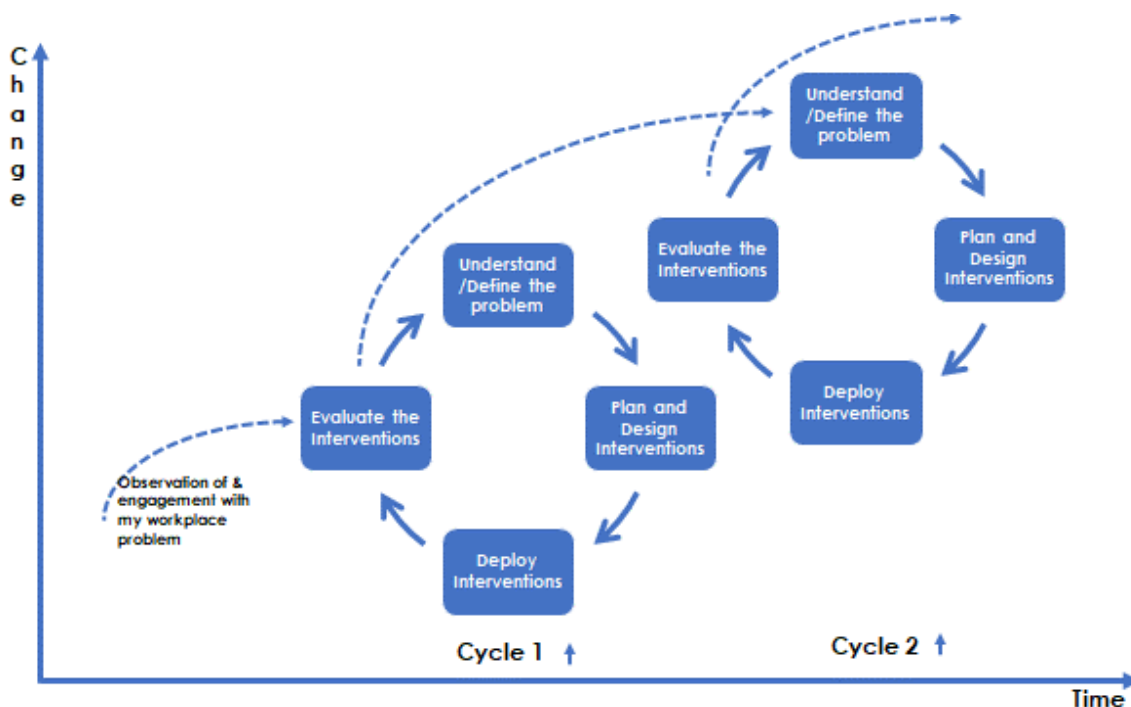
Figure 1.2. Spiral of action research cycle (Source: adapted from Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p10)

The process starts with the identification of the issue for example, how can we grow low-cost deposits for the bank? Followed by defining the problem, observation, and data collection. We build on the previous phase by identifying actionable solutions. These solutions are implemented and regularly subjected to critical evaluation. The result from evaluation may generate further problem and this lead to going through the process cycle. The repeated engagement in the action research cycles allows participants to learn from experience while taking actions. Revans (1982) insists that there can be no action without learning and no learning without action. Action research and its role in this research are discussed extensively in chapter 3. The rich picture in figure 1.3 shows the research problem and the dimension, the solutions deployed, and my role.
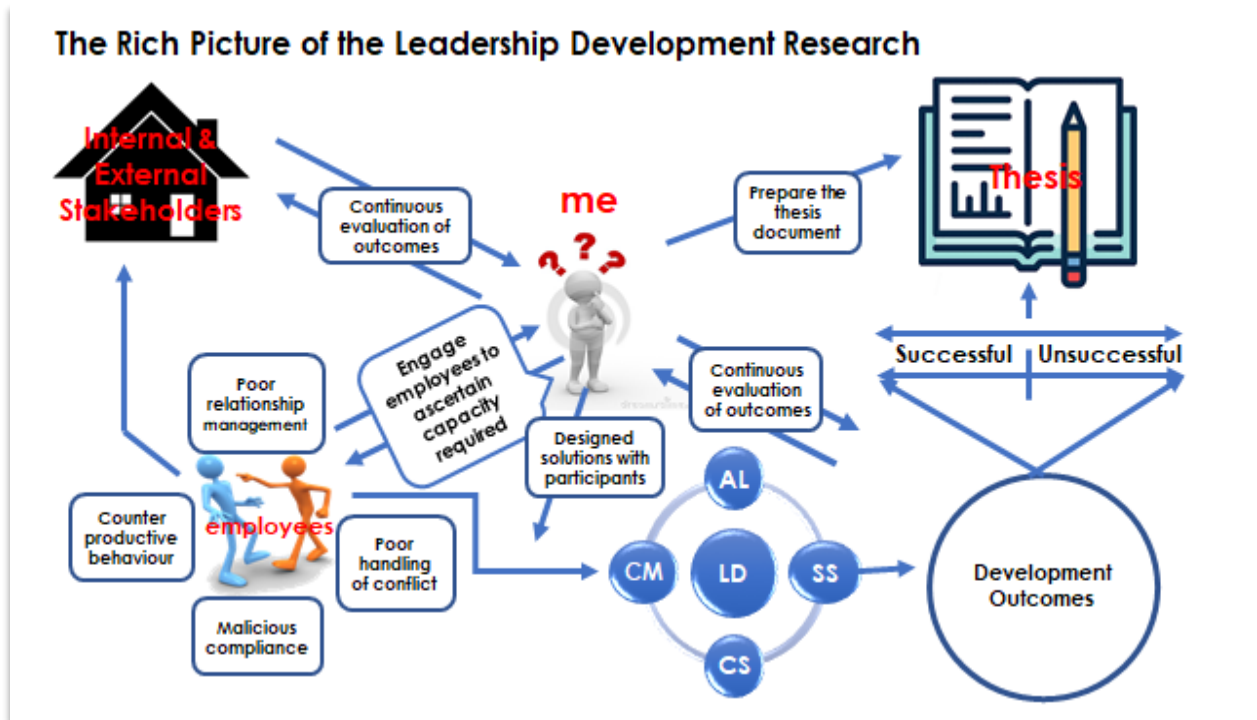
Figure 1.3. The rich picture (source: personal collection)

Note: LD = Leadership Development; AL = Action Learning (Learning from & in Action); SS = Sunrise Session (Learning from interactive session); CS = Case study (Learning from critical experiences on workplace); CM = Coaching and Mentoring.

In the course of this research, I observed that some of our employees did not exhibit the expected leadership qualities toward their different stakeholders which negatively impacts the relationship that exists internally as well as our customers. To correct this problem, I had to work with the members of the organization while leveraging on action research method religiously, we designed and deployed four broad-based initiatives that focused on ensuring that participants develop the desired leadership capability. The process used for this research, the methodology adopted, and the results gotten were provided in the Thesis.

1.4 The research objectives

The focus of this action research investigation is on understanding, deploying cost-effective and inclusive leadership development initiatives that will assist members

of the organization to develop the capacity to practice leadership from anywhere within the organization. The emphasis here will be on leadership development principles that do not require the heroic style of leadership. The fundamental focus is on improving employee's capacity to influence tasks, processes or champion innovative ideas with or without being in a position of authority.

The increase in the number of people that practice leadership will aid my organization to realize its service delivery, profitability, and growth objectives. In addition, this will simultaneously aid the development of my leadership capability and contribute to the existing knowledge on evidence-based practice. In line with these, the specific objectives of the research include:

a) Explore and deploy continuous, cost-effective and inclusive leadership development initiatives that will assist members of the organization to develop the capacity to practice leadership from everywhere in the organization.
b) To gain an understanding of the current leadership development needs of the members of my organization.
c) Develop my capacity and expertise for workplace problem solving and evidence-based practice.
d) Transform my leadership practice from the perspective of a man in front to an inclusive style of leadership.

1.5 Research Questions

To realize the objectives of the action research investigation this research will seek to find, answers to two key questions:
a) What kind of everyday leadership capabilities do participants gain from in-house Leadership Development Programmes based on initiatives built into routine activities, training sessions and action learning?

b) Which one of the in-house leadership interventions provided participants the greatest avenue for acquiring the desired leadership capability?

The two key questions gave rise to the following sub-questions, which will be answered through the findings:

i. What are the current leadership development needs of the organization? This question focuses on understanding the development needs of the members of the organization. The question will aid in the achievement of the second objective of this research which focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the current leadership development needs of the members of the organization.

ii. What are the impacts of in-house Leadership Development Programmes based on initiatives built around routine activities, training sessions and action learning teams on the participants? This question focuses on how leadership skills are developed through action learning and other interventions deployed. The question will aid in the achievement of the first and fourth objective of the research which is to explore and deploy continuous, cost-effective and inclusive (CCI) leadership development initiatives towards assisting participants to develop the capacity to practice leadership from anywhere within the organization.

iii. What initiative provided the participants the most effective platform to develop and practice leadership? This question is important for identifying the platform(s) through which the participants achieved their development objectives in the context of these findings. This question will aid as well in the achievement of the first objective of this research work; as well as the third objective.

1.6 The rationale and motivation for the research

The rationale for this research stems primarily from the fact that some of our employees lacked everyday leadership capabilities required to perform effectively in line with the objectives of the organization. The significant part of the attrition that the organization faced was attributable to this problem. This problem needs to be resolved to enable the organization to achieve its business objectives. As Turesky and Gallagher (2011) emphasized, the ability and necessity to develop the leadership skills of employees are crucial to the effectiveness and long-term survival of organizations. Thus, the action research is motivated by the desire to assist my organization to develop an institutionalized, consistent, low-cost and inclusive approach to leadership development for all employees of the organization regardless of their experience, discipline, function and time spent in the organization.

The outcome of this research will assist the organization to retain its good hands and achieve the desired business objectives. Pearce (2007) argued that almost all organizations desire to build a strong leadership base through leadership development. Only a few organizations have a formalized process for actualizing the objective. Furthermore, this research has improved my leadership capabilities and concept. The research also improved my problem-solving skill in the workplace through collaboration and co-creation of knowledge, evidence-based practice (Rousseau, 2006), reflective and reflexive practice (Hartog, 2002). The reflective practice entails learning from experience by reviewing past actions and events. The reflexive practice involves knowing in action.

Considering the direct and indirect benefits of the research, the members of the organization including employees, management and myself are interested in finding a sustainable solution to this problem.

1.7 Contribution to Knowledge

In this research, I present evidence that will contribute to the existing knowledge in the field of leadership development programmes carried out through action learning and action research.

Most organizations crave to increase their leadership base by investing in the capacity building of their employees but the challenge faced is the time and resources required to achieve the goal. This research focuses on how my organization can build and increase the number of employees that practice everyday leadership through a continuous, inclusive and low-cost approach. In leveraging action learning and action research traditions, our focus will be on building leadership development into routines to ensure that a sustainable leadership development path is developed and maintained. Day et al. (2014) suggest that what is important is not which leadership theory or model is right, but rather how to efficiently and effectively develop leaders and leadership. The various actionable solutions deployed to resolve the selected identified workplace problems, led to the discovering of new knowledge or enhancement of the existing ideas as the participants engage in action research cycles. By diagnosing the problem, taking action, evaluating how the findings are going and what participants are learning, knowledge emanates which are subjected to further evaluation leading to new knowledge and the cycle continues. Reflections on the learning emerging from the action research cycles led to meta-learning (Coghlan, 2003). The actionable knowledge generated leveraged events and happenings in the organization to achieve continuous, low-cost and inclusive leadership development.

The action research approach adopted created enormous bond and networking among members of my organization as we jointly take up the problems of the organization, resolved them collaboratively and more importantly learned from the study in and on the actions. The resolutions from the problems aided the organization in achieving the desired business objectives, in extension, increased

the number of employees that practiced leaderful behavior. The value derived from actions by the participants and the organization will be further discussed in chapter five and six.

1.8   Current View of Myself as a Leader

In today's dynamic and competitive environment, organizations require imaginative, creative, inspirational and innovative leaders as critical-success-factor to achieve short-term and long-term goals (Amagoh, 2009). I believe that the demonstration of these qualities by me made my organization trust upon me numerous leadership positions from the early days of my career. Accordingly, I see myself as a hero in front of others; who can use innate and acquired qualities to harness others to achieve desired outcomes.

However, in the last decade, there is an emerging trend in leadership literature that transforms the understanding of leadership as a heroic behaviour of an individual to one that could be practiced and shared by everyone.

In this regard, Raelin's (2003) Leaderful leadership emphasized a shift in the meaning of leadership as belonging to an individual to one that could be practiced by everyone concurrently and collaboratively. Leveraging on the insights from leadership literature, especially the works of Raelin, I envision myself as a leader having a comprehensive set of strategies focused on the behaviour and thoughts that people can use to influence themselves; as well as assist others to lead.

1.9 Summary

My organization is faced with the challenge of how to equip all employees with the practical leadership skills to function effectively regardless of the employee's level, role, and function in the organization. This will enable all members of the

community to carry out their assigned duties effectively, innovatively, assist others and develop themselves in line with the objectives of the organization. Without putting in place platforms that equip the employees with the desired capabilities, the organization will continue to experience high staff turnover, customer dissatisfaction, burn-out of high-performing staff, and failure to achieve business objectives.

As an insider action researcher, my research work focused on how to assist my organization to discover and implement continuous, low-cost and inclusive actionable solutions that will help employees build desired leadership capacity. Following the action research tradition, this research was carried out with the participants who are all members of my organization. The intention is not to turn all employees to start practicing heroic leadership style, but rather to develop everyone to a level where they all practice leadership wherever they are or find themselves within the organization.

The subsequent chapters of this thesis contain a critical review of the literature (chapter 2), the methodological framework and the data (chapter 3), the findings of the investigation (chapter 4), the discussion of the data and findings (chapter 5), my reflection on the action research project (chapter 6) and the conclusion (chapter 7).

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Background and Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

According to Bryman (2004), the purpose of a literature review is to engage in research of the existing literature in a chosen field and ascertain what is known already about the focused concept, research relevant theories and concepts, understand the points of convergence and divergence, explore inconsistencies in findings, explore methods adopted by researchers and determine the existence of unanswered questions.

This action research adopts numerous concepts that require further explanation for proper understanding. This chapter reviews existing literature in; leadership, leadership development process, the meaning of everyday leadership, understanding leadership as a process and what leadership development entails. These points on leadership are important to the context of my research because leadership and its development are multidimensional concepts. Thus, the way individuals and organizations think about and engage with leadership is crucial to effective leadership practice and development. Accordingly, a common understanding of leadership, how it can be developed and what constitutes leadership acts will aid the achievement of developing leaders in the context of this research.

The review begins with the definition and concept of leadership. The chapter also explored the difference between leader and leadership development in line with the focus of this research. Like the concept of leadership, leadership development has multiple interpretations. The way a theorist or practitioner chooses to interpret leader and leadership development have a significant influence on the path to be followed to achieve leadership development. Furthermore, the chapter explores the various theory of leadership as the basis for leadership development. This research also focused on the fundamental points

of the reviewed theories and leadership styles alongside their significance and aptness to this investigation. The leadership styles and theories reviewed include the skills approach, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, strategic leadership, distributed leadership, authentic leadership, and ethical leadership.

This chapter further discusses leadership in the context of native culture and traditional setting in Cote d'Ivoire. In addition, critical insights and reflections from the literature will be discussed. This chapter ends with a summary highlighting the leadership theories that contributed significantly to this research as well as giving important suggestions on actions to take.

2.1 Absence of Generally Acceptable Definition of what constitutes Leadership

Leadership has many different meanings to different people (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003). Until the last decade, research work on leadership has been essentially leader-centered. Thus, most of the definitions of leadership from reviewed works of literature focused on the abilities, traits, and behaviours of people who have been successful in getting their followers to do what they want them to do. Nevertheless, there is no consensus on what leadership is and how it should be studied or developed (Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009). As Barker (1997) remarked, how can we then develop people's leadership capacity if we do not know what leadership is all about? Based on the question above, it is important to highlight the meaning of leadership in this research work, as this will define the type of development programs to adopt in improving the leadership abilities of the members of my organization as well as the choices to be made at various stages in this research, especially under the research methodology framework. Antonakis, Cianciolo, and Sternberg (2004, p.5) stress the importance of a broad definition of leadership in the absence of a universally accepted definition before the study of leadership as a field of scholarly discourse.

A comprehensive review of leadership definitions is beyond the scope of this research. Numerous definitions of leadership, as well as supporting arguments of different leadership perspectives, are adequately documented in the literature (Barker, 1997; Day, 2000; Day et al 2014). Some leadership definitions examined, as well as the rationale for the definition adopted are discussed below.

Winston and Patterson (2006, p.7) proposed an Integrative Definition of Leadership:

> "A leader is one or more people who select, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives".

This definition of leadership focuses on the power relationship between leaders and followers. This definition further highlighted the idea of someone leading others to achieve a specific objective, using either influence, reward, sanctions, special skills, or traits. From this perspective, leaders are considered to wield power on the followers to guide, facilitate and structure activities or relationships in a group. Yukl (2013) suggests that other numerous existing definitions have little else in common.

An alternative way to view leadership is to consider it as an influence process that occurs within a social system and diffused among members (Campbell, Dardis, and Campbell, 2003; Grandy and Holton, 2013). This view maintains that anyone who can influence what happens in a group, and how members of a group relate with one another is a leader. Northouse (2016, p.6) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. This definition views leadership from a process and influence perspective. Northouse views leadership as a process of transactional event that happens

between leaders and followers which entails mutual influence, the existence of a group and attention to common goals.

According to Yukl (2013, p.7), "leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives". This definition gives broad perspectives to the leadership concept by including the informal and formal influence. That is, an individual in a community regardless of the level or position could be influential. From this standpoint, leadership rests on the principle that an individual does not need to hold a position of authority or power to influence another individual, as this is not required to be a leader.

This study will adopt Yukl (2013) Leadership definition for the following reasons:

a) The definition aligns with the focus of this research work; which centres on understanding, deploying cost-effective and inclusive leadership development initiatives that will assist members of the organization to develop the capacity to practice leadership from anywhere within the organization.

b) It reduced ambiguity by highlighting the nature of the influence.

c) This definition gives a broad view of leadership by including several viewpoints that encourage members to work towards accomplishing desired goals.

Leadership in the context of this investigation encompass social influence relationship (interactions and practices) on people, thoughts, processes or activities that span across various stakeholders of the organization (that is, employees, colleagues, teams, customers, suppliers, and regulators) and aid organizational members to achieve set goals and objectives. The focus of this study will be on developing the skills needed to work in line with the strategic direction of the organization.

In the next section, I discuss everyday leadership, leadership as process and influence as key concepts mentioned while establishing the meaning of

leadership. The focus on these concepts is necessary to ensure that participants and other stakeholders understand leadership and its development in the context of this research as a process instead of position. When leadership is conceived as a process, it becomes available to all. Thus, no one has an excuse for neither engaging in acts of leadership nor take leadership development as a worthwhile endeavour. Accordingly, the understanding of everyday leadership and leadership as a process by participants and other stakeholders will: a) aid the achievement of the research objectives discussed in section 1.4, b) ensure that leadership is perceived by the participants as attainable and a capability that has to be developed and not one to be granted, c) encourage participants to see themselves as leaders, and d) encourage participants to take ownership of their development.

2.1.1 Understanding Everyday Leadership

This research views leadership as a broad-based activity that is not limited to a leader's assigned role, but is part of the daily activities engaged by individuals in an organization. This leadership perspective is different from others that admit that leadership can successfully be shared between two or more leaders or between leaders and followers. Thus, everyday leadership "is a set of social practices, organized by people in interaction..." (Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009, p.3). These practices relate to intentional processes toward organizational change and development. Below are examples of every leadership and capabilities to be developed:

i.   The adoption of a continuous process, procedures and products improvement mindset by all employees in the discharge of all their duties.
ii. The continuous challenge of the status quo to ensure that excellent service is provided to all stakeholders.
iii. Development or enhancement of capacity to seek and remain open to views, contributions, and opinions of others.

iv. Development of the habit and ability to support and persuade others to leverage potentials within the organization in resolving issues.

v. Willingness to help others to make sense during discussion through own contributions and summarizing key points from the various views exchanged/expressed.

2.1.2 Understanding leadership as a process and tool available to everyone

This research views Leadership as a process. This concept of leadership contrasts the attribute or trait-based notion of leadership which assumes that some people are born leaders with some traits that are not possessed by others. Trait leadership suggests that only a select few with certain traits endowed at birth can become a leader. Traits frequently mentioned include unique physical characteristics, extrovert personality and oratory power (Yukl, 2013).

As a process, leadership is a two-way relationship between leaders and followers. The implication is that leaders and followers can interact with one another freely. In addition, you don't need to be in a formal position of authority to lead. Thus, leadership is not a unique characteristic given at birth (Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2016; Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2010).

Furthermore, leadership is seen as delegated when one is assigned a formal position of authority. Examples of leadership positions include; project team lead, unit head, divisional head or chief executive officer. Emergent leadership is said to have occurred when people in a community submit to an individual as the most influential member of the community regardless of being entrusted with a leadership role or not. Emergent leadership, therefore, occurs because members of the community endorse, support and accept the behaviours of a person considered as a leader (Mistilina, 2005; Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2016). Leadership from a process viewpoint entails influencing subordinates, peers, and senior colleagues in a group or work environment. One cannot be a leader without influence. As a form of power, coercive leaders use force, penalties, rewards,

threats, and punishments to influence others. It is important to highlight that coercion, though used to influence others, is different from leadership. Good leaders and leadership are considered as involving the design and management of a collaborative process of task objectives, decision making and conflict resolution to which all stakeholders subscribe (Allio, 2009).

The process view of leadership suggests that leadership is observable through the actions and behaviours of everyone and it can be learned (Mistilina, 2005; Yukl, 2013). Furthermore, leadership within a group context involves the achievement of shared goals by leaders and followers. As a result, there is a group of people who are desirous of achieving specific goals. Consequently, leadership in this context entails the ability to influence a group of people to achieve desired goals. Also, it is a known fact that leaders are not superior to followers and vice versa. The leaders and followers keep a mutually beneficial relationship and together pursue the desired objectives. Kousez and Posner (2002 cited in Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh and Al-Omari, 2008) emphasise that leadership is not a position rather, it is a set of behaviours and practices. The practices that help leaders to achieve set goals and objectives include; challenging the process, inspiration from a shared vision, enabling others to act, showing the way, and encouragement.

2.1.3 Focus on leadership as between individuals instead of within individuals

There are new ways of thinking about leadership. This new approach views leadership as emergent, relational or collective (Kennedy, Carroll and Francoeur, 2013; Raelin, 2004). Consistent with the shift from seeing leadership as belonging to someone expected to be in front, leadership development effort should be directed towards a role of leadership as a mutual social phenomenon rather than as a position of authority. This perspective constitutes a challenge to the assumption that leadership development can be accomplished by concentrating on successful leaders. There has been a significant shift in this

section to focusing on leadership mindset, rather than the traditional focus on skillset. Leadership development from the perspective of mindset consists of three interconnected dimensions namely; personal, relational and contextual. The shift has caused a movement away from leadership as a concept that is within the individual to one that is considered as between people (relational), although enacted by individuals (Kennedy, Carroll and Francoeur, 2013).

Furthermore, when members of an organization are ready to learn and lead, there is collaboration among workers. The following traits characterize this type of workers; willingness to share insights, comfortable with their ideas and assumptions being challenged, actively seek feedback, embrace new positive behaviours, reflect continuously on their activities and operating assumptions, support each other, and demonstrate a sense of modesty that reflects the limits of their knowledge (Raelin, 2004). The section that follows focuses on the leader and leadership development.

2.2 Leader or leadership development?

Leadership is viewed traditionally as dependent on the skill levels of the individual. From a traditional viewpoint, leadership development is achieved by primarily developing the interpersonal skills of individuals. Alternative and contemporary perspective views the individual and social-relational dimension as important in leadership development. From the latter perspective, theories separated leader development from leadership development to account for the differences in efforts channelled towards assisting individuals to acquire leadership skills (leader development) and social development within an organization (Kark, 2011).

Day and co-authors (Day, 2000; Day and Harrison, 2007; Day et al., 2014) maintain that there is an apparent difference between leader and leadership development. Leader's development is viewed as efforts geared toward acquiring or improving a person's capabilities to lead or do their work. It involves

teaching and learning communication skills, sharing and facilitating exchange, and the ability to motivate others through positive social influence. The emphasis is on the individual as a leader defined by intrapersonal skills. On the other hand, leadership development focuses on processes such as social influence, team leadership and attention to factors like organizational climate and social networks to achieve organizational effectiveness. The primary focus of leadership development is on building and using interpersonal competencies. The emphasis is on the creation of quality interpersonal networks that facilitates cooperation and exchange among actors in organizations. Table 2.1 (Day, 2000, p.584) portrays differences between leader and leadership development.

Table 2.1: Differences between leaders and leadership development

Comparison Dimension	Development Target	
	Leader Development	**Leadership Development**
Capital Type	Human capital (skills, knowledge and capabilities necessary to execute work)	Social Capital (interpersonal networks that facilitated cooperation and exchange)
Leadership Model	Individual (personal power, knowledge, trustworthiness)	Relational (commitment, mutual respect, trust)
Competence Base	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal
Core Skills	Self-awareness (emotional awareness, self-confidence, accurate self-image)	Social awareness (empathy, service orientation, political awareness)
	Self-regulation (self-control, trustworthiness, personal responsibility, adaptability)	Social skills (building bonds, team orientation, change catalyst, conflict management)
	Self-motivation (initiative, commitment, optimism)	

Source: Day (2000, p.584)

In table 2.1 (Day, 2000, p.584), self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation are skills associated with leader development, while social awareness and social skills are associated with leadership development. Leader and leadership development are different as explained by Day and co-authors. Nevertheless,

they complement each other. In addition, leader development serves as the foundation for leadership development and both practices use common processes and platforms as channels of development. Leader and leadership development are not independent concepts, rather they mutually influence each other. Considering the leader and leadership development shared influence, it is essential to combine the individual leadership development approach with that of the shared and relational approach. In addition, the intervention used to develop intrapersonal skills can be simultaneously used for the development of interpersonal skills. Accordingly, the terms leader development and leadership development are used interchangeably.

2.3 Leadership styles and theories as the basis for leadership development

One of the fundamental questions to address and leadership development decisions to make depends on the focused intervention. This section explores the leadership styles and theories to gain insights into what our research work is focusing on. Leadership has been predominantly conceptualized as individual skills that are associated with a certain type of behaviours displayed towards achieving desired organization objectives (Orazi et al., 2014). In line with this, most leadership development studies and programmes focused on developing into people the skills of those considered as successful leaders (Kennedy, Carroll and Francoeur, 2013). Various leadership styles and theories articulate several perspectives on desired skills and behaviours as well as maintaining diverse positions with regards to what leadership development efforts should be. The fundamental argument by advocates of these theories is that the characteristics of their leadership style (leadership style could be; transactional, transformational and servant leadership) should be the focus of leadership development efforts. Various propositions of popular leadership styles are discussed below.

The Skill Approach

The skills approach suggests that knowledge and abilities are essential for effective leadership. The emphasis of the skilled approach is on the skills and abilities that could be learned and developed. Researches under the skilled approach revealed a list of overlapping skills and qualities which comprise intrapersonal attributes, interpersonal qualities, communication skills, cognitive abilities and task-specific skills, intelligence and creativity (Campbell, Dardis and Campbell, 2003; Sternberg, 2008). The idea behind the list is to ensure that focus is placed on the job and what is required to get it done rather than on characteristics of people considered as leaders. Different leadership framework exists in the literature that categorises skills that members of an organization should possess to be effective leaders at different levels. Notable research in this field of study is the work of Mumford, Campion and Morgeson (2007), which highlights that different levels of expertise and leadership skills are required at different levels in the organization (that is; lower, middle and upper-level leaders). The framework maintained that junior, middle and senior members of the organization require different combinations of cognitive (that is; basic and foundation of leadership skills required such as, information processing and communication, writing and presentation skills, critical thinking and learning), relational (that is; the combination of social or interpersonal skills necessary in relating with others), business (that is; operational and resource management skills) and strategic skills (that is; skills needed to operate from a broad perspective which includes articulating a vision, strategic planning, problem-solving and evaluation of alternatives). Figure 2.1(Mumford, Campion and Morgeson, 2007, p.156) illustrates the leadership Strataplex.
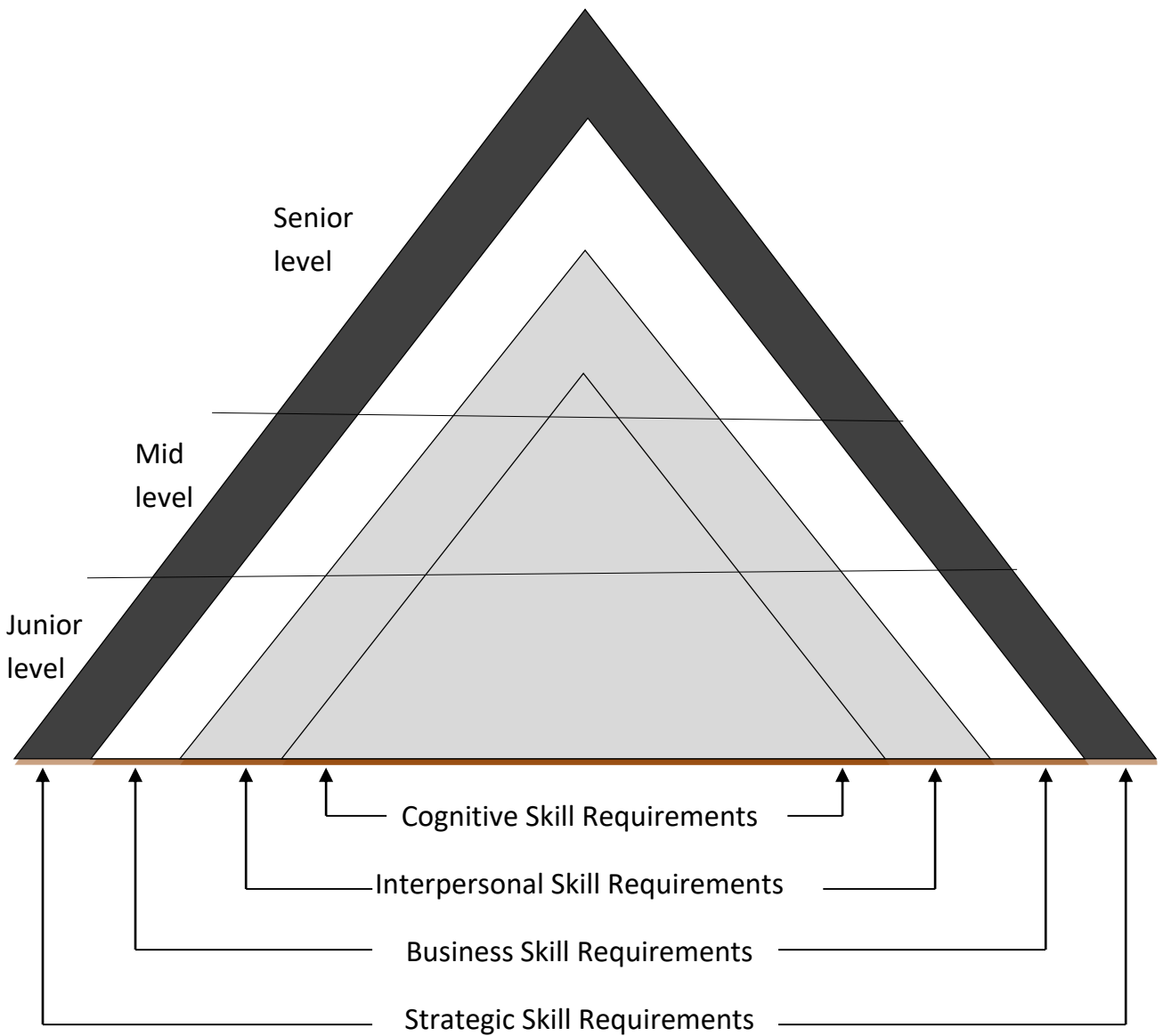
Figure 2.1   The Leadership Strataplex
Source: Mumford, Campion and Morgeson (2007, p.156)

The four triangles of the Strataplex diagram represent the four general categories of leadership skills required namely cognitive, interpersonal, business and strategic. The two horizontal lines in the figure above stratified the skill requirements into different levels in the organization, namely junior, mid and senior levels. The areas captured under each segment represent the quantum of skills required for the level. In the figure above, the cognitive triangle covers the largest area in terms of size, which implies that cognitive skills are essential at all levels in

an organization. Additionally, at the junior level, cognitive skills are the most required skills, while strategic skills are the most required skills at the senior level.

The fundamental idea behind the leadership Strataplex is that the nature of leadership changes as one moves up the career ladder in an organization. This suggests that leadership requirement differs at the different level in an organization. Generally, the framework recommends that the leadership skills requirements depend on the leader's level in the organization. The strategic leadership skills required for a leadership role at the upper level in an organization are higher than at the lower level. In terms of degree required, cognitive is the most needed, followed by interpersonal, business, and strategic skills. A fundamental setback of the skilled approach as a model for leadership development is the lack of delimitation on the number of skills required to become an effective leader. As an illustration, Fleishman et al. (1991) listed 499 effective leadership behaviour and 13 leader behaviour dimensions. A question that comes to mind is how many of these dimensions trainee leaders are expected to imbibe before becoming leaders. Assuming the trait, habits and actions of individuals that are considered effective leaders could be agreed on, interventions from this field will require participants to change their habits, traits and actions by adopting that of the ideal hero. This is difficult to achieve, as it will require that trainee leaders change their personalities and worldviews (Rost, 1993). The factors that aid leadership development are too many that forcing them into prescriptive lists could be ineffective. To develop an effective leader, the approach must be open and broad-based (Barker, 1997; Day, 2000).

Notwithstanding, the focus on leaders' skills as the most significant factor in developing leaders for solving organizational problems improved the understanding of leadership in my organization.

In this investigation, action research and learning and other work embedded interventions were adopted. Acknowledging the fact that action research entails investigating with participants, participants are allowed to determine their

leadership needs. Consequently, a predetermined list of skills was not imposed on participants. In addition, the approach does not require members of my organization to imitate the behaviour of a person or persons considered as ideal leaders. Rather, the focus is on skills and capabilities that would make them perform as effective leaders in our organization.

Transactional Leadership Style

At the heart of the transactional leadership style is the assumption that leaders and followers have different goals. To make the goals converge, the leader influences the followers strategically using monetary inducement. Unlike transformational leadership theory (discussed next section), transactional leadership focuses on task performance over a relationship. Consistent with its orientation, the transactional leadership style relies on the fulfilment of agreed or contractual obligations by rewarding achievements and punishing deviations (Bass et al., 2003; Vera and Crossan, 2004).

From the perspective of transactional leadership, a leader is expected to set goals, articulate how they will be achieved, monitor the goals, reward achievement, sanction deviations and provide productive feedback to ensure everyone focuses on the tasks. In line with the nature of the style, it is expected that there will be effective communication in the organization as the leader focus on setting goals, clarifying how to achieve the goal, monitor the goals and provide timely feedback to keep the desired objectives in focus (Bass et al., 2003; Vera and Crossan, 2004).

As a task-oriented style, the transactional leadership style has a positive impact on performance (Bass et al., 2003; Vera and Crossan, 2004). The leadership style has been reported to be effective in medium to large organizations that desire to reach maturity through the establishment of efficient operations and standardization of practices (Orazi et al., 2014). Notwithstanding, Gareth and

Roger (2012) discovered that transactional leadership is ineffective at the topmost level in the organization, but effective at lower levels. In addition, followers subjected to transactional leadership are likely to show less sense of duty towards their leader and less disposition to a reciprocal relationship. In terms of practical application and implication to this research work, transactional leadership promotes task performance over a relationship and is effective in a structured environment where efficient routines and goal setting can lead to a positive outcome. Although effective communication, goal setting, and other capabilities linked to transactional leadership are desirable in my organization, the focus of the discourse is on developing capacities that ensure that everyone acts as leaders regardless of where they operate from in the organization. Transactional leadership falls short in this regard. Transactional leadership style neither concerns itself about the need of individual followers nor their development.

Transformational Leadership Style

A leader with a transformational style focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to align their goals and beliefs with that of the organization, as well as compel them to perform beyond expectations. Unlike transactional leadership, transformational leadership is conceptualized as located in the top end of the continuum of social exchange at which exchanges considered to be of high quality and mutually stimulate leaders and followers thereby turning followers into leaders and leaders emerging as moral agents (Bass et al., 2003; Gareth and Roger, 2012).

Transformational leadership style is distinguished by the articulation and sharing of vision, building credibility and commitment, creating challenges and inspiration for the followers (Orazi et al., 2014). Although it shares some aspect of transactional leadership, it focuses on communicating an appealing vision and needs for change to employees that persuades them to go beyond the expected and individual interests. Transformational leaders operate as role

models. They inspire followers to realize their full potentials by appealing to emotions, clarifying visions, aiding the process of sense-making, providing stimulating challenges and creating work structures that actively encourage everyone to participate. In line with this view, researchers have developed leadership models based on the attributes and skills of transformational leaders. Researchers insist that the characteristics and skills adopted by transformational leadership theory should be the focus of leadership development programmes (Bass and Avolio, 1989; Bass et al., 2003; Gareth and Roger, 2012).

Recent research evidence highlights that transformational leadership generally promotes communication which enables employees to engage their peers and superiors without fear and promotes a climate for open discussions (Braun et al., 2013).

Given this research work, a leadership development intervention leveraging this theory should focus on developing communication skills that will enhance the leader's ability to articulate and share the organizations' vision. Leaders also need to have the skills needed to create structures that encourage and promote participation and performance (Orazi et al., 2014). By promoting the sharing of mission and vision and focus on individual empowerment, transformational leadership theory encourages structured interventions that make it possible for beneficiaries to develop increased autonomy, high self-efficacy and enhancement of employee's influence on work outcomes. Accordingly, training programmes should concentrate on the development of communication skills to support a leader's ability to share vision and mission and encourage subordinates. Like transactional leadership, the focus of development is on individual characteristics ideal for the transformational leadership style. Although the skills of transformational leaders are beneficial, the focus of my interventions remains on capacities that position everyone as a leader.

Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leaders are considered as individuals who act as role models to followers by demonstrating a high sense of confidence and power, making bold and unconventional decisions. From relationship-oriented behaviours, charismatic leaders usually thrive by challenging the status quo and dependence on the viewpoint that the organization is yet to reach its potentials. Other attributes associated with charismatic leadership include effective communication of the vision, eliciting the acceptance of shared goals and inspire followers towards the realization of shared goals. These characteristics are reflected in transformational and visionary leadership concepts, which focus on modelling, vision sharing, and emotional appeal. These elements contrast the charismatic style from the transactional leadership style that is task-oriented and based on goal setting, a reward of performance and sanctioning of deviation (Walter and Bruch, 2009).

Evidence exists in the literature in support of the argument that a charismatic approach is more effective than transactional leadership in terms of followers' performance, commitment and satisfaction (DeGroot, Kiker and Cross, 2000). However, to realise the desired outcome, charismatic leaders need to be credible, eloquent and convincing, self-confident, motivated and inspiring and must be willing to take risks (Conger, Kanungo and Menon, 2000). Leadership development efforts should, therefore, focus on building or reinforcing these attributes.

Charismatic leadership is about idealised influence (that is; leader's charisma), which enables the leader to provide vision and emotionally influence the followers. Compared to transformational leadership, it is more effective in less formal settings in small to medium organizations or start-ups that require an embrace of its vision at the initial phase. It is equally good for adoption by organizations in crises and those that need to improve employees' performance.

The main attributes of charismatic leadership do not fall under the focus of my investigation. In charismatic leadership, the central focus is on the leader's charisma as the influence processes are primarily intended to align followers' vision with that of the leader. The charismatic leader epitomizes the ideal member of the community. In this type of leadership, the team's or organization's success depends on the leader (House and Howell, 1992). The members lose enthusiasm where the ideal leader steps down or moves to a new function. A charismatic leadership disposition tends to promote groupthink (Conger, 1990). Group-think occurs where the leader's advisors or followers hastily delude themselves into an agreement with the leader. While it may be useful and suitable for short-term projects where there is no fear about the group breaking up with the loss or exit of leadership, it does not align with the focus of this investigation which aims at ensuring everyone practices leadership.

Strategic Leadership

A strategic leader is a person who can assist the followers in making independent decisions daily in a way that promotes the short-term stability and long-term survival of the organization. Strategic leadership style is laden with "a person's ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future for the organization" (Ireland and Hitt, 2005, p.63). Strategic leadership combines the characteristics of transactional and transformational leadership. It operates at higher levels of both and not a concept that resides between the two. It emphasized that strategic leaders, act in the present to create and shape the future. Strategic leadership is usually associated with managers and executives at the top echelon of the organization who must go beyond their expected roles to ensure continuous personal development and lead the followers by enhancing their adaptive capacities (Crossan, Vera and Nanjad, 2008; Vera and Crossan, 2004; Rowe, 2001).

Leveraging their position at the top of the organization, strategic leaders can carry out effective communication with the members of the organization, create and obtain a commitment to a compelling vision, recognize and reward members that demonstrate high potential as change agents and institutionalize productive work and reward culture (Elenkov, Judge and Wright, 2005). Through the development of adaptive capacities, top executives can place their organizations in a position to envisage and effectively manage threats and opportunities (Boal and Schultz, 2007).

As a combination of transactional and transformation leadership attributes, strategic leadership can drive their organization towards the achievement of short and long-term performance and sustainable competitive advantage. Leveraging the Strataplex skills framework (Mumford et al., 2007), strategic leadership requires the combination of all categories of skills but in degrees consistent with the ability to pilot strategic vision and direction. Through an appropriate combination of skills, ranging from technical to strategic on the Strataplex, the strategic leader can shape the future with attention to daily activities and strategic focus on the future by articulating and implementing strategies with short-term profitability and long-term growth and survival.

In terms of practical application, strategic leadership theory focused on top executives of organizations. Leveraging their privileged positions at the top of the organization, they can effectively communicate with organization members, direct energy towards the desired future in line with the vision, reward followers with high potentials and create a culture where strategic leadership is suitable for top-executive in highly competitive, complex markets and dynamic environments (Vera and Crossan, 2004). The strategic leader adopts flexible styles. It requires foresight and adaptation to changes, exploitation of existing procedures for maximum efficiency, exploration of new directions, leveraging interpersonal connections and motivation of followers. This suits the situation and challenges of the organization and therefore appropriately tells the type of

interventions deployed in this research. Notwithstanding, strategic leadership as a style is appropriate for adoption at the top level, and it is most suited to the complex, dynamic and highly competitive environment, and markets (Boal and Schultz, 2007; Vera and Crossan, 2004).

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leaders are seen as those that have attained a high level of authenticity through a genuine recognition of who they are. Their values and beliefs are expressed while interacting. They focus on building followers' strength, deepening their thinking and creating an engaging work environment (Ilies, Morgeson and Nahrgang, 2005).

As it is with transactional and transformational leaders, the distinguishing factor is not the style adopted. Authentic leaders can be directive, participative or authoritarian. Hence, a behavioural pattern does not determine whether a leader is authentic or inauthentic. Rather, authentic leaders act in line with deep personal values and convictions thereby building credibility, earn the respect and trust of followers. They lead in a manner that followers regard as authentic by actively promoting multiple viewpoints and building networks of collaborative relationships with followers. Because people trust them, they leverage the relationship to motivate people to achieve high performance (Avolio et al., 2004; George et al., 2007).

Shamir and Eilam (2005) highlight that authentic leaders can be distinguished from less authentic or inauthentic leaders by four characteristics: 1) they do not pretend to be leaders because they are in a position of authority, they see themselves as leaders because it aligns with their self-concept of leadership, 2) they engage in leadership roles, not because of status or reward, but on conviction and strongly held values, 3) they are original. They hold their values not because they are socially or politically correct, but because they are convinced the values are appropriate based on their own experiences, and 4) their actions

are based on those values and convictions. Their actions are consistent with what they proclaim and believe.

Researchers suggest that authentic leadership skills development is best achieved through unconventional training programmes, as it is difficult to pass on personal skills that make it possible for such leadership through traditional training. Self-awareness is considered as the appropriate starting point for leadership development efforts (Avolio et al., 2004; Baron, 2012; Baron and Parent, 2015). The important ability the leader must have is understanding the past and present to get others to understand the future. Leveraging on this ability, leaders should understand what the future looks like in the present time.

An intervention focused on authentic leadership is expected to revolve around empowering others, authentic leadership characteristics, participatory leadership characteristics, inspirational leadership characteristics, visionary leadership characteristics, and courageous leadership characteristics. While the style may have its uses, it is still very much focused on the idolized perspective of leadership.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership rests on the principle that leadership emerges from followers through a collective social process (Uhl-Bien, 2006). In distributed leadership, leaders strive to develop the leadership capacities of their followers by providing them with opportunities to take initiatives and lead others. Based on this perspective, leadership is viewed not as a role, but rather as an activity that can be shared with and delegated to others. In this case, the follower is seen also as actively involved in leadership and not just mere recipients. This is a paradigm shift in leadership perception from something possessed by one person to a collective phenomenon shared among people within a community (Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012).

From the viewpoint of distributed leadership, there is a shift in focus from a hero-type man leading the pack to a more systematic approach in which leadership emerges. Developmental efforts should provide platforms that encourage the emergence of leaders.

Parry and Sinha (2005) maintain that a vast majority of people possess inherent leadership capabilities that can be developed. Distributed leadership encourages followers to lead and make decisions. Based on the fundamental view that leaders are selected from among followers in an organization, distributed leadership is generally associated with leadership development and the formation of a professional learning community (Stoll and Louis, 2007).

2.4 Critical Issues on Leadership

Effective leadership development needs to consider important leader and leadership development issues (Kirchner and Akdere, 2014). This section considers some of the important issues highlighted in the literature. These include: a) the importance of perceiving leadership as attainable and the need for participants to see themselves as leaders to develop the identified required skills, b) the importance of using suitable channels and proper focus on real development needs, c) the need to consider the impact of culture in leadership development, and d) the need for a proper strategy for leadership development.

Despite the use of several labels, leadership is predominantly conceived in the literature as something huge and available only to specially endowed people (Northouse, 2016). Thus, important organizational activities such as decision-making are considered as the preserve of executives and other position leaders. Whereas, everyday decisions most employees make are just as important to the success of the organization as the decisions by management and position leaders. Hence, organizations are increasingly encouraging their employees to part take in leadership. This focus emerged from the desire to benefit from quick decisions by those who are most knowledgeable about the issues, especially

employees at lower levels in organizations. These employees are known to be able to make decisions and implement changes quickly (Shadi and Noor, 2011). Without conscious intervention aimed at ensuring that participants embrace the emerging perspective of leadership, the great man view of leadership has a potential negative influence on this research as participants may not see themselves as leaders. Accordingly, some of the interventions implemented such as the interactive session focused on addressing this constraint.

Furthermore, research evidence offered by the various leadership theories suggests that every theory is superior to others. Despite the claims, evidence suggests that certain factors in organizational contexts such as followers' characteristics, nature of tasks, professional experience and cultural orientation can act to negate the influence of the leader regardless of the style. As an illustration, national and organizational culture influences leadership styles and their development as it influences how followers respond. This is because leadership style and orientation are constrained by cultural conditions that followers expect (Schein, 2004). In public institutions in Cote d'Ivoire, leadership is based on the centralization of power and authority in the hands of top-ranking officers. In the private sector, organizational leadership is expected to embrace a decentralised management model. However, little is known about the practice of leadership in private organizations in Cote d'Ivoire. Nonetheless, leadership development is more likely to succeed if the organizational culture is supportive through active senior management participation and consideration of leadership development as a long-term strategy (Amagoh, 2009).

In addition, significant attention focused on the kind of capability an individual could learn to become a more effective leader. The evidence suggests that there is no boundary to the number of capabilities that could be developed. However, it is important to have a multivariate approach (Avolio, Avey and Quisenberry, 2010); and defined steps taken to realize the objectives of the programme (Leskiw and Singh, 2007).

In the context of my research, successful execution of the leadership development programme requires focus on some important issues which include: a) utilization of effective channels to re-orientate participants to embrace the view that position is not required to engage in leadership, b) the design and deployment of effective training and learning opportunities, c) ensuring that conscious attention to the context of the research environment including the organization's culture, d) making proper evaluation and documentation of the impact of the interventions implemented, e) provision of platforms which enable participants to reflect and learn on their experiences, and f) linking strategy to leadership development and vice versa.

2.5 Cultural perspective and Leadership Development

The influence of culture on leadership processes is generally accepted in the literature (Javidan et al., 2006). Accordingly, awareness and sensitivity around the influence of culture on leadership processes are important as culture may either facilitate or hinder development outcomes (Straka et al., 2018).   In this section, attention is focused briefly on culture, organizational culture and leadership development; as well as a critical assessment of studies examining culture and leadership and how it relates to my organization's context.

Culture is a concept with multiple facets which refers to the shared and enduring set of values, beliefs and attitudes in a nation, region or organization (Hayton, George, & Zahra, 2002; Hofstede, 1980). Research evidence that demonstrates how elements of leadership profiles are shaped by culture abounds in the literature (Javidan and Carl, 2005). Generally, the literature on culture and leadership adopts a dimension-based approach to study the impact of culture on leadership (Taras, Kirkman and Steel, 2010). Despite the existence of numerous cultural dimensions, scholars agreed that the dimension of individualism-

collectivism is one of the most influential dimensions of culture that describe an interface between individual and community (Triandis, 2001; Hofstede, 1980).

Individualism emphasise personal freedom and achievement. It rewards personal accomplishments that stand out an individual through an award of social status. Cultures that are high in individualism promote competitiveness, personal initiatives, ambitious drive and individual decision making. In contrast, collectivism favours the entrenchment of an individual in a larger group by encouraging conformity and discouraging dissent. A culture that is high in collectivism promotes allegiance to a group. Power distance is another important influential dimension (Javidan and Carl, 2005). It emphasizes that individuals in societies and organizations are not equal. Culturally, power distance expresses the extent to which the less powerful member of a community accepts power is not equally distributed. Cultures that are high in power distance promote unequal rights between the power-privileged and those lower down in the pecking order, centralization of order, strong hierarchies and powerful leaders and decisions from top managers rather than through discussion and teamwork.

Furthermore, relying on the concept of tight and loose culture, Gelfand, Nishii and Raver (2006) emphasized that external norms and constraints are important for a fuller understanding of cultural differences in behaviour. The concept of tight and loose cultures focuses on the potency of social norms and the degree of sanctioning in society as a way of understanding behaviour. Tight cultures, such as agrarian communities, have clear norms that are reliably imposed. Lose culture, such as heterogeneous societies, frequently have unclear norms about social situations and tolerate deviations. Thus, culture demonstrates the beliefs and values system of an individual that are expected to influence leadership processes and mechanisms.

2.5.1 Organizational culture and leadership development

Corporate values, missions and practices are elements that differentiate one organization from another and at the same time represent the cord that unites employees with different backgrounds to a single corporate culture (Straka et al., 2018). Schein (2004, p. 17) defined organizational culture as "as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems". It encompasses the shared values, principles, traditions, and practices that influence the way organizational members act. It involves the taken-for-granted values, core assumptions, expectations, collective memories, and it provides unwritten or unspoken rules on how things are in an organization (Klein, 2011). These shared values and practices evolved over time and to a large extent determine how things are done in most organizations (Shadur and Kienzle, 1999).

The international standard of the parent office of my organization which reflects the organization's culture expects employees to act like entrepreneurs. Thus, there is a moderate level of power distance, emphasis on individual delivery of results whilst being a member of a team and a high degree of internal competition.

Despite the corporate culture and supportive work environment, some of the employees are not working in line with the expectation. This is partly because some of the employees are familiar with the work environment being different from the one being promoted by the organization. Like most countries in West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire (where my organization is based) is a high power-distance, collective and tight society. Encouraging people accustomed to high power distance and collective orientation to embrace a different behaviour might trigger a potential for conflict and failure especially if people within the organization refuse to embrace new ways of working and relating. Where certain

beliefs and values in an organization work at cross purposes, it will lead to situations full of conflict and ambiguity (Martin, 2002). Consequently, this posed two main challenges to the leadership intervention programme. First, position leaders might create the opinion that they are losing control. On the other hand, subordinates and junior officers might have the impression that they being are set-up against their leaders if they act contrary to what their supervisors or group they belong to wants. Based on these positions and fear, open criticism, conflict, and critical reflection might be seen as a threat or disobedience to authority. Second, subordinates in a high power distance culture expect a high level of supervision and believe that those in the position of authority are entitled to special privileges. This implies that subordinates expect to be told what to do. This contradicts the expectation of the organization which requires employees to be entrepreneurial in carrying out assigned tasks and voluntarily assumed roles. Nevertheless, it is possible to replace ineffective culture and replaced with a new approach that supports and enhances the organization's vision through shared learning (Schein, 2004).

2.5.2 Focus on Organization's Culture and the Everyday Leadership Development

My organization prides itself as highly responsive to the changing needs of customers. Job activities are designed around work teams. Individuals and teams have goals, and rewards are based on the achievement of the agreed targets. Team members are encouraged to interact with colleagues across functions and authority levels. Management focused on high productivity, which they believe results from enterprising and effective leadership behaviour. Although there are rules and regulations employees are expected to adhere to, management encourages enterprising work habits and good performance. Thus, employees enjoy significant autonomy in choosing how the goals are attained. Despite the significant level of autonomy granted to employees, a lack of effective leaders and leadership prevails in the organization. This is mainly because some aspects

of the organization's culture curtail everyday leadership development. These organization's cultural factors include:

a) Authorities and power are highly concentrated in position-leaders such as team leads and group heads. Accordingly, little attention is accorded to the existence and desirability of everyday leadership.

b) Functional teams reflect their own unique cultures. These cultural differences especially between sales and support functions fragment the organization and make it difficult to achieve effective leadership.

c) Whereas management continues to express the desire to grow leaders, the desire is not part of the business strategy. Leadership development within the organization before the commencement of this research is fragmented and lacks overall strategy.

d) Effective leadership is hardly considered in the achievement of objectives. The key focus is on the result. The process that generates the result is not considered.

e) Recognition is mostly based on seniority and experience in the organization rather than consideration for those who possess qualities associated with effective leaders (Phelan & Lin, 2001)

Unfortunately, the organization appears unconscious of the constraints these factors constitute to the practice of leadership and the development of its leaders. Research suggests that people do not generally understand their culture until it is challenged, until they experience a new culture, or until it is made overt and explicit (Klein, 2011). Consequently, the core issues in the area organization's culture to be considered in this research include: a) inculcating the development of leadership capability as a way of life using a variety of developmental activities and platforms, b) promoting common elements typical of the entire organization, and c) rekindling and entrenching aspects of culture that supports effective leadership. Accordingly, this action learning and action research will constitute a critical building block of corporate culture that supports the leadership development of all employees leveraging on the events happening in the

organization. In addition, it will create a corporate culture that places a premium on creating an appropriate environment and infrastructure that support the emergence of the desired leadership behaviour. In the next section, the discussion focuses on major insights from the literature review.

2.6 Major insights from the literature review

The study of leadership enjoys a very rich tradition of theoretical development and empirical research. Nevertheless, answers to some key questions such as what is leadership and what to develop? Remain vague because development efforts focused on numerous and diverse theories. Despite the lack of common understanding of leadership and common strategy for leadership development, the existing literature produced several important insights about leadership development in the context of my organization.

Insights from the literature revealed that beneficiaries of leadership programmes can learn to lead differently and effectively. For example, drawing on experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), research evidence suggests that lived experiences that are new, of high importance to the organization and its members, and require people to manage change with diverse groups across organizational boundaries are vital and most effective sources of leadership development (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988). This influenced the adoption of experiential learning under the over-arching tradition of action research for this research.

Further insight from the literature revealed that there is no accepted standard for developing leaders. However, researchers tend to agree that leadership development can occur virtually in any environment and through various leadership development programmes such as 360-degree feedback, mentoring, coaching, networks, job assignment and action learning (Day et al., 2014; Day,

2000). In addition, the adoption of multiple strategies and platforms will likely guaranty success in leadership development (Amagoh, 2009).

What also emerges from the scan of the literature is the knowledge that organizations that seek to know the developmental needs of their members, and designed learning experiences for their specific context, will achieve greater impact. It is therefore advised that leadership development should be preceded by a need assessment phase that will enable the organization and trainee leaders to identify their leadership development needs. This will enable the trainee leaders to identify the capabilities that they desire in the context of their work, take ownership of their development and ultimately focus on achieving their developmental needs (Amagoh, 2009; Grandy and Holton, 2013).

Lastly, the research on leadership development suggests that alignment of interventions with organizational strategy is essential for developing leadership development systems that promote and enhance organizational effectiveness (Ladyshewsky, 2007).

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, contemporary literature was used to answer key leadership and leadership development questions that are considered critical aspects for this research study. Some of the key questions considered while reviewing scholarly articles include: a) what is leadership? b) What is the difference between leader and leadership development? c) How do leadership theories influence my leadership development interventions? d) How is leadership perceived in the local context of Cote d'Ivoire?

Insights from literature revealed that leadership studies predominantly centred on traits, abilities and actions of individuals considered as leaders following the traditional conception of leadership as heroic acts and behaviours. Inherent in

this paradigm are the assumptions that consider a leader amongst others as someone in front, someone who occupies a high position, and someone in possession of authority. Further insight revealed growing interest and research focus on leadership development from the dimension of what happens daily in organizations (Carroll, Levy and Richmond, 2008). These research efforts focused on concepts such as distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002) and collaborative leadership (Raelin, 2006). Distributed leadership entails assigning duties and responsibilities of leadership to several individuals rather than a single individual. Spillane and Zuberi (2009) highlight two aspects of distributed perspective described as the leader-plus aspect and the practical aspect. The leader-plus aspect recognizes that multiple persons can carry out the responsibility of a formal or informal leader. Collaborative leadership supported collaboration among members of a community rather than competition.

During the review, two theories stood out as a fundamental framework through which the leadership development investigation should be explored. First, the skilled approach maintains that leadership capabilities can be developed over time through training and learning from experience. Rather than focusing on behavioural patterns of leaders such as; transactional leadership, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, the skills approach emphasises the acquisition of knowledge and skill which make effective leadership possible. According to this approach, if people are capable of learning from their experience, then they can earn leadership. Second, distributed leadership theory views leadership as an activity that could be shared instead of the view of leadership as a role. This conforms with the view that leadership development should focus on interactions, actions and activities of people in group context instead of structures, positions, styles and designs (Raelin, 2004; Spillane and Zuberi, 2009).

Based on the paradigm from these theories, this research views leadership as a tool that is available to all and could be practiced from anywhere in the

organization. Leadership is therefore viewed as resulting from the interactions among several stakeholders. Although leadership theory and principles can be learnt, individuals rise as leaders in an organisation by exploring solutions to problems faced in different situations. The experience gathered from both successful and unsuccessful outcomes, leads to the development of a pattern of thoughts and actions.

Chapter 3 – Research methodology and Data Collection Methods

3.0 Methodology

This action research investigation focused on the non-directive perspective of leadership. The study, therefore, takes a view of leadership as something available to every member of the organization. As the investigation revolves around the development of everyday leadership practice, the use of action research will assist members of the organization involved in the various interventions develop capabilities to understand issues important to the organization, collaboratively come up with solutions, work with groups and seize opportunities of events happening in the organization to learn and develop.

The focus of this research aligns with traditional and theoretical perspectives of the qualitative research approach. Accordingly, the qualitative research approach was employed under the overarching tradition of action research to achieve the objectives of the study. Whereas quantitative research is based on scientific methods, qualitative research is useful in examining subjective human experience, using non-statistical or quantitative methods (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015). Furthermore, qualitative research is conducted when the problem under investigation requires exploration or when it is necessary to develop the theory to fill a void. Other reasons for adopting qualitative method(s) include the necessity to appreciate the context or setting under which participants in a study view an issue or when it is generally inappropriate to adopt a quantitative research method (Creswell, 2013). This research is not seeking to reveal the truth about leadership development. Instead, it focused on generating insights and understanding of leadership development as the phenomenon of interest from the perspective of how it is practiced daily (Milne and Oberle, 2005). Lack of effective leadership in organizations has led to several business failures and loss of huge investments, time and trust (Tourish, 2014; Ugwuanyi, 2014). The extensive search for quantitative and qualitative studies on leadership in Cote d'Ivoire through the University Liverpool database revealed zero output. Thus, the results and insights from this research will be of great value in charting new and

sustainable directions for my organization with regards to effective leadership development and practices necessary to improve employees' capabilities and business growth. In addition, this research will contribute to the qualitative research literature on the development of effective everyday leadership in Cote d'Ivoire via a case study of a financial institution.

In this chapter, the general design of the research, methods used for data collection and the procedure adopted to analyze the data collected are explained in detail. This chapter is important to the research as it enabled me to surface the various research decisions made from the various options available, state the step-by-step process used for data gathering and analysis and explain how the research was conducted throughout the study period. Furthermore, the research on relevant existing studies helped me to identify suitable options for this study and how they apply to my research.

Several research studies that are based on causing the development of participants relied on qualitative techniques (Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe, 2007; Hotho and Dowling, 2010; Bleach, 2013). Hotho and Dowling (2010) emphasized that participant interaction with leadership development programmes varies depending on individual and/or contextual factors. Thus, the context of the research plays an important role in this research. Consequently, the use of qualitative research methods will facilitate access to contextual variables and subjective human experience in the course of the research. When the qualitative method is properly employed, it offers research in leadership distinct advantages over quantitative methods. This research benefits from these advantages which include: a) greater chances to explore and give attention to contextual factors, b) more opportunities to explore leadership development intervention in significant depth, c) greater and deeper ability to investigate processes more effectively, d) flexibility to discover and understand unexpected phenomenon during the research, and e) ability to generate very rich data grounded in participants' experiences through the use of intensive interviewing and participants' observation.

The subsequent sections explain the philosophical assumption, theoretical perspective, research design, the rationale behind the selection of case study design for this research work, data collection tools, data analysis, sampling, selection of participants and risk management.

3.1 Philosophical Assumption

Creswell (2013) stressed that researchers always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions into their research whether they are aware of it or not. Thus, a well-developed qualitative research strategy makes explicit the philosophical assumptions used in the research. These include the discussion on the philosophical position and assumptions such as positivist, relativist and social constructionist that underlie the research.

Research based on positivist tradition is based on the assumption that the social world exists externally. As such, its properties should be measured through objective methods rather than being inferred or socially constructed. Investigations conducted under this position are usually effective for generating evidence to support or invalidate hypotheses about a phenomenon. It is therefore appropriate for research based on scientific methods or empirical in nature including experimental and quasi-experimental methods. The relative merits of these methods include the fact that they can be applied to a large number of situations, they can be concluded in a timely and cost-effective manner and the conclusions reached can be generalized for wider application (Johnson & Duberley, 2000; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012). The drawback lies in the fact that the methods are usually inflexible and not very effective in understanding the importance of observant or research objects attached to a particular action or situation.

A research based on relativist's tradition or position is based on the assumption that certain practices and structures exist. These practices and structures result in organizational learning which a researcher can map out. The methodology usually involves a survey and semi-structured interview, therefore, making it possible to investigate the association between variables through the collection of a structured and standardized set of data. The strengths include value derived from collecting data through multiple sources and views, and it enables generalization beyond the situation of the investigation. For the result to be valid, large samples are required that can make the research costly (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012).

A research based on social construction tradition is based on the assumption that reality is not objective and exterior, rather it is socially constructed by the participants and people involved. It is essentially dominated by the idea that reality is created by the sense people make of their world through sharing experiences with others. As a result, attention should be focused on what people feel, think and communicate with each other. Researches based on this tradition are usually dominated by qualitative methods. Merits of research based on this tradition include the fact that the findings usually provide solutions to a situational problem and are therefore usually relevant for deciding to solve a specific managerial problem. Considering the focus on the meaning people attach to situations, they provide a platform for gathering data that is viewed as more natural than artificial. The drawbacks include the fact that data gathering can take a great deal of time and resources. In addition, data analysis and interpretation are more difficult and might depend on the knowledge and experience of the researcher (Jones, 2009; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012).

This study was guided by a constructivist paradigm as I seek to understand and drive change in my organization through the development of leadership

capabilities. Leveraging the constructivist world view, my research is characterised by the following fundamental principles.

i. This research acknowledges that multiple reality exists. Accordingly, the research was carried out to capture and report the multiple views and perspectives of the individuals involved in the research project. The data and evidence produced represent the subjective views of participants and the research findings include participant's quotes, obtained from semi-structured interviews.

ii. Leveraging the constructivist worldview, I acknowledge the influence of my background on the research and how it shaped my interpretation in the study. And as the research progressed, I continue to develop my knowledge and self-awareness about leadership development (Moustakas, 1994).

iii. This research was carried out working with and establishing rapport with research participants. The fact that I am a member of the organization with extensive knowledge and dual role play helped the creation and retention of rapport with the research participants. The aforementioned aligns with an assertion from action research that states that the only way to understand a phenomenon of interest is through a comprehensive and collaborative attempt to change it (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

3.2 Theoretical Perspective

There is no univocal, timeless or universal understanding of what leadership constitutes as discussed in section 2.1. Different communities and culture have their understanding of what leadership means and what constitutes good leadership. This suggests that everyone can lead and in different ways so long as it is acceptable by the community. Accordingly, researchers employed numerous theoretical perspectives and research methods in the study of leadership development processes in organizations.

In addition, leadership has traditionally been conceptualized as a process that is existing within a system of leader-follower (Spreitzer, 2006; Day, 2000) or equated with individuals in positions or with special gifts. As a result, most leadership development researchers focused on addressing the deficiencies of individuals in comparison to an ideal leader. Leadership development approaches that focus on individual deficiencies ignore the value of building on the existing strengths and talents of individuals.

My research focused on developing leadership capacity that enables people to learn to reach their full potential and continuously achieve performance that exceeds expectations. Thus, leadership is viewed as contextual and relational. This suggests that it is not a top-down tool or function of a lone individual. Rather, it is a participatory process involving every member of the organization. With this in mind, two interrelated theoretical underpinnings were selected to guide this study. First, the study is underpinned by transformative perspective. The transformative perspective rests on the view that quality research should have intervention agenda which focused on improving the situation of individuals and places they work or live (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the transformative perspective focused on: a) provoking change to practice; b) assisting individuals to liberate themselves from workplace hindrances, and c) emancipating individuals from constraints that moderate their development and self-determination.

Second, the study is underpinned by learning by doing leveraging Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984). The KELT provides a lens from which to look at the learning styles of people for which specific training is intended. It suggests that learning is a cognitive process that entails continuous adaptation to and engagement with one's environment. The theory stresses the need to be conscious and deliberate about learning from experiences. Essentially, the KELT argued that individuals create knowledge from what they experience, rather than just from the instructions they received. Within the KELT process, learning

results from synergetic interactions with the environment as individuals make choices about what aspect of the environment to engage.

The KELT works on two levels namely grasping experience (concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation) and transforming experiences (reflective observation and active experimentation). These two levels establish the framework for four distinct learning styles that are based on the four-mode learning cycle namely concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984; Turesky and Gallagher, 2011) in figure 3.1.

This cycle is relevant to this study because it makes it possible to follow the development journey of participants and insights from learning situations in the programme. This learning journey encompasses participants' reflections in and on action, confirmations from participants from feedbacks during action cycles and scheduled interviews about leadership changes they experienced, and research on practice.
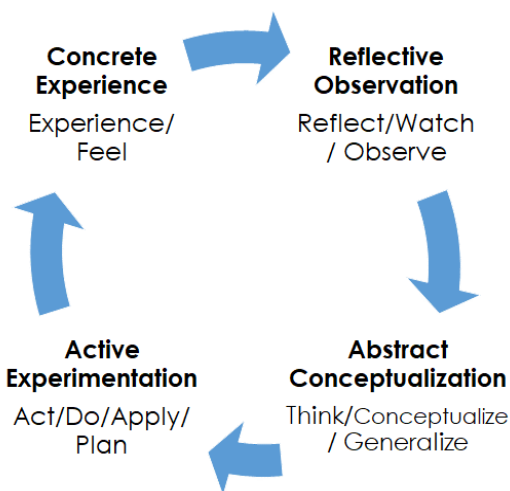
Figure 3.1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Source: Kolb, 1984 p21)

Whereas the action research is underpinned by learning from experience, participation in the project does not automatically translate to learning for everyone involved. It is important to incorporate a framework that facilitates experiential learning. The integration of the KELT's four distinct learning styles with

action research/learning cycles is useful for developing required leadership capabilities that participants can adopt effectively in managing simple and complex situations they encounter daily. Figure 3.2 reflects the linkage between action and the learning that occurs from the action research cycle and experiential learning cycle.
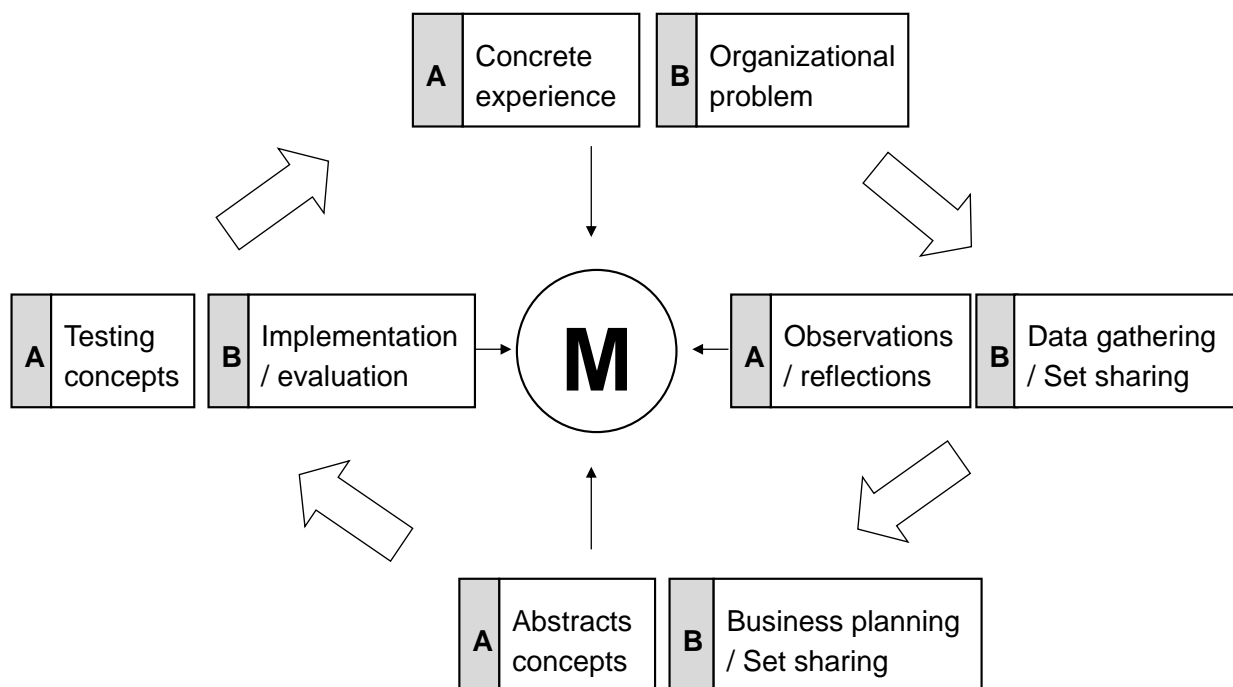
Figure 3.2 Relationship between Kolb's experiential learning cycle, Action Learning and meta-competence (Source: Gray, 2001 p318)

Meta-competence ('M' in Figure 3.2) is at the heart of action learning and experiential learning. This represents new learning transferrable to new situations regardless of whether the search for or the outcome of the adopted solutions is positive or negative. The experiential learning cycle (boxes labelled A) is juxtaposed against the action research phases (boxes labelled B) used for the interventions deployed. The cycle starts from concrete experience which manifests through organizational problems action learning teams focused on. Further to the selection of the problem, the team shifts attention to gathering data (including observation) to discuss, unearth and understand all the dimensions of

the problems. At this stage, the team focused on asking questions about the problem and challenged the taken-for-granted assumptions through a reflective process. Through the process of data gathering, questioning and reflection, new knowledge and actionable solutions are generated. The actionable solutions are implemented and subjected to continuous evaluation. The evaluation stage corresponds to the testing of these concepts in new situations in Kolb's experiential cycle.

The experiential learning theory affirms the importance of experiential activities. This entails systematically taking the learner through each stage of the cycle and ensuring that effective links are made between each stage. To implement KELT and action research cycles in my study, I designed development programs such as training, mentoring, case study and action learning which aided participants' development. This ensures that each of the four elements identified by KELT was used to create a structured learning experience aimed at building a particular skill, inculcating a particular behaviour or changing a particular behaviour. The purpose of the process is achieved once there is learning from the process, as action learning and experiential learning focus on learning that occurs from the process rather than the outcome of the solution to the focused problem. This aligns with the findings of several studies (Volz-Peacock, Carson and Marquardt, 2016; Ethridge and Branscomb, 2009) that identified numerous instances where the skills practiced in action learning sessions where transferred to the workplace. Thus, leadership skills can be developed in action learning sessions as individuals work with a group of people on important organizational problems with no known solution.

3.3 The Research Design

Leadership research exhibits a variety of theoretical perspectives and methodological diversity (Bryman, 2004). Cao and Triche (2013) emphasized the importance of aligning the overarching research questions, method and design of the study. Gay et al. (2012) suggest that narrative, phenomenology,

ethnography, and case study are high-quality qualitative research designs. Although there are steps that are common to all qualitative research approaches, each (that is; narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, case study, etc.) has its process and dominant techniques for carrying out research. The key steps common to all include: (a) the determination of the approach that is considered the most appropriate bearing in mind the objectives of the investigation, (b) the statement of broad philosophical assumption, (c) the selection of the participants of the study, (d) the determination and selection of the data collection techniques, (e) the analysis of data collected, and (f) the documentation of outcome in form of the final report (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012; Creswell, 2013). Nevertheless, Wolcott (1990) suggests that the adoption of a research methodology does prevent the research and the researcher from drawing or leveraging techniques of other research methodologies. Sogunro (2002, p8) recommends that:

"Among other factors, when faced with the question of which method to choose in conducting research…the following factors are important for consideration: matching research purposes and questions with methods; depth of study of phenomena;   availability of resources (money, time, etc); availability of supporting literature;   'knowledge pay off' (i.e., which approach will produce more useful knowledge); and 'style' or preference for a method….and so forth".

I confirmed that I decided to adopt the case study design after reviewing and eliminating other designs that did not suit the purpose of this study. The review and elimination process focused on the purpose of the research, the research questions and the philosophical assumptions that underlie the adoption of the method. Other factors taken into consideration include the resources available to conduct the research (time and co-researchers availability), experience required to handle the method and the complexity of data collection and analysis. The review of the assumptions and fundamental characteristics of the various methodologies bearing in mind the factors highlighted above revealed the following:

a) Narrative research methodology focuses on narrating the true-life story of an individual. This type of research involves a series of chronologically connected written or spoken narratives (Lewis, 2015; Rindstedt, 2015). The implementation of this design involves; studying one or two individuals, data gathering, and processing the chronological data into something meaningful. Thus, the result of narrative design focus on retelling the experiences and story of study participants by the researcher (Wolgemuth, 2014). The limited perspective and the need to retell the story of the lived experience of an individual made the narrative design inappropriate for this study. Consequently, I eliminated the use of narrative research design for this study.

b) Phenomenology research methodology revolves around the principle which places values on human experience and the meaning and understanding assigned to the experience. In Phenomenology, the research focuses on describing the common meanings from many individuals of their lived experience. This is unlike narrative design which focuses on the lived experience of one or several individuals. Phenomenology focuses on the things, views, or meaning that several individuals have in common as they focus on their experience on a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013; Strandmark, 2015). Phenomenology research focuses on discovering and understanding the inner essence of participants' mental processes about some common experience (Sousa, 2014); and it is more appropriate for studying emotional and deep human experience (Steffen, 2014). This investigation is not focused on discovering and understanding the inner essence of the participants' mental processes regarding some common lived experiences. As a result, I consider this design unsuitable for my study.

c) Ethnography research methodology analyses and describes the cultural beliefs and practices of a group of people. Ethnographers focus attention on cultural analysis and interpretation (Baskerville and Myers, 2015). The researcher makes in-depth observations, interpretations and reading of the culture by focusing on the whole population (Bertero, 2015). If cultural analysis and interpretation convey the purpose of the research, the more

ethnographic the approach, the more satisfactory will be the outcome of the investigation (Wolcott, 1990). Ethnography is a misnomer tradition to adopt if cultural analysis and interpretation are not the goals. Nevertheless, this does not prevent the research from drawing or leveraging ethnographic techniques (Coughlin, 2013; Creswell, 2013; Wolcott, 1990). The core objective of this research is neither analysis nor a description of the culture and beliefs of employees in my organization. Hence, I consider ethnography as an inappropriate design for my study.

d) The grounded theory approach is considered appropriate in situations where there is an absence of existing theory on the phenomenon of interest in some form of human action or interaction (Creswell, 2013). The development of this theory is actualized by gathering data and generating hypothesis needed to either accept or reject the developed theory. The focus of this research is not on development or building theory. Therefore it's not appropriate for my study.

e) The case study research methodology is suitable for research work with clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and intentions to provide an in-depth understanding of the case or cases (Iden, 2012; Ferreira de Lara, Neves & Guimaraes, 2014). Rowley (2012) posit that researchers use case study research design for the exploration of why to establish something, how to implement something and how to evaluate the result. The use of case study methodology within the framework of action learning and action research is considered appropriate because the study aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of the role played by work-based and experience-based leadership development initiatives (Crofts, 2006) in developing leaders and leadership in my organization.

Case study research design permits in-depth exploration of an individual's perspective on the phenomenon under investigation in single or multiple-case design (Rowley, 2012). The case study design is the most appropriate design to explore the reason why something was established, the way it was implemented and the outcome achieved (Yin, 2014). One of the core objectives of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the usefulness of action-oriented

interventions in developing the leadership base of my organization. Accordingly, I selected the case study design to explore the strategies the study participants used to develop their leadership capabilities.

About two decades ago, qualitative research was virtually unknown in leadership research (Bryman, 2004). Today, leadership research is still dominated by quantitative research method and a single kind of data gathering instrument—the self-administered questionnaire. This dominance is largely caused by the perception by some scholars that qualitative studies in the field of leadership are time-intensive, complex and fault with methodological challenges (Bryman, 2004). Thus, qualitative methods as research tools, have been underutilized in the field of leadership research (Conger, 1998). However, in a review of 10 years publications in The Leadership Quarterly, Lowe and Gardner (2000) found that one-third of all articles employed qualitative research approach. So, there is increasing use of qualitative research approach due to: a) quantitative analysis is poor at measuring interactions; b) qualitative analysis produces a rich detail about the phenomenon under investigation; c) the dynamic nature of leadership processes poses a great challenge to quantitative analysis; and d) qualitative research is far more effective in identifying contextual elements that induced shifts in perspective of achievement of outcome (Sandelowski, 2010; Creswell, 2013).

The vast majority of early qualitative leadership studies used a single case study design (Rigano & Ritchie, 2003; Brown & Gioia, 2002; Dillon, 2001; Jones, 2000; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). However, this is gradually given way to multiple case study and cross-sectional research designs. For data collection, qualitative interviewing comprising semi-structured, in-depth, unstructured, and biographical interviewing remain the main method of data collection. Researchers (Bryman, 2004; Conger, 1998) emphasized that it is important to combine observation method and other qualitative strategies with interviews to ensure multiple perspectives on the research phenomenon and between-method triangulation

of data. Observation combined with interviews proved to be a powerful methodology for uncovering data distorted or not provided during interviews.

3.4 The Leadership Development Interventions

Leveraging the insights obtained during the needs assessment from participants and the literature, four interwoven interventions were designed and executed to build the leadership base of my organization. Thus, multiple platforms and strategies were adopted and implemented under the tradition of action research over six to 18 months. Specifically, training sessions, case studies, coaching and action learning sets were deployed (refer to figure 3.3). This was done to ensure that the interventions integrate theory with practice, and at the same time give the participants the opportunities to take actions and learn from the actions. The adoption of an integrated learning strategy can promote the transfer of learning outcomes into the workplace and enhance the development of leadership competencies (Ladyshewsky, 2007).

In this section, the discussion focuses on a brief explanation of action learning and action research (ALAR), highlights the overlaps and differences between the two concepts, how ALAR and other interventions were employed for our leadership development programme and the roles that I played.

Figure 3.3   Leadership Development Interventions (Source: adapted from Coghlan and Brannick, 2010 p8)

3.4.1 Action Learning and Action Research (ALAR)

Action research involves a group of people known as 'action researchers' (including a facilitator) whose focus is on one or more problems that are explored in a structured and systematic way. It is a research methodology in which investigation is carried out with the people rather than on the people (Altrichter et al., 2002; Coghlan and Brannick, 2010).   In action research, the action researchers are considered experts in their profession. Altrichter et al. (2002) emphasized three key characteristics of action research: a) a group of people working together; b) Who are engaged in an iterative cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting on their work with a degree of consciousness than usual; and c) generating a public report of the experience.

The definition of action research in my investigation relies on the work of Altrichter et al. (2002) which emphasized three key characteristics of action research discussed above.

On the other hand, Action Learning refers to learning from an action or a concrete experience, and the use of the learning to embark on an action (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). Coghlan and Brannick (2010, p45) define action learning as a means of developing people within an organization that considers the focused tasks as a channel for learning. Action learning rests on the principle that there is no learning without action, and no sober and deliberate action without learning (Revans, 1982).

3.4.2 Overlaps and differences between ALAR

A thin line exists between ALAR, as there are several overlaps between the two concepts. ALAR entails active learning, searching, problem-solving and systematic inquiry. Zuber-Skerritt (2002) highlighted three overlapping perspectives. These are the paradigms and theoretical framework, the praxis of action learning and action research, and programmes and projects. From the perspective of paradigm, Action Learning and Action Research are both categorized under the social sciences discipline. Unlike in natural science, the focus is on individuals, group of people and organizations whose behaviour, characteristics, actions, ideas, and strategies are complex and virtually impossible to predict. ALAR, therefore, maintains that knowledge is socially constructed from within and for a group or context. Both ALAR rests on the principle that we gain knowledge and learn from our action and experience. Praxis relates to the interdependence and integration existing between theory and practice. ALAR shared the belief that there is a dialectical relationship between action and learning. From the perspective of programmes and projects, there is no standard or recommended procedures to adopt in conducting ALAR. This is attributable to the open-ended nature of solving complex problems in organizations. Nevertheless, the various generic models espoused for ALAR reflect the classic cycles of 'plan – act – observe – reflect' (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002; Coghlan and Brannick, 2010).

Despite the similarities between Action Learning and Action Research (ALAR), there are remarkable differences. The main difference between Action Learning and Action Research is that Action Research (AR) is more systematic, rigorous, can be scrutinized, verifiable, and the report is always made public than Action Learning. Another distinguishing factor is that; while action research is about a group of people working together in a cycle of planning, acting, observation, and reflection, action learning (AL) emphasises individual learning. Granted that members of the action learning group (referred to as learning set) work as a group, everyone in the set learns from separate experiences that do not necessarily reflect or involve other set members. Finally, action research involves "action learning, but not vice versa (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002; Zuber-Skerritt and Perry, 2002).

Sub-sections 3.4.3 to 3.4.6 focused on the four interventions. Refer to table 3.1 for the summary of the key elements of the four interventions.

3.4.3 The Action Learning Teams

Six action-learning teams were selected comprising voluntary participants who are employees of my organization across different functions and hierarchical levels. The teams were formed from a pool of 30 people that initially indicated interest to participate in this investigation. Initially, five teams were formed comprising six participants each. As more people voluntarily indicated interest to participate, the sixth team was formed resulting in a total of 41 participants in this intervention. Each of the six teams comprised 5 to 8 set members which are in line with action learning best practice as recommended in studies that used action learning for building leadership skills and improving leadership behaviours (Leonard and Lang, 2010; Volz-Peacock, Carson, and Marquardt, 2016).

The set members focused collaboratively on resolving problems presented and selected by the teams. The learning set typically starts with a workplace problem

important to them and the organization. For example, a team focused on how to attract more foreign exchange inflows and transactions for the bank. Further to the selection of the problem, the learning set thoroughly examined the problem to unearth all its dimensions by leveraging on theory and practice. Planning, including identifying actionable solutions, was carried out. The solutions are thereafter implemented and subjected to regular evaluation. The knowledge generated from the evaluation results to further action which activates another cycle. The cycle follows the steps in figure 3.3.

How the action learning worked

At the first meeting of each learning set, I gave an introductory lecture to the members of the team on action learning, how it works and its benefits to the participants and the organization. The members were informed about the need to establish leadership development goals at every session. In addition, they were required to share their reflection at the end of every session on the achievement of the goals they set at the beginning of the session, as well as obtain feedback from cohorts. At the next session, members were required to share with the cohorts how the learnings at the previous sessions were transferred to the work environment. The sets met at least once weekly and were encouraged to meet for as long as required. The set members shared responsibilities for the organization and the facilitation of set meetings. At each session, the typical process is summarized below:

- The set agrees on the ground rules or reminds members about already established rules for effective meetings and group work. As an illustration, the members were encouraged to use open questions to clarify, probe deeply, etc. They were encouraged to refrain from being judgemental and to remain conscious that reality is socially constructed.
- The meetings usually start with an introduction and preliminaries which included discussions on how the learning from the previous session was transferred to the live environment. The cohorts were required to give

examples or instances when they observed the demonstration of the behaviours discussed by the member. After the completion of this process, each member will then state his or her development objectives for the current session. Set members also used this opportunity to discuss areas where they require support from their cohorts.

- The facilitator conducts the set meeting which entails time management and ensuring that the meeting focused on work-related issues.
- A review of the current meeting is carried out at the end of the session.
- A member is required to volunteer to host the next meeting and facilitate the session.

My Roles

As the action learning coach, I was saddled with the duty of enabling the action learning teams to solve the problems they focus on and in the process build a high-performing and 'leaderful' team. In addition to this, I ensured the development of leadership competencies by the participants at every learning session. Indeed, Rao (2014) emphasized that action learning coach must support the learning of the participants. To achieve this, I played the following roles:

a) Prior to the commencement of every session, I request the participants to identify the leadership development skills that each of them desires to develop. The stated needs were recorded on a chart for everyone in attendance at the session to see.

b) The set was then informed to take note of the needs stated by each participating member. At this stage, I informed the group that everyone would be required to explain if they were able to develop the focused skill stated at the beginning of the session. After each person's account, the group members are individually required to provide examples of how the person demonstrated the skill mentioned.

c) In the course of the sessions, I sometimes intervene when I noticed opportunities for members to develop a stated capability from the problem-solving process.

d) At the end of every session, I request that every member, one after the other, reflect on the skill they desire to develop. Immediately after the presentation of each member, the group provides feedback stating the opinion on how the member performed in the development of the skill.

To encourage the development and practice of the skills on the job, I required all participants at the beginning of the next sessions to explain how they practiced the skill on the job and, the impact it had on their engagements and performance. Members of the various learning sets corroborate the claim of every participant by providing instances where they observed the behaviour talked about demonstrated. These follow-up reviews at the beginning of the next sessions, identified over 240 instances where skills practiced during the action learning sessions were transferred to the work point. During these reviews, reports from participants centered on the following themes:

a) Participants mentioned that it helped them to ask questions in a safe environment

b) It was easy to transfer the leadership skills learned from the various sessions to live situations

c) The organization learned that it was possible to solve important problems whilst its members were developing leadership skills

3.4.4 The monthly sunrise session.

The sunrise session is similar to the traditional classroom learning style. It provides the participants: a) a platform where participants learn from theory and practice through interactive conversational learning; b) learning opportunities in work setting through deep reflection and purposeful engagement of fundamental principles of leadership; c) an environment that enabled learning, relationship

building and social networking; and d) the opportunity to gain a deep understanding of various concepts of leadership and how they can be consciously developed through routine activities.

3.4.5 The Case Study Sessions

Organized monthly case analysis of internal and external customers' complaints, to understand the underlying reasons for the service failures, learn from the incidents and proffer and implement actionable solutions. At each session, the participants carry out a review of prior cases to ascertain if the solutions agreed have been deployed and at the same time evaluate the success or otherwise of the solutions. New actions are taken based on feedback from participants and fresh insights. Thereafter, the case/cases for the month is/are presented. The dimensions of the problems are examined and actionable solutions are agreed. Twenty-four (24) colleagues participated in this intervention.

This intervention focused on providing participants with opportunities for learning by solving workplace problems generated from customers' complaints and feedback through deep analysis, action and reflection.

3.4.6 The Coaching and Mentoring Platform

Established coaching and mentoring platforms for young employees in the organization. The coaching and mentoring programme paired a junior member of the organization with a senior member of the organization.
Thirty-six (36 participants from our organization consisting of 12 mentors and 24 mentees, took part in this programme and the average age of the mentees and mentors are between 25 and 32 respectively. The mentors worked with the organization for an average of 2 years. However, the average work experience of the mentors ranges from 2 to 6 years. No mentor had a boss-subordinate relationship on the job with the mentees assigned to them. All the mentors and mentees were members of the action learning set.

The coaching and mentoring focused on deepening understanding of the concept of leadership and how the participants can leverage relationships for personal development. The intervention created leadership development opportunities from the combination of opportunity and intent. The resultant bonding relationship between the mentor and the mentee aided the participants in developing new skills, abilities and improved performance.

Table 3.1 – Highlights of the key elements of the four interventions

Description	Leadership Development Interventions			
	Action Learning	**Interactive Session**	**Case Study Session**	**Coaching & Mentoring**
Brief description	A platform in which 6 to 8 members of my organization work together as a group of peers towards solving important organizational problems by taking actions.	Participants attended series of interactive sessions that focused on numerous aspects of leadership—leading oneself, leading others, personal effectiveness, mastering effective communication etc.	Sessions provide opportunity for personal reflections on the cases and how learnings from the cases can be used for development	One-on-one sessions between mentee and mentors designed for developing functional and behavioral capabilities, as well as overcoming personal obstacles.
Participants	41 members of my organization	72 members of my organization	24 members of my organization	36 members of my organization
What they did	Participants focused on workplace problems they considered important	Provides the participants a platform where participants learn from theory and practice	Participants carry out a review of internal and external customers' complaints, with	The mentees and the mentors used tailor made engagements to deepen understanding

	with a view to finding and implementing actionable solutions.	through interactive conversational learning. Session takes place once in a week. An anchor facilitates presentation and discussions on chosen aspects of leadership	a view to understanding the underlying reasons for the service failures, learn from the incidents, proffer, and implement actionable solutions.	of how the participants can leverage daily activities and interactions for personal development.
Facilitator	Me	The sessions were anchored by me and volunteers who are members of my organization	Me and volunteers among the participants	These sessions were facilitated by internal mentors
The mentors	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	12 employees who have been in my organization for at least 2 years
The mentees	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	24 junior members of the organization
My Role	▪ Facilitator/ Co-facilitator ▪ Participant observer ▪ Interviewer	▪ Facilitator/Co-facilitator ▪ Participant observer ▪ Interviewer	▪ Facilitator/Co-facilitator ▪ Participant observer ▪ Interviewer	▪ Participant observer ▪ Interviewer
Data Collection	Semi-structured interviews and participant observation	Semi-structured interviews and participant observation	Semi-structured interviews and participant observation	Semi-structured interviews and participant observation

3.5 Identification of Participants

Every research must target a specific group of individuals (Stuart, Bradshaw and Leaf, 2015). Puhan (2013) recommended that the target population must relate to the research, as well as serve a specific purpose. Topkaya (2015) emphasised the importance of selecting participants with qualifications, experience and multiple perspectives to allow in-depth exploration of the focused phenomenon. The participants of the study were employees of my organization. Thus, individuals who can purposefully inform the understanding and exploration of the research problem and the implementation of actionable solutions/initiatives were engaged. This research ensured a fair representation of participants from every group in the organization. Some of the specific characteristics considered before approaching a prospective participant include: the length of stay in the unit, the possession of first-hand experience from at least one area of the organization, having worked in the unit and job functions that require interactions with customers and members of the organization.

3.6 Data Collection Tools

Qualitative researchers need data collection instruments that permit the generation of reliable and valid research findings, as they seek to understand and describe reality through the eyes of the participants with conscious and ongoing attention to the context of the investigation (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015; Cai and Zhu, 2015).

Whilst numerous data collection techniques are available, qualitative researchers often select interviews to explore participants' experiences. During structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews, qualitative researchers ask open-ended questions that allow participants in their own words to describe their experience with the phenomenon.

The use of semi-structured interviews allow researchers to retain control of the interview by asking participants predefined questions based on an interview protocol; as well as remaining flexible to ask follow-up questions to gain deeper insight into the phenomenon under investigation. Researchers emphasized that the use of supportive questions allows researchers to gain in-depth exploration that yields rich and thick data (Conrad et al., 2015; Campbell and Clarke, 2019).

The researcher, participants and other stakeholders of a research benefit from the advantages of interviews when used a data collection strategy. Semi-structured interview conducted with open-ended questions grants the researcher the opportunity to produce rich data with flexible questioning; as well as allowing participants to discuss in-depth their engagement and experience of focused phenomenon (Abawi, 2012). Furthermore, to elicit extensive and in-depth responses from the participants, the researcher adopts active listening techniques (Smith and Caddick, 2012). Active listening demonstrates that the researcher cares about the participants by picking and making follow-up interrogation on verbal and non-verbal cues.

Nevertheless, the researcher and participants may also be exposed to disadvantages that affect the quality of data when using the interview as a data generation instrument (Feiler and Powell, 2016). A common disadvantage of using interviews for data generation includes ineffective interview skills and personal bias that may weaken the strength of the instrument, distort data and make the result unreliable. Another disadvantage can occur in interviews when respondents provide what they think the interviewer will like to hear rather than providing unfiltered honest responses (Abawi, 2012). In addition, participants may consider the interview as invasive if they feel nervous or uncomfortable with the interview process (Driskell and Salas, 2015).

The use of interview protocol assists researchers to mitigate the weaknesses of the interview as a data collection technique, aid the generation of sufficient

information and facilitate effective interview sessions (Holmberg and Madsen, 2014; Jones, 2013).

Three main points were considered from researches that examine leadership issues. These relate to the emergence and discovery of themes in interview data that helped to establish pattern and framework for understanding the phenomenon; the understanding of the context surrounding the problem under investigation and the opportunity to explore the phenomenon in significant depth (Karami, Rowley and Analoui, 2006; Stincelli and Baghurst, 2014; Guptill, Reibling and Clem, 2018).

Based on the insights from the literature, I used semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions to collect data from the participants in both the one-on-one interviews and during the focus group session. In addition, I used an interview protocol that mitigated the inherent weaknesses in the interview as a data collection method, facilitated efficient interview sessions and the generation of useful information.

Conger (1998) insists that over-reliance on interviewing as principal data methodology constitutes the greatest shortcoming of qualitative research in the field of leadership. Accordingly, qualitative researchers in the field of leadership failed to leverage the advantages of other tools that are useful for gaining broader perspectives; and also offer validity testing of data through the use of multiple methods. Indeed, for a successful case study, the researcher's role as a primary data collection instrument is essential (Yazan, 2015; Larson-Hall and Plonsky, 2015). Observation is a powerful data collection technique in leadership when it is combined with interviews. It facilitates the discovery of data either previously distorted or not accessible through interviews.

The participant observation method is effective at capturing interpersonal dynamics and unconventional behavior associated with formal and informal leadership. When observation is combined with the interview, they provide the researcher access to uncover data either distorted during the interview or not

surfaced (Brooks and Normore, 2015; Cacciattolo, 2015; Bryman, 2012). Thus, leadership studies (Tan, Hee and Piaw, 2015; Kramer and Crespy, 2011) use the observation method and other qualitative strategies in conjunction with the interview to obtain multiple perspectives of the phenomenon under investigation and to perform between-method data triangulation. The adoption of interviews and observation for this research aided the generation of data that capture participants' views and experiences, which helped in addressing the research questions.

Furthermore, I used participant observation and focused group sessions as validity checks to detect distortion to data gathered through interviews and data not accessible through interviews.

3.7 Interview Facilitation

One of the most important sources of data and evidence for the case study is the interview. Interviews must be arranged to suit the schedules, availability and protection of the interviewees (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013). Stephens (2007) emphasized that the length of face-to-face interviews varies from one interview to the other; however, average interviews last about 45 minutes. The questions in case study interviews are usually fluid rather than rigid (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

I conducted all interviews to ensure that comparable data are collated from research participants. With the permission of the participants, all interviews were audio-recorded. Additional notes and observations were made in writing during the sessions. The use of semi-structured "opened end" type questions, during the one-on-one interviews, focus group session and action learning sessions inspired the participants to freely express their views and also made it easier for the researcher to ask participants additional questions to gain more perspective.

The one-on-one interviews took about 35 to 50 minutes. The research participants were informed beforehand, that they are under no obligation to answer any question they are not comfortable with. Furthermore, the participants were

informed that they can retract any views expressed during the interview. Finally, participants were notified of the possibility of being contacted within 12months, from the time of the interview, for more information or clarification.

3.8 Data collection

Grandy and Holton (2013) emphasized that a social constructionist approach to leadership development must begin with the needs assessment phase. This suggests that need assessment investigation must be carried out before creating leadership development programmes. Shadi and Noor (2015) suggest that the leadership development needs of an organization can be distilled by obtaining the views of the current leaders and members of the organization. However, I was conscious of the warning that determining the necessary leadership abilities and skills is one of the most difficult aspects of leadership development.

3.8.1 Data collection through interviews

Data collected occurred in three phases as outlined in Figure 3.4.

Duration: November 2015 to December 2019

Phase 1
- Gather information about the leadership needs of members of the organization
- Participants (30)
- Semi-structured interview

Phase 2
- Gather and validate the leadership needs of members of the organization
- Participants (10)
- Semi-structured discussion

Phase 3
- Evaluate leadership development experienced by participants
- Participants (30)
- Semi-structured interviews
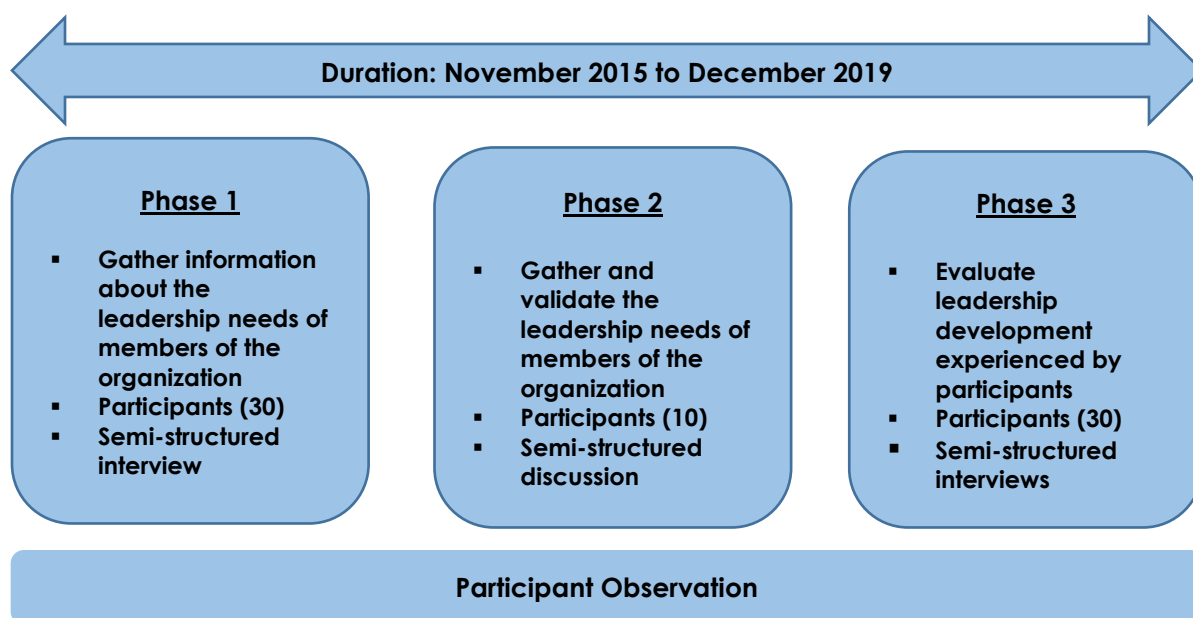
Participant Observation

Figure 3.4. Data Collection Phases (Source: James, Milenkiewicz and Bucknam, 2008 p70)

Figure 3.4 indicates that the initial data gathering focused on identifying leadership development needs of the members of the organization and data generation to evaluate the impact of the interventions. In the initial phase, the views of participants on their leadership development needs were obtained through semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The emphasis of the initial data gathering was to ensure that the leadership development initiatives that were developed and deployed address the needs of the participants. The first 30 people that gave consent to participate in the study were interviewed.

The leadership development needs assessment of the organization was carried out with three objectives in mind. These are the: a) identification of the present and future leadership development needs of the employees of the organization; b) kind of development methods that the participants desire; and c) actionable interventions to be implemented to address the expressed need.

The following questions were used as guide for the series of interviews to ensure consistency in data collection from the participants. This aided the data analysis as it makes it possible for me to ascertain the similarities and differences in the dimensions discussed by the different interviewees.

The focus group session which focused on obtaining the views of the participants on what they consider as their leadership development needs, the needs of their supervisors and collaborators, their current leadership challenges and how they think their needs could be addressed complement the data from one-on-one interviews. The findings from these phases of interviews were integrated with the insights from the critical literature review to the design of leadership development interventions in line with the objectives of the study.

The second phase of the data generation focuses on evaluating the impact of the interventions during and after months of repeated action research cycles. The data generation at this stage focus on obtaining the participants' impressions on how the various interventions impacted their leadership skills. This provides

empirical evidence on the impact the action-oriented investigation has on the employees. Table 3.2 reflects the data collection strategy used.

Table 3.2   Data collection strategy adopted

Description	Preliminary Data Collection		During/Post Action Data Collection	
	Interview	Focus group	Interview	Observation
Focus	To assess leadership development needs.	To obtain the collective view of the group and the meaning/understanding behind the views on leadership development needs. It serves to clarify the data collected during one-on-one interviews. In addition, initial actionable interventions were explored considering the needs expressed.	Ascertain the impacts of the interventions on the participants based on their views.	Ascertain the impacts of the interventions on the participants based on observation by the insider action researcher.
Time	2 weeks.	Two weeks after the conclusion of the one-on-one interviews.	At different stages of interventions and action learning cycles.	During interviews, meetings and routine interactions.
Anchor/ Facilitator	Me	Me	Me	Me
Mode	Semi-structured one-on-one interviews before interventions.	Semi-structured discussion	Structured interviews during and at the end of interventions.	Participant observation
Participants	30 voluntary participants across the various sections of the organization.	Ten participants	36 participants drawn from participants of all the interventions.	Observed participants and me
Mode of recording	Note taking and audio recording	Note taking and audio recording	Note taking and audio recording	Note Taking and audio recording
Duration (Average)	35 to 50 minutes per interview	About four hours.	35 to 50 minutes per interview	45 minutes to 90 minutes per visit

Source (Adapted from: Patton, 2015 p525)

3.8.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation was employed as a method. I attended numerous development programmes including action learning activities and team meetings, discussion sessions and mentoring sessions. The degree of my involvement varied depending on the activity involved.

I played my role participant-observer in an overt manner (Bryman and Bell, 2007) in line with the ethical plan and I do not consider it necessary.

This allows me to develop a rich understanding of how the various participants engage with the development programs, the context, and the opportunities and difficulties that they experienced.

It is important to highlight that the observation was not limited to formal gatherings, as I engaged participants in non-formal activities such as lunchtimes and informal gatherings.

The observation was useful to this research in many ways: a) I gained a richer understanding of the context of the development programme and participants' engagement with the process; b) it facilitated confidence and trust between the participants and me during interviews. I confirmed that my participation in the various programmes and information conversations encouraged the participants to be opened and frank with me during interviews.

3.9 Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers employ various methods of data analyses including thematic, content and discourse analysis to capture rich descriptive data, discover patterns, ascertain meanings and make conclusions (Yin, 2014; Rowley, 2012). Bradley, Curry and Devers (2007) emphasized that analysis is an ongoing, iterative process that begins in the early stages of data collection and continues throughout the study.

Thematic Analysis

I used thematic analysis approach to analyze the interview data. This is an exploratory approach in which the components or parts of a text is analyzed in relation to the contribution to the emerging theme (Schwandt, 2007). In other words, it is an approach used for identifying and analyzing themes from a data set. It provides flexibility and scope for a deep, detailed and complex analysis of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is most suitable when researchers use semi-structured interviews to extract themes and codes, organize key quotes and themes, and sort into global themes (Vaughn and Turner, 2016).

The data analysis follows general procedures for qualitative research including preparing and organizing data, classifying data into themes through a process of coding, and representing the data in figures, tables, or discussions (Creswell, 2013). Refer to figure 3.5 for the summary of the analysis steps used in this research.
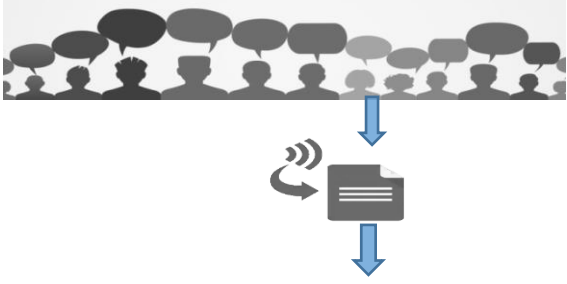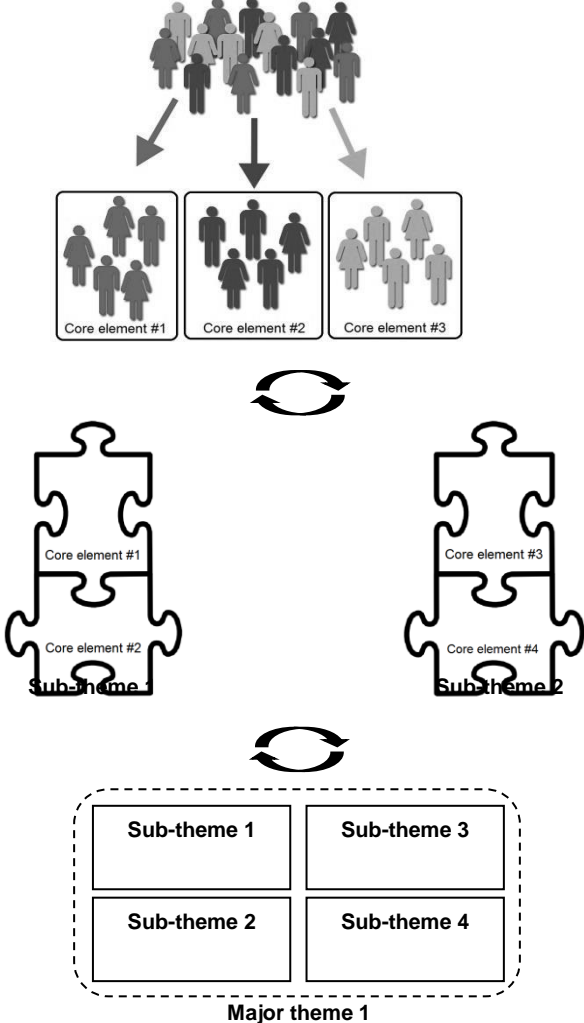
Step	Data Analysis Phase	Activity	Description
1	**Preparation for Analysis and Coding**		Research Interviews Transcription of interview recordings
2	**Reading for Overall Understanding**		Review of the entire data collected
3 & 4	**Coding Process and Identification of Thematic Levels**	Core element #1 Core element #2 Core element #3 Core element #1 Core element #3 Core element #2 Core element #4 Sub-theme 1 Sub-theme 2 Sub-theme 1 Sub-theme 3 Sub-theme 2 Sub-theme 4 Major theme 1	Initial Coding of transcripts Combination of initial codes into core elements Combination of core elements into sub-themes Combination of sub-themes into Major themes
5	**Generation and Presentation of Result**	Table 4.1 Summary of Major Theme 1 (see below)	Generation of themes

Table 4.1 Summary of Major Theme 1

Major Theme	Sub-Theme	Core Elements
Major Theme 1	Sub-Theme 1	▪ Core Elements 1 ▪ Core Elements 2
	Sub-Theme 2	▪ Core Elements 3 ▪ Core Elements 4

Figure 3.5   Data Analysis steps (Adapted from: Creswell, 2013, p179; Braun and Clarke, 2019)

The data gathered and analysed reflect the learning experienced by the participants involved in the leadership development programme. The interview transcripts were analysed manually considering that the data generated were neither substantial beyond manual analysis nor sufficient to justify the adoption of Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis. The data was analysed under broad themes. Three thematic levels were considered optimal, as they provide sufficient transparency and surfacing of the participants' experiences. Leveraging Bradley, Curry, and Devers (2007), the analysis of the data collected was carried out using the systematic approach. The activities carried out in each of the data analysis steps in figure 3.4 are explained below:

Step 1 - Transcription of Interview Recordings

As an initial step, I transcribed the digital audio recording of the interviews by listening to the audio recording, transcribe the responses and listening to the audio recording again while reading through the texts to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Sufficient spaces were created as margins on the transcript files to permit comments and coding in the subsequent stage.

Step 2 - Reading for Overall Understanding

The review of the data in step 1 without coding helped me to gain a general understanding of the scope and contexts of the key experiences under study. Furthermore, it aided me to identify emergent themes and the link between concepts and their context, obtain insights on the formal system to organize the data and uncover links within and between concepts and experiences described in the data.

Next, is the review of the entire data collected without coding. Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000) and Creswell (2013) insist that this is an important first step that aids the identification of emerging themes without losing the connections

between concepts and their context. This was done several times to enable me to immerse myself in the details, as well as obtain a sense of the interviews before breaking the data into parts. Insights (short phrases, ideas, key concepts, etc) from the initial overall readings were noted in the space created as margin. The reflection on the thoughts and ideas generated 12 initial categories. I read each transcript multiple times before codes were attributed. Morse and Richards (2002) argued that it is sufficient and preferred a single researcher to perform all the coding. This, they argued further, is particularly useful for studies in which ongoing relationships with research participants are critical for the quality of the data collected.

Step 3 - Developing the Code Structure

The development of the code structure from the data was achieved through an inductive process, rather than fitting responses into pre-defined categories. Also, known as 'bottom up', inductive reasoning starts from specific to general and ending with general conclusions. This contrasts with deductive reasoning which uses a 'top down' approach.

The classification by phrases was adopted instead of sentences because some sentences contain more than one idea. In some cases, some sentences contain multiple views. For example, the response "I need to improve on how to do many tasks at the same time" and "I need to improve on my ability to handle multiple tasks" were group together because they focus on multi-tasking. Upon capturing all responses, each category is assigned a name or tag that reflects various comments in the group.

Step 4 - Coding of Data

The general review for the understanding of the data and development of coding structure was followed by the coding process, which includes the

development, finalization, and application of the code structure. The transcripts were printed and grouped initially into two broad functions that exist in the organization (that is, front office and support function). The transcripts were later grouped into three using the level of employees (that is, junior level, middle level, and senior level. The transcripts were studied in groups with each sorted in descending order using the number of themes and elements contained in the file. The process of coding enables me to adopt a formal approach to organize the data, uncovering and documenting additional links within and between concepts and experiences expressed by the participants in the data.

The data were subjected to a detailed line-by-line review followed by code assignment once the concept is obvious. Labels were assigned to responses from the initial or new categories (such as phrases, paragraphs, and sentences) to help in recording and preserving valuable concepts. Further review of data, led to assigning codes that show new concepts and highlight phrases and paragraphs that match the chosen concept.

To ensure that the code assigned is appropriate, phrases previously assigned the same code, are compared to confirm that they reflect the same concept. This approach led to identifying new codes and refining existing ones. The inductively generated codes reflected the experiences of participants. In determining the codes, I aligned with the suggestion of Miles and Huberman (1994) who insist that it is not so much of the words that matter, rather the meanings that lie within the words.

Step 5 - Finalizing and Applying the Code Structure

This step focused on reducing the number of categories by merging similar response categories. This resulted in having fewer categories. There are diverging opinions on how to develop code structure. The main debates focus on whether coding should more inductive or deductive (Heath and Cowley, 2004). As previously stated, I used the inductive approach. This entails that data are

reviewed line-by-line and code assigned as a concept becomes apparent. I engaged in further and multiple reviews of the data. This resulted in the continued assignment of codes that reflect emerging concepts. To ascertain if a code assigned is appropriate, I compare text segments to segments that have been previously assigned the same code and decide whether they reflect the same concept. With the use of the constant comparison method (Strauss and Corbin, 2008), I refined the dimensions of the existing codes, as well as identify new codes. Through this process, the structure of the codes evolves inductively, reflecting the experiences of participants.

The final step is reached once further processing of all available data does not lead to generating a new concept from the coding and code structure.

Step 6 - Generating Results

The last step is the generation of themes. The themes represent general propositions that emerge from the diverse experiences of the participants and provide insight and understanding of the impact of the interventions deployed to aid leadership development. In the final classification, four major themes emerged.

3.10 Selection of Participants

Numerous sampling techniques can use when recruiting participants in qualitative research. Purposeful and convenience sampling are the most utilized as they align best across nearly all qualitative research designs. Qualitative researchers with the intention to recruit participants who are easily accessible and convenient to the researchers to use the Convenience Sampling technique. Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to recruit participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. Robinson (2014) recommends purposeful sampling since it grants

the researcher the flexibility to regulate the selection process of a target population. Vohra (2014) insists that purposeful sampling grants researchers the opportunity to identify participants with deep knowledge in a particular area. Horsfall and Hayter (2014) suggest that purposive sampling permits the researcher to select participants that are capable of providing deep insight and understanding of the phenomenon.

Accordingly, to gain deep insight that will enable me to answer the research questions, I used purposive sampling to select participants possessing the characteristics required to achieve the objectives of my research. The purposive selection process considered several factors including membership of functional units of the organization, formal and informal roles of the participants and hierarchical level within the organization.

A purposive sampling approach was implemented and the selection of participants considered those jobs, positions and functions that might have a very rich source of information research topic under investigation.
The participants selected represent people from different functional divisions and hierarchical levels in the organization who voluntarily opt to participate. In addition, the participants possess the characteristics required for engendering leadership development. Although representation cuts across all functional levels, teams and groups, the actual participants are not necessarily representative of the population of these segments as participation is voluntary and depends on the consent of the participant. All participants in the various programmes and initiatives were engaged as cohorts, regardless of the person's hierarchical position in the organization.

3.11 Validity and Review Process

Multiple sources of data are one of the distinct characteristics of the case study, as researchers leveraging the case study approach rely on data, researcher,

theory or methodical triangulation (Yin, 2014). Wijnhoven and Brinkhuis (2015) affirm the use of methodological triangulation data analysis for case studies as it grants the researcher the opportunity to demonstrate the richness and depth of the data. With methodological triangulation, researchers explore numerous dimensions of focused phenomenon relying on multiple data collection techniques such as interviews, observation and documents (Tibben, 2015). Accordingly, methodological triangulation is considered the most appropriate data analysis process for this case study. For this research, the use of participant observation was very useful during the interviews as it aided me in relating to the programme specific opinions made by the respondents.

Furthermore, in action research, all results are co-owned by all the participants. As agreed with participants during the process of informed consent, the result of the investigation and the thesis were submitted to them for review before completion and publication by the University of Liverpool. The review by participants ensures that the thesis reflects their participation, the impacts of the various interventions, the observations, and their responses to interview questions. Greenwood and Levin (2007) emphasized that this is fundamentally important to action research considering the collaborative nature of the research process. In addition, it provides internal credibility to data and result generation. The generated data and result were shared with the participants electronically. The participants were required to review the thesis to ensure an accurate representation of the project, the context of the investigation, and the outcomes based on their responses. Participants' feedback of the relevant part of the thesis was sent in by the participant for consideration and revision.

3.12 Ethical Research

Yin (2014) insists that case study researchers must strive for the highest ethical standards while doing research. These include receiving informed signed consent from participants, protecting participants from risks and harm, protecting the

privacy and confidentiality of the participants, and exercising special precautions needed to protect vulnerable groups. This research followed the ethical guidelines of The Liverpool University. Ethics approval was obtained from The Liverpool University DBA Research Ethics Committee before the commencement of the research. Details of ethical considerations and approvals are included in the appendix.

3.13 Summary

Reason (2006) advised that action researchers must surface various choices that characterise their investigations to make it clear to themselves, people they engaged in the investigation and those to whom the research report will be presented. Accordingly, this chapter outlined the methodology and methods used for this research and the reasons for their adoption.

The chapter commenced by recalling that this study sought to discover the skills and capabilities acquired by the employees of my organization that contributed to their emergence as leaders based on the perspectives of the individuals that participated in the action research. Furthermore, it is a longitudinal study with observation occurring over more than six months and interviews conducted with the same group of participants at different points during and after the development of the various programmes.

The chapter continued by clarifying that the qualitative research approach was employed under the overarching tradition of action research to achieve the objectives of the study. The qualitative research design is useful in examining subjective human experiences with attention to context. The chapter continued by outlining the ontological and epistemological assumptions upon which the research rests. Thus, this research is characterized by three fundamental principles including: a) the research acknowledges that multiple reality exists; b) the researcher's background influences the research and the interpretation of the

study; and c) the research was carried out working with and establishing rapport with research participants.

Further to the critical review of numerous qualitative research designs, the case study design was adopted as the most appropriate design to achieve the purpose of the study. It was stated that, amongst others, the adoption of the case study enabled the study of the phenomenon in-depth within its context (Yin, 2014; Hartley, 2004 in Cassell and Symon, 2004). In this research, the phenomenon is the leadership development programmes and the context is my work environment.

The subsequent sections focused on: a) data generation through semi-structured interviews, focus group and participant observation; b) data analysis that follows general procedures for qualitative research; c) the selections of members of my organization who can purposefully inform the understanding and exploration of the research problem as participants through purposive sampling; and d) ethical consideration.

With the adoption of qualitative research methods, this research benefits from numerous advantages including: a) greater chances to explore and give attention to contextual factors, b) more opportunities to explore leadership development intervention in significant depth, and c) ability to generate very rich data grounded in participants' experiences through the use of intensive interviewing and participants' observation.

Chapter 4 – Research findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the research findings that drew primarily from the data obtained from 49 semi-structured interviews, as well as incorporating findings from observational field notes. The interviews were conducted at three different phases. The first set of interviews were carried out at the beginning of the leadership development program in February and March 2016. 14 participants out of a total of 25 persons interviewed were involved at this stage. The second phase of interviews occurred few months after the intervention programs ended. This happened from April to June 2017. There were 20 persons involved at this stage. 12 out of this 20 were previously interviewed.

The final phase of the interview happened about 6 months after the end of the program. 25 participants were interviewed. In all, out of the total of 25 interviewees, 12 participants were interviewed in all three phases, 10 interviewed in 2 of the three phases and three interviewees were interviewed in one of the three phases.

Throughout this chapter, pseudonyms were used to respect the confidentiality of the respondent in line with the ethical approval obtained before the commencement of the study.

Refer to table 4.1 for the list of the interviewees and the time they were interviewed. It is difficult to provide details about the interviewees and still respect their anonymity. However, the participants are all employees of my organization working across the length and breadth of the organization and functions and hierarchical levels. 10 out of the interviewees and participants had supervisory roles, whilst the others are members of teams within the organization.

I transcribed fully the recorded interviews. Thereafter, a systematic analysis of the transcripts ensued. Details about the data transcription and analysis can be found in chapter three.

Table 4.1 – List of Interviewees

Participant	Phase 1 March 2016	Phase 2 June 2017	Phase 3 March 2018
1	√		√
2	√		√
3	√	√	√
4	√	√	√
5	√	√	√
6	√	√	√
7	√	√	√
8	√	√	√
9	√	√	√
10	√	√	√
11	√	√	√
12	√	√	√
13	√	√	√
14	√	√	√
15		√	√
16		√	√
17		√	√
18		√	√
19		√	√
20		√	√
21		√	√
22		√	√
23			√
24			√
25			√

The next section focuses on the analysis of the leadership development needs of the participants.

4.1 Leadership Development Needs Assessment

To execute an effective leadership development program, it is better to start with a leadership need assessment program (Grandy and Holton, 2013). The leadership development needs analysis of the participants was conducted via one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 14 participants at the beginning of the leadership development project from February to March 2016.

The interviews revealed different leadership development needs. The identified needs by the participants are summarised in figure 4.1 under two broad categories – individual level needs and group level needs. These two broad categories were further analysed into seven sub-categories (a) effective communication, (b) relationship management, (c) problem solving, (d) ability to multi-task, (e) self-discipline (f) self-awareness, and (g) confidence building.
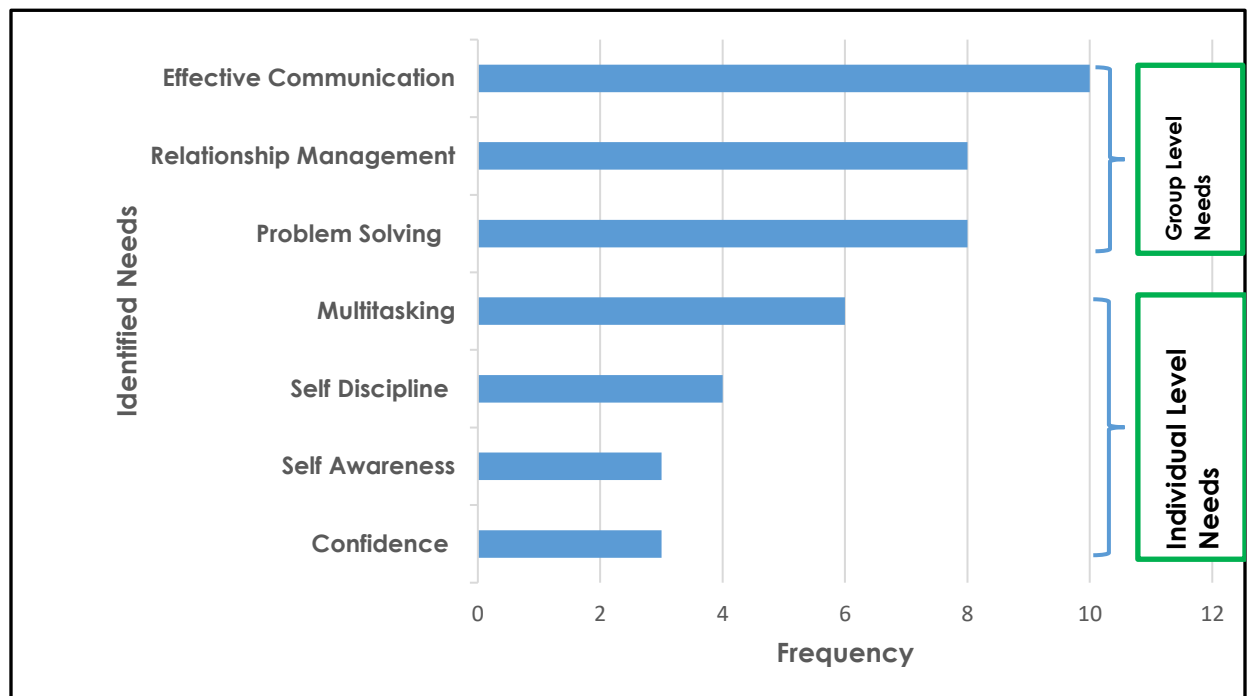

Figure 4.1 Leadership Development Needs identified by participants in order of frequency.

Figure 4.1 gives a pictorial representation of the responses from the 14 participants to various items on the interview questions. The group-level category leadership development needs have three sub-categories. The dominant sub-category expressed by most of the respondents relates to the development of effective communication capability. This is required for effective written and verbal communication with all stakeholders and through all channels. This is also expected to enhance collaboration among the members of the organization.

- 'I think we need to develop the capability to communicate effectively within our various teams and with other teams within the organization. This will develop the ability to drive performance objectives, as well as collaborate with others to achieve set objectives.' (Participant 4, February 2016)

In addition, the participants hoped that the leadership development program would help them develop relationship management capability. According to some of the participants, the organization is characterised by organizational silos. This is attributed to poor relationship management skills across various spectrums of the organization.

- 'I wish that the participation in the program will help to develop abilities to work more effectively and collaboratively across the functional divisions.' (Participant 11, March 2016).

The third sub-category discussed by most of the participants relates to problem-solving capability. Some of the participants term this as the ability to conceptualize and solve challenging problems that are important to the organization, leveraging on self and numerous resources within the organization.

- 'There are lots of challenges that we struggle to solve as individuals and teams, despite the many resources resident in the organization. I look forward to developing alternative means of solving numerous challenges that we encounter while executing routine and non-routine tasks.' (Participant 2, March 2016).

The second category relates to individual-level development needs. There are four sub-categories participants discussed here as capabilities that they required

to empower themselves for effective delivery of their numerous responsibilities. These include the ability to multitask, self-awareness, self-discipline, and confidence-building.

- 'To have a successful career in this organization, it is obligatory to develop the capacity to multi-task. As a sales and marketing officer, I am expected to manage a portfolio of good and difficult customers, grow the individual/team balance sheet and profitability in line with defined targets, recover doubtful and bad loans, obtain approvals for customers' credit requests, and onboard new customers'. (Participant 7, March 2016).

- 'Successful execution of my duties and achievement of my goals and objectives require a high level of self-discipline. I will consider my participation in the leadership program as a success if I can develop capacities to consistently follow-through on all assignments'. (Participant 6, March 2016).

- 'I believe that leadership has to do with influencing others to take actions willingly. I need confidence to effectively lead and influence members of my team in all engagements and interactions'. (Participant 8, March 2016).

- 'When I engage my team members, sometimes, I am filled with a lack of confidence. What bothers me the most is the feeling that they are aware whenever I am in this position. I would like to grow in self-confidence and lead people by earning their trust'. (Participant 10, March 2016).

- 'I need to develop the skills and mindset to bring out the best in others. To achieve this, I would like to come out of this program with a better perception of myself. So, I look forward to developing capacity for

continuous self-discovery and self-awareness.' (Participant 13, March 2016).

4.2 Summary of Need Development Assessment

The success of organizations will depend on their ability to nurture and develop leadership capacity for success in the 21st century.

A good leadership development program must begin by assessing the leadership development needs of people for whom the leadership program is designed. It should reveal areas requiring development interventions.

The need assessment I carried out revealed that the participants had seven leadership development needs summarised in figure 4.1.

The identified needs led to the development of four interwoven actionable interventions discussed in chapter three. The outcome of the need assessment also helped to achieve two other objectives. The first being the involvement of participants in identifying their leadership development needs, and the second being the determination of the actionable interventions to address the needs.

4.3 The Leadership Development Program

The findings discussed in this section represent participants' learnings, from the cyclical steps of action research and experiential learning, by engaging in conversational learning and learning by experience (Kolb, 1984) participants can transform their experiences into knowledge. The findings summarised what happened to participants following the various interventions by collecting empirical data through logs and diaries maintained on participants and the interviews with the sample of the participants on their views about what changes have happened to them. Specifically, I described what happened to participants through field notes I took from observations of the participants and one-on-one interviews with the participants at various stages of the action research cycles

and other interventions implemented. The report includes some examples of the views expressed by participants in their own words.

Analysis of the data gathered resulted in the emergence of four major teams from 52 elements. The qualitative themes and findings emerged during the analysis using a constant comparative method which involved observation, interviews, transcription, coding, peer review, and researcher reflection. The major themes were performance leadership, thought leadership, people leadership, and organizational culture leadership. The titles of the major themes reflect the broad views of the participants based on the elements that are considered similar in terms of impact. It is important to highlight that the focus of the findings is not on the result of the various actions implemented; but rather the processes, activities, and actions carried out towards achieving the results. The focus is therefore on how the interventions have helped the participants in practicing leadership in their day-to-day activities. The four themes and 52 elements that captured the findings of the research are discussed in subsequent sections.

4.3.1 Theme 1: We developed and engaged in Performance Leadership

The outcome of the first theme confirms the improvement of participants' performance in the organization as a result of the various interventions. The action research leveraged the fact that the researcher can take initiative as well as get involved in the process of solving identified problems by participants. The process of generating new knowledge is the know-how that propels individuals and organizations to achieve planned outcomes and triggers the continuing development of new capabilities.

In general, participants emphasized that they had noticed a tremendous increase in their leadership capabilities through working in teams of people from different backgrounds. Under this theme, participants revealed how the various interventions enhanced their learning and leadership development. The six attributes identified under this theme are: (a) multi-tasking and inter-tasking capacity, (b) critical thinking capability, (c) strategic thinking capability, (d)

developed capacity to manage set-back, and (e) developed innovative and improvement mind-set.

Table 4.2 – Summary of Major Theme 1: Developed and engaged in Performance Leadership		
Major Theme	Sub-Theme	Core Elements
We developed and engaged in Performance Leadership	Developed innovative and improvement mind-set	▪ Always apply a continuous improvement mind-set in executing tasks ▪ Apply original thinking and problem analysis and good judgment while making changes to work output ▪ Continue to leverage multiple views to make high impact changes ▪ Work with an obvious business mindset, minimizing waste while ensuring good outcome for the organization
	Multi-tasking and inter-tasking capacity	▪ Acquiring know-how to manage many assignments simultaneously. ▪ Improving on my work organization ▪ Mastering the act of effective execution of several activities even when they have competing deadlines
	Critical thinking capability	▪ Envisage problems and opportunities before they happen or become obvious ▪ Learn to make continuous, but progressive engagement with problem ▪ Adopt model for solving work place problems ▪ Pay close attention to details and strategic analysis of issues before the deployment of resources ▪ Plan for resource requirements thus avoiding unnecessary inefficiencies
	Strategic thinking capability	▪ Develop total solutions mind-set in seeking solutions to a problem or delivering service. Change from focusing narrowly on assigned area. ▪ Assess impact of changes before and during implementation ▪ Clearly identify problems and come up with long term solutions to solve the problem ▪ Understands and effectively drive work in line with the bank's strategic direction ▪ Adapt readily to changes ▪ Optimally utilize and manage resources
	Developed capacity to manage set-back	▪ Adopt failure as great opportunity to learn and take steps to create the desired goals. ▪ Make conscious efforts to learn from mistakes and seek better ways or solutions.
	Sound decision making	▪ Work with and drive decisions based on theory, industry trends and developments. ▪ Actively benchmark using up to date information. ▪ Conscious and deliberate efforts to consider obvious and obscure alternatives.

Findings 1: Developed Innovative Capability – All the respondents (25 of 25 [100%]) indicated that the leadership development program enhanced their innovative skills and improved their mind-set. The most significant finding under this theme is that respondents believe that the leadership development program enabled them to develop innovative and process improvement capabilities.

The leadership development program allowed participants to learn and unlearn leadership skills. This enabled participants to identify organizational challenges and suggest ways to improve the working condition in the organization.

The action learning process adopted requires focusing on workplace problems, current work culture, implementation of the actionable solution, evaluation of the implemented solutions, and reflecting on the action taken.

Below are extracts of some of the participants' views on how the membership of action teams aided them in achieving the desired goals:

- By involving and engaging numerous and different stakeholders, I have been able to do new things regularly. When I submitted my goals and targets to my supervisor for approval at the beginning of 2016, she wrote on the document that "this will be another vanilla year". This suggests that I do not intend to do anything new. The document I submitted does not reflect an intention to do things differently and do different things. As a member of one of the BEST Teams, I engaged my team in solving numerous workplace problems. This, for example, has improved my turnaround time and enabled me to achieve more in less time. Numerous small, but high-impact, improvements have been implemented. My superiors and peers are proud of my performance and that of the unit. The changes and improvements I carried out, though not captured in my goals and target as they were neither planned nor envisaged, gave me the profile of the most significant contributor to the good image of my team (participant 13, March 2018).

- I am very excited about the innovative capacity that I developed since my involvement in the project. By innovation, I am not referring to

groundbreaking changes. Indeed, there is no single one that I can talk about. However, I continue to make small changes with a positive effect on customer service delivery and my overall performance (participant 5, March 2018).

Finding 2:   Multi-tasking and inter-tasking Capability – Most of the respondents (18 of 25 [75%]) indicated that the leadership development program enhanced their innovation and improvement mind-set.

As a relatively new organization with limited human and material resources, several employees combine numerous functions and responsibilities. As an illustration, the legal team is also responsible for communications and external affairs. During the need assessment phase, several of the employees expressed the need to enhance their capacity to multi-task. Indeed, we observed that this is one of the elements most talked about by participants.

Responses from participants show two observable multitasking processes. The first observable multitasking relates to parallel processing in which someone engages in more than one task at a time. As an illustration, writing reports about visitation to a customer and listening to audio material at the same time.

The second observable form of multitasking from participants is called task-switching. As an example, a staff preparing a new customer's file switches to respond to an unrelated but urgent mail from another client.

While the distinction between the two forms appears thin, respondents have expressed that they struggle with maintaining or increasing the efficiency with task switching.

Participants highlighted that before the interventions, they carried out tasks in a fragmented manner and indulge in hasty and poor decisions as their thinking was frequently interrupted by the 'ghosts' of pending tasks. Generally, their work outputs were poor. The reality of the research work is that employees are saddled with many responsibilities some of which must be attended to simultaneously or inter-tasked. Furthermore, participation in various interventions has helped to acquire an increased capacity for multi and inter-tasking. Multi-tasking leadership

capacity was achieved partly because the participants were actively involved in several intensive interventions that rest on logical and cyclical patterns.

Below are extracts of some of the participants' views:

- Generally, I experienced improved capacity in multi-tasking and my quest for knowledge has increased tremendously. The past few months have revealed the need for actions informed by theory; as well as given me the know-how for managing several assignments simultaneously efficiently and effectively (participant 1, March 2018).

- The main improvement and capacity I would like to talk about are on the organization of my work. Using an example of when I was transferred to my new unit, I was afraid because at that time I did not know anything about my new responsibilities and the existing members were struggling with the multiple assignments that required concurrent attention. They barely had time to integrate me and the people that joined after into the unit. Now, we have developed some leadership skills which helped me to prioritize and handle numerous assignments at the same time. The organization and manner of handling jobs have improved tremendously, although the volume of work is increasing (participant 4, March 2018).

Finding 3: Critical thinking capability – Some of the respondents (16 of 25 [64%]) indicated that the leadership development program enabled them to develop critical thinking capability.

Contrary to the traditional "strong man" work context where answers to issues are expected from top to the bottom, with action learning and action research (ALAR) everyone is required to take personal responsibility for finding solutions to workplace issues. In the ALAR context, learning is emergent as people are expected to fashion out how their learning supports and aids the strategic direction of the organization. The people at the top, middle, and bottom of the ladder are required to take ownership and responsibility for their learning. The

concept of critical thinking capability helped participants to operate in a safe environment where they could question ideas, thinking patterns, assumptions, and solutions.

Furthermore, workplace problems provide the platforms through which participants could practice critical thinking using the power of questioning and application of theory in practice. Participants in this investigation through the various interventions were obliged to embrace critical thinking through the implicit and express permission of the organization, to subject all their activities and those of others in the organization to critical questioning. They explained further how they had been able to use the power of critical thinking to improve on their work approach and effective delivery. Although some of the participants were initially not comfortable with questioning people they considered as superiors, as the various interventions continued, more and more participants started to develop confidence and began to question taken-for-granted assumptions.

Below are extracts of some of the participants' views:

- The critical thinking ability which I developed by participating in research work is helping me a lot. A leader should be able to foresee potential problems before they happen, and develop ways to prevent the problems from occurring. Some of the problems we worked on concerned the day-to-day work of some teams in the organization. The thorough analysis of these problems helped us to build a template for solving workplace problems through continuous engagement with the problem and the solution. I can say that I have developed an orientation, mindset, and capability of undertaking extensive and comprehensive examination to uncover all the dimensions of a problem as a part of the process for finding practical and suitable solutions (participant 3, March 2018).

- I developed the capacity to scan for potential opportunities and take advantage of them to benefit my career, other employees, and the bank.

I understood that to be considered a leader and critical problem solver, one must be logical, set a clear plan, itemize actions to be taken, the strategy to be followed, considers the contribution and views of everyone. For example, the best program in which I actively participated helped me to develop the sense of thinking about a solution concerning a potential problem or a process requiring improvement (participant 16, March 2018).

Finding 4:   Strategic thinking capability - Some of the respondents (17 of 25 [68%]) indicated that the leadership development program enabled them to develop strategic thinking capability.

Strategic thinking capability refers to the skills required to consider or view issues from the whole picture perspective. This perspective includes; shared vision, strategic planning, problem-solving, evaluation of alternatives, and assessment of the impact of an action on others.

Participation in various groups and interventions gave participants the capability needed for considering the impact of any action on members of the organization, teams other than the one that initiated the change, and the strategic direction of the organization. Those who once viewed themselves as insignificant in the organization now understood how they fit into the organization's big picture. Participants admitted that participating in these programs transformed the way they act and reason. They now understood how their actions and inactions could affect the overall health of the organization. They explained how the transformation had affected how they go about executing their day-to-day tasks.

Below are extracts of some of the participants' views:

- Participation in various programs especially the best intervention has opened my eyes and mind with regards to thinking about the impact of my actions on others and the overall performance of the organization. While carrying out routine and special assignments, I make conscious efforts by critically analysing the impact of my actions or decisions on others. This resulted in improving relationships between my unit and other units of the

organization. I am considered as someone high on empathy which is contrary to the way I was initially perceived. This facilitates the speed with which I carry out my duties, especially when there are problems to be resolved urgently (participant 9, March 2018).

- As an internal control and internal audit officer, my work entails causing change to systems, processes, and operations whenever I observe a gap in any activity of the organization. Once the gap is addressed, I feel pleased that the process has been strengthened and the bank protected. It is neither expected that I carry out a post-implementation evaluation of the change nor do I assess the impact on the activity. I only carry out a follow-up audit compliance check. Armed with a strategic thinking mentality, reflection on some of the changes I caused in the past revealed to me that the changes might have created negative impacts in the team directly involved or in other teams. Driven by the knowledge gained from my participation, I included impact assessment as part of the documentation required whenever recommendations for change of systems, processes, and operations occurred. This has been adopted by both the unit and other units in the organization. This compels me to think with, for and about others while in seemingly routine changes and improvements (participant 14, March 2018).

Finding 5: Acquired the capacity to handle temporary setbacks - Some of the respondents (14 of 25 [56%]) indicated that the leadership development programme enabled them to develop the capacity to handle temporary setbacks.

Although the organization operates in a dynamic environment not immune to the uncertainty that could lead to failure, we see failure as a useful learning tool. In the context of this investigation, failure is considered as a deviation from desired or expected outcomes. This failure comprises avoidable errors and negative results from implemented solutions. In a high-performance-driven environment

such as ours, written and unwritten rules dictate that failures are something to be avoided.

However, under this investigation, action learning and action research encourage participants to develop the attitude of failing forward. Failing forward encourages turning mistakes or temporary failures into stepping stones for further actionable solutions. This idea of action learning aided participants in developing leadership potential by considering the possibility of failure from interventions deployed and changing attitude to failure by learning and practicing how to turn mistakes into stepping stones for further actions and success. Through this action learning and action research, learning occurs by analysing actionable solutions from mistakes and setbacks. This research reveals that when it comes to day-to-day mindset and activities, organizations can develop members' ability to learn from failure.

Below are extracts of some of the participants' views:

- The review processes, at various stages of the program, encouraged and compelled us to unveil identified failures in the executed project. It was quite amazing how the process or people's failure that would have been swept under the carpet under normal circumstances were unveiled. In the process, we came to realize that taking steps to correct the observed problems in the organization did not diminish our image or self-esteem. Instead, it helped to strengthen us and projected us as highly reflective practitioners (participant 22, March 2018).

- Learning from failures and mistakes (especially the day-to-day mistakes) gives me and others not directly involved to learn from the analysis of the setback. During the case review analysis, colleagues introduced perspectives that would not have crossed my mind. In the process, I developed the ability to accept failures and sometimes the weakness of thoughts, actions, and decisions. I now recognize and accept that no one is perfect and that when we consciously make effort to learn from our

mistakes, it empowers us to find better ways of analysing and resolving the same or new problems (participant 7, March 2018).

Finding 6:   Acquired Decision-Making Capacity - Some of the respondents (20 of 25 [80%]) indicated that the leadership development programme enabled them to acquire decision-making capacities.

To decide on any issue as participants in this research, we are conscious of the fact that the identification and evaluation of alternatives are critical. We ensure that we questioned fixation on the status quo, which is usually based on the assumption that what works in the past will always work regardless of changing circumstances. During the evaluation of some of the implemented solutions, we noticed that some of the encountered problems were a result of not considering alternatives.

Below are extracts of some of the participants' views:

- The most important improvement I have noted is in my ability to make decisions and convince my Boss. My Boss is someone who believes in evidence and facts. To convince him you need to be very well prepared and you need to know exactly what you are talking about. In the beginning, it was not easy working with him. But as of today, after participating in the leadership programme, I can say I have gained the confidence of my Boss and that means I have improved and increased my level. Now I am more confident when I give an explanation to my boss about a topic or a matter relating to my work. I understood and developed the practice of using data, statistics, and research to support my work (participant 12, March 2018).

- I developed the habit of deliberately thinking differently when faced with a situation that requires me to make a decision. I realize that what works in the past may not work in the present situation. And that the first solution that comes to mind is not necessarily the most suitable. Conscious and

deliberate efforts must be made to look at obvious and obscure alternatives especially from others (participant 17, March 2018).

4.3.2 Theme 2:   People Leadership

People leadership, in this context, embraces actions and thoughts that permit good working relationships among members of the organization. People leadership referred to by the participants in this investigation is not about a hero in front of whom everyone approaches for directions or solutions to problems. Instead, it has to do with how participants interact with their immediate communities and the stakeholders of the organization. Through deliberate action and conscious attention to the daily interactions with colleagues, customers, and other stakeholders, members of the organization can develop their leadership skills.

Table 4.3 – Summary of Major Theme 2: Developed and engaged in People Leadership		
Major Theme	**Sub-Theme**	**Core Elements**
We developed people leadership	Conflict management	▪ Criticisms are subjective labels ▪ Engage in conversation expecting judgemental differences ▪ Assuming for others create conflicts
	Developed effective listening capability	▪ Develop effective listening skills by making effort to understand colleagues and assist them to satisfying their customers ▪ Built capacity for inclusive solution through empathic attention to the need of others ▪ Paying attention to body language and contextual details
	Capacity for building one-on-one relationships	▪ Seize every opportunity to build cordial relationship with colleagues, whether peers, juniors or superiors and subordinates ▪ Deliberately and successfully network with colleagues in other locations and units ▪ Punctual and time conscious in engaging others and in meeting commitments ▪ Develop the habit of following through on commitments made to both internal and external customers ▪ Lead by example and actively promote the bank's core values

Finding 1:   We learn to manage conflict – The majority of the respondents (16 of 25 [64%]) indicated that the leadership development programme enabled them to develop the ability to better manage conflicts in their jobs and personal life. The investigation revealed that employees' ability to manage workplace conflict improved. Conflict occurs during an interactive process that manifests in the incompatibility of goals, interests, and preferences among individuals and groups during interactions. The absence of conflict at the start of the investigation gave room to support a popular decision or a friend's position, regardless of other options available. As the investigation progressed, with the various interventions, members began leveraging the conducive environment to challenge and express divergent views. Although Conflict arose from participants' new ways of reasoning and acting, our focus was on the positives, using various research interventions. The comments from the participants below reflect the impact of the programs in this regard:

- I used to consider it personal when people make what I perceived as a negative comment about me, my unit or my functions. I poise for a fight once I sense criticisms regardless of whether it is constructive or not. Sometimes, I take a pound of flesh whenever I could from colleagues that I dislike because they are often too critical of my activities. Through the leadership programmes, I understood and imbibed the paradigm that conflict must happen. We are all working towards the same objectives and criticisms are my subjective labels of people's harmless views (participant 11).

- We learnt and continue to ensure that colleagues do not take conflict as personal whenever it happens. The nature of my functions requires virtually all members of the organization to engage my unit regularly. I learnt to consciously engage in conversation bearing in mind that our differences can result in personal conflicts if not managed. The various sessions and useful feedbacks from team members have transformed the way I work and the way I relate with others (participant 6).

Finding 2: We developed effective listening capability - Some of the respondents (15 of 25 [60%]) indicated that the leadership development programme (CIC-LDP) enabled them to develop effective listening skills.

International Listening Association (ILA cited in MacLeod, 2016) defines listening as "the learned process of receiving, interpreting, recalling, evaluating and responding to verbal and nonverbal messages". Daimler (2016) highlights three levels of listening; internal listening, focused listening, and 360 listening. In internal listening, the person is focused on his thoughts, priorities, worries, and actions. The listener pretends to be listening but he is engrossed in his thoughts. In focused listening, the person is focused on others, without necessarily connecting with them. Although the listener is focused on the speaker, he is not listening to nuances and what is not being said. In 360 listening, the listener pays attention to what is being said, how it is said, and even what is not said. Participants in this investigation considered what others say, how it is said, and what is not said. Leveraging on these, participants gained perspective on why people act the way they do and also solve identified problems together. Extracts from participants' responses revealed the impacts below:

- Participation in the various work teams has helped me in developing the capacity to listen attentively to what people say or signaled. We must pay equal attention to what is uttered and what is not said. We make efforts not to assume what others have in mind. We learnt to go the extra mile to unearth the assumptions that inform their positions. Through these, I have been able to build smoother working relationships with others, as well as developed informed solutions. Furthermore, I built a capacity for a sympathetic approach to work by putting myself in the shoes of others. Also, I learnt how to understand the perspectives of others on issues and work approaches. This has reduced the 'us-versus-them' attitude in the organization to an insignificant level (participant 2, March 2018).

- The program helped me to learn how to listen to people to get the best from them. Naturally, we think differently and the approach we canvass is

an outcome of the thought process peculiar to every one of us. Attentive listening skills and paying attention to contextual details helped in the realization that we are all trying to achieve the same goals regardless of the approach. From the perspective of listening as a leadership skill, I no longer focus on how it is being said. Rather, I keep the focus on what is being said. That is the goal (participant 15, March 2018).

Finding 3:   Developed capacity for building one-on-one relationships - Some of the respondents (18 of 25 [72%]) indicated that the leadership development programme enabled them to develop relationship management skills. Collaboration has been central to our development as leaders. Participants in this research were from different departments of the same organization with diverse personal attributes, professional experience, level of commitment, and mental strength. This diversity aided the participants in learning and forming collaborative behaviors with people that are significantly different in many ways. The various interventions facilitated the building of a one-on-one relationship in two ways. Firstly, participants developed formal and informal relationships with colleagues through close interaction. Secondly, the mentoring and coaching relationship provided opportunities for the mentors and mentees to engage in one-on-one relationships. Participants learned how to give and receive feedback while building interpersonal relationships. Below are some views expressed by participants:

- Now I take time to build relationships with my colleagues, as it is apparent that leveraging on their expertise will accelerate my ability to get my work done. I now see my colleagues as additional resources, which I need to leverage. Before now, I preferred to be seen as the person who solved problems, even as a team member. This behaviour oftentimes creates problems for me. Sometimes, malicious compliance has been used to frustrate my job because I insist on getting others to do their job as specified in the standard operating procedures. With the benefit of hindsight, people like to share in one's success especially when it is not apparent that they

have contributed to the success of the endeavour. I now approach my work bearing in mind that it is not an obligation for anyone to go out of his/her way to assist in the performance of my job. It is indeed a privilege to be assisted beyond what the process dictates. And whenever help is received from colleagues, they are properly acknowledged (participant 19, March 2018).

- I see a great emerging trend in the way I have developed the capacity to work with others. This capacity is aided by the realization that people will be more receptive to your ideas and demand when there is a joint exploration of solutions based on mutual trust, respect, and joint ownership. I now seek help daily from people I hitherto would not consider or approach. Even when I do not need to consult, the mere fact of asking for input has put me in a better position, as colleagues now understand what it takes to deliver my assignments in line with standard level agreements. As an illustration, I was amazed recently when the head of a unit I disappointed by not completing a project as agreed was the one explaining to me what went wrong at management's meeting. That kind of position can only emerge from a thorough understanding of the way my unit functions and the mutual respect that we have shared through our various recent interactions (participant 23, March 2018).

4.3.3 Theme 3:   Developed Capability for Thought and Change Leadership

The focus of thought and change leadership is on championing new ideas or new ways of achieving desired or desirable objectives (McCrimmon, 2005). The participants focused on espousing new ideas and new ways of getting things done while seeking a solution to workplace problems and in daily routine activities. We now regularly make change through the exploration of new possibilities without waiting for an order from the top, as this form of leadership does not require someone to be in a position of authority. The research

intervention made participants develop a continuous improvement mindset challenging the status quo and finding ways to improve the current practice. This section details four leadership dimensions discussed by the participants.

Table 4.4 – Summary of Major Theme 3: Developed and engaged in Thought and Change Leadership		
Major Theme	**Sub-Theme**	**Core Elements**
We developed thought and change leadership	Asking the right questions	▪ Potent questions are more important than answers ▪ Great questions unravel disaster before they happen.
	Developed process leadership capability	▪ Search for multiple views before choosing course of actions ▪ Feel more responsible to find solution to any organizational problem

Finding 1:   Asking the right questions – All the participants (25 of 25 [100%]) indicated that the leadership development programme enabled them to develop the ability to ask relevant questions that will aid in reaching a more acceptable solution.

Our leadership capacity improved through subjecting every activity, process, and request to critical questioning. Through the various platforms, especially action learning, participants were encouraged to use clear questions to examine, clarify, gain a better understanding, and insight into every issue. Participants through the various interventions, especially the action learning and critical review, realized that effective resolution of any problem could not be achieved without deliberately asking useful questions. This promotes the use of open-ended, reflective, and reflexive inquiry towards arriving at a generally accepted viewpoint. Leveraging on the ability to ask questions, participants discussed the capacity to assess the impact of their actions on others. Before now, once we find a solution to our problems, we do not bother to ask ourselves if the solution will negatively affect others. We have developed the consciousness of ensuring that a solution to a problem does not generate its problems. Find below extracts from participants' responses:

- My leadership capacity changed tremendously using critical questions that inspire or challenge my juniors, peers or superiors to act in new ways in a manner that ensures the use of fewer resources to achieve greater output by eliminating waste, achieving automation of processes, etc. It is unbelievable how the way I now carry out my routine assignments changed in such a short time. I used to spend hours reviewing offer letters submitted by the marketing officers just to ensure that letters are error-free. Making inquiries on why our officers submitted documents with many errors, we realized that the documents were often prepared under intense pressure. To solve this problem, we worked with the Information Technology team to develop an application that locks static information and conditions. By just asking the right question, we were able to develop an application that enabled us to complete the issuance of more offer letters than before in lesser time without errors (participant 8, March 2018).

- As a member of one of the action teams, I often take my day-to-day challenges to the team. This helped me in achieving more in lesser time, as I can anticipate potential obstacles and disasters before they occur with the help of my action learning team and by asking critical questions. I can leverage the various dimensions that they have brought to bear on my professional and personal life (participant 3, March 2018).

Finding 2: Developed Process Leadership Capability - Some of the respondents (25 of 25 [100%]) indicated that the leadership development programme enabled them to develop process leadership capacity.

As action research and action learning oriented interventions, participants reflected on process issues experienced while engaging tasks such as; making decisions when faced with deviations from standard procedure, activities that hinder smooth delivery, what happened within their group and with the various people they interact with and the feelings they observe throughout the activities. Find below extracts from participants' responses:

- Through the experience gained from participating in the action learning teams, I have developed my capacity to influence thoughts and decisions by looking at various viewpoints available before choosing the course of action. I learnt tremendously from the rich personal and professional experiences of various participants. I am conscious of the fact that there are many possible ways of solving a problem and as such, ensure that all possible options are explored. In line with this, I now avoid jumping to conclusion that obvious solutions are the best solutions (participant 10, March 2018).

- I am now very active in helping my colleagues find a solution to the work problems. I feel more responsible for assisting them, bearing in mind that finding a solution would aid the organization. Besides, I seize every opportunity provided to improve my capacity for problem resolution through the various processes and models I adopted from the sessions (participant 21, March 2018).

4.3.4 Theme 4: Organizational culture leadership

Graham (2006) defines organizational culture as; the moral, social, and behavioral norms of an organization based on the beliefs, attitudes, and priorities of its members. The organization culture, therefore, sends a strong message to the employees about the importance it places on leadership.

Leadership development will be ineffective if the organizational culture does not reinforce the dimensions of leadership desired. As an illustration, where a culture stresses core values such as openness, teamwork, and integrity, trainee/aspiring leaders will consciously strive to imbibe the desired values by leveraging on developmental platforms and initiatives created in the organization. Reinforcements help trainee leaders to focus on areas they need improvement as specified by the organizational culture.

This section explores the six common leadership views expressed by the participants.

Table 4.5 – Summary of Major Theme 4: Developed and engaged in organizational culture leadership		
Major Theme	**Sub-Theme**	**Core Elements**
We developed organizational culture leadership	Have different assumption and view of leadership	▪ It is possible to act as a leader without being a team leader or manager of some people ▪ Leadership is inherent in all activities ▪ I understand that leadership has nothing to do with the office you occupy of function you carry out ▪ Anyone can be a leader
	Developed broadened leadership thinking	▪ Approach all activities with the mind of practicing leadership; and not doing leadership through activities ▪ Leadership has to do with the ability to influence and inspire yourself and others to action ▪ I am able to influence and enable others to unleash their utmost potential
	Developed network based leadership	▪ Leverage on the various expertise in the organization to achieve desired outcome ▪ Leadership for me is about helping individuals and teams achieve their objectives whether or not my assistance is solicited.
	Developed community of committed participants and employees	▪ Lead by example and actively promote the bank's core values ▪ Display an obvious strength of commitment to the organization's objectives
	Take responsibility for self-development	▪ Actively empowers self by voluntarily taking on challenging tasks and responsibilities ▪ Actively seeks for opportunities to expand scope of work ▪ Conscious and deliberate in seizing every opportunity for business development purposes

Finding 1: Have a different assumption and view of leadership – All the respondents (25 of 25 [100%]) indicated that the leadership development programme is not the exclusive reserve of anyone but intended for everybody. Before participating in the leadership development programmes, participants often rejected the direct and indirect reference to them as leaders as they do not see themselves as one. The idea of being a leader to them encompasses

having powers from hierarchical structure and delegations. In their opinion, they lacked the powers to make decisions or influence the direction of the organization. However, the leadership programmes changed their assumptions and behaviour about leadership and what it constituted. This helped them in achieving a better understanding and appreciation of the culture of the organization. Generally, the participants expressed changes in how they saw their roles in the organization, their appreciation of the vision and how they were driven along with the core values of the organization. Participants used the platforms provided by the various interventions to clarify, deepen, challenge, and change their views of leadership including who a leader is and practices that constitute leadership. Views from some participants are captured below:

- Since I joined the bank, I have been constantly confronted by my boss who regularly insists that I perform my responsibilities as if I own the bank. The organization expects every one of us to see our functions, desks and teams as a mini organization with the big institution. This usually sounds confusing to me as I do not own the business and I cannot pretend to own it as well. The participation in the various programmes helped me to understand and develop the capacity to realize that I must take ownership of everything I get involved in. That my job was not complete after attending to my direct responsibility. That my job will be complete when the ultimate beneficiary of the service is satisfactorily attended to (participant 25, March 2018).

- The fact that even the ideas of the youngest member were taken into consideration during sessions enabled me to know that some other paradigms that I was not thinking about leadership were possible. The alternative way of thinking about leadership helped me to perceive leadership as part of all my routine and periodic activities. Interestingly, this alternative view aligned with organizational expectation, which required everyone to be entrepreneurial in handling all tasks and activities (participant 18, March 2018).

Finding 2:   Developed broadened leadership thinking - some of the respondents (21 of 25 [84%]) indicated that the leadership development programme enabled them to broaden leadership thinking.

Leadership traditionally is viewed as a position occupied by someone in front. This traditional leadership view is full of the assumption that the man in front has answers to all issues and problems.   This notion implies that followers or subordinates only follow instructions and orders from the top, and when they face difficulties, they do not take initiative but wait for the leader to give clarifications or directions.   The concept of leadership in this intervention suggests that leadership is not the exclusive right of a selected few but for everyone.

Some of the participants at the beginning struggled with two spinoffs of non-managerial leadership. The participants in the traditional position of authority did not understand how the people that were supposed to defer to them could practice leadership. On the other hand, the people usually referred to as followers also didn't know how to function as leaders, because they were not designated to lead. The two categories of participants had to let go of old positions by embracing the new approach to leadership in the organization.

At the start of the intervention, most of the participants expressed confusion and cynicism about the possibility of expecting leadership from everyone in practice. Participants expressed that despite the initial skepticism, the interventions enabled them to change their paradigm. The realization that leadership is not a position but rather a process helped them in carrying out tasks knowing that the solutions to problems can come from anyone within the organization. Below are views from some of the participants:

- Everything that I do after going through the various programmes, I constantly remind myself that I am a leader and my output and actions must reflect my new position. The question that resonates in mind while handling any task is "is this how a leader is expected to carry out this assignment?" or "is this way of handling the task what is expected of a leader?". Whenever my answer is no, I re-approach the job with greater critical attention, consciously and commitment with the mind of achieving

the best result considering the context. It is important to point out that I don't compare myself with anyone. My idea of leadership is now based on best practice, in line with the expectation of the organization (participant 24, March 2018).

- I used to look forward to the day when I will be a leader in the organization. I consider people in senior management roles as the leaders in the organization. I have since realized that you don't have to be a manager or have any title attached to my function to practice leadership. Coincidentally, I work alone in my unit. I used to ask myself how it would be possible for me to practice leadership if I did not have anyone that reports to me. Now, I know that I do not need subordinates to be a leader. In the way I think, act and relate with others, there are boundless opportunities to practice leadership (participant 20, March 2018).

Finding 3:   Developed network-based leadership - some of the respondents (16 of 25 [64%]) indicated that the leadership development programme helped them network with other leaders.

The execution of tasks within our organization engages both formal and informal channels. Both the formal and informal channels improve employees' ability to interact, collaborate, and influence decisions in a team and across teams in the organization. Participants, as a result of this intervention, have developed the ability to create and nurture networks for achieving professional objectives and helping the organization to achieve its goals. Developing networking capability as a leader requires: (a) using workplace friends and enemies instrumentally, (b) creating multiplex relationships capable of providing a variety of resources to each other, and (c) forming deep relationships with powerful and well-connected individuals (Cullen-Lester, Woehler, and Willburn, 2016; Uzzi, 2008).

Before the initiation of this research, informal network relationships formed because shared interests existed in the organization. Nevertheless, these relationships did not produce sufficient networks in terms of influence and

profundity. The various platforms provided by this intervention gave participants opportunities to learn about the needs and benefits of networking relationships, understand various means through which they could connect with others capable of providing a variety of resources while leveraging the relationships that exist in the workplace. This intervention aided more collaboration and networking among participants and other members of the organization. Below are views from some of the participants:

- I am still amazed at how we formed a strong coalition by voluntary decision to work together to realize the desired objectives. While focusing on the tasks at hand, no one remembers his or her previous or permanent 'constituency'. We all move together as a force with a mission to achieve the impossible. No one remembers his or her primarily assigned functions or level within the organization. We leveraged the various expertise within the team to get results. We simply desired to achieve the best possible for the organization (participant 25, March 2018).

- I used to feel that I was alone in the onerous task of acquiring new customers and growing the business of existing customers as a sales officer. Added to this is the problem of managing my boss who is too demanding and extremely impatient with poor performance. Participating in the programme provided me with the opportunity to better understood my colleagues, especially the ones I considered as professional foes. I learnt to cultivate relationships with virtually everybody in the organization. The result has equally been wonderful. I get quicker attention whenever my transactions get to the various units. What is more encouraging is that the members of my team are now consciously engaging in direct and indirect customer acquisition on my behalf (participant 14, March 2018).

Finding 4: Developed as a community of committed participants and employees
- Some of the respondents (15 of 25 [60%]) indicated that the leadership development programme helped them bond as a team.

The research intervention proved the loyalty of the participants to the organization's ideals and objectives. Participants did actualize the research objective through involvement and devotedness to the organization. The key attributes of the interventions made this possible. As members of action learning teams, participants understood that despite the differences in their views, commitment to ensuring successful implementation of whatever solutions that were adopted using the action learning tradition was non-negotiable. Below are views from some of the participants:

- I feel great learning and developing desired skills with a group of engaged and committed individuals. The realization that we huddled together as voluntary participants reveal the power of the learning derived from the various teams' engagements. This kept me going, and never looked forward to parting with the members. I sincerely wish that our organization is permanently structured this way (participant 9, March 2018).

Finding 5:   Taking responsibility for self-development - Some of the respondents (18 of 25 [72%]) indicated that the leadership development programme assumes that leaders took responsibility for their development.

It is natural for employees to assume that the organization is responsible for providing training and development. Everyone looks forward to getting an email from the human resource department with information on an approved training scheduled for them. Unfortunately, this is not the case for our organization that is aggressively pushing to breakeven by minimizing cost and maximizing revenue. However, action learning and other interventions provided platforms that enable the participants to take ownership of their training. One of the primary focuses of action learning is the emphasis on the fact that participants need to take responsibility for their personal development. Some participants' views are stated below:

- This programme has been transformative for me. I am now a firm believer in the view that we are all responsible for our development. I wish I realized this early in my career. Rather than wait or lobby human resources for training that will not be scheduled, I have now realized how working on the daily issues that come my way is helping me to train and develop different abilities (participant 1, March 2018).

- I have learnt how to pool ideas and resources together to achieve a given goal. Prior to working in the BEST team, I have worked with numerous task forces. But this is strikingly different. It is different from working in a task force considering that we engage in cyclical analysis and implementation of issues and re-evaluation of results. The focus is not only on the ultimate result but on the process leading to the result. I can therefore say that I have been able to sharpen my ability to carry out my day to day tasks in a painstaking manner leveraging resources within and outside my unit (participant 5, March 2018)

Finding 6: Participants developed, adopted and accepted the Culture of challenge - Some of the respondents (15 of 25 [60%]) indicated that the leadership development programme developed, adapt to the Culture of positive or negative challenge.

A critical element of process-based leadership is the culture of challenge, and this culture is usually noticeable at meetings and gatherings. Employees are more likely to speak up in meetings and gatherings. The mood created by this intervention supports and encouraged participants to ask critical and insightful questions. While engaging in various activities, trainee leaders could get feedback about themselves, learning opportunities and development, and the organization's core values. The program helped participants to evaluate and re-evaluate their progress against the targeted development needs. Based on the views of the participants, they were able to; firstly, develop the courage to

challenge the thoughts and ideas they disagreed with within the organization. Secondly, learn how to focus discussion on the issue and not on a person.

4.4 Summary

Given the importance of leadership and the amount of time, attention, and resources devoted to its development, it is easy to appreciate why the study of leadership has become one of the most heavily researched areas within the social sciences over the last few decades (Richard, 2008). Leadership development is often the focus of a significant amount of organizational resources for attracting, retaining, and developing leaders at all levels of the organization.

Effective leadership is commonly believed to be an essential element of organizational success. The positive outcomes associated with effective leadership are numerous, including higher levels of individual commitment, satisfaction, effort, effectiveness, and team outcomes (Bass, 1990; Bass, 2003; Lowe and Gardner, 2000).

There is no agreed framework in the extant literature on what leaders and leadership development interventions should focus on given the numerous theories about leadership and leadership development. The data generated from the participants in this investigation revealed seven leadership development needs and they are: (a) effective communication, (b) relationship management, (c) problem solving, (d) capability to multi-task, (e) self-discipline (f) self-awareness, and (g) confidence building.

The needs expressed by the participants reflect the current challenges the individuals and organizations face at the time of the study. As a relatively new subsidiary of an international commercial bank, the organization currently focuses on break-even in terms of profitability. Based on participants' opinions of how the various interventions influenced their development as leaders, the findings

revealed that participants developed leadership abilities through engaging in routine activities and problem-solving projects.

Through learning from experience and other forms of learning, participants realized and developed capabilities that enabled them to practice leadership regardless of their function or level in the organization. The intervention opened up participants' to a new perspective and practice of leadership.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.0 Introduction

The leadership development challenges faced by my organization were captured and discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Amongst others, employees do not see themselves as leaders regardless of their functions and the positions they occupy in the organization. Everyone thinks that the next-man-up is the leader. This is partly attributable to how leadership is conceived and the fact that conscious leadership development efforts have historically been approached in the organization through non-inclusive off-work training programmes, which focus on employees who are considered to have high 'leadership' potentials.

This action research study explored and implemented actionable solutions focused on building the leadership base of my organization. In this section, I discussed how the four non-conventional leadership interventions described in chapter two helped in achieving continuous, inclusive, and low-cost leadership development. By implementing the four broad leadership development interventions involving 71 participants, we gained deep understanding and knowledge about how to achieve leadership development. Specifically, the participants in the programmes confirmed that they experienced leadership development along the lines of the leadership needs they expressed. Participants developed various leadership capabilities in the process of solving workplace problems, understanding themselves and others, and their work environment. Several factors facilitated participants' learning and development including the participants themselves, the various team activities they are involved in, the processes involved in solving the focused workplace problems, and the continuous engagement in development interventions embedded into routine activities.

As an insider action researcher, I am concerned about the question "how can leadership development be achieved through continuous, inclusive, and low-cost approaches"? The following discussions focus on the key research questions that the investigation sought to address. For ease of reference, these include: (a) What are the current leadership development needs of the organization? (b) What are the impacts of the in-house Leadership Development Programmes based on the four interwoven interventions built around routine activities, training sessions, and action learning teams? (c) What initiative provided the participants the most effective platform to develop and practice leadership? The following discussions are structured along the research questions, as we take a critical look at the respondents' feedback with regards to the impact of the intervention vis-à-vis the extant literature.

5.1 What are the current leadership development needs of the organization?

Leadership development should be preceded by a need assessment phase that will enable the organization and the participants to identify their developmental needs. Amagoh (2009) and Grandy and Holton (2013) suggest that this will assist trainee leaders to identify the capabilities that they desire in the context of their work, take ownership of their development and ultimately focus on achieving their developmental needs

The data obtained during the need assessment phase revealed seven capabilities required by the members of the organization. These include (a) effective communication, (b) relationship management, (c) problem solving, (d) ability to multi-task, (e) self-discipline (f) self-awareness, and (g) confidence building.

Two main factors, from my experience as an insider, are responsible for the needs that emerge from the assessment exercise. First, my organization is a high-performance environment. Consistent failure to deliver the agreed targets over

two quarters can result to the exit of the employee. Second, most of the employees were given important and sensitive responsibilities to handle very early in their careers. From these factors, it is expected that the participants crave for capabilities that will help them to effectively perform routine and sensitive tasks, as well as consistently achieve excellent performance.

5.2   What are the impacts of the in-house Leadership Development Programmes based on the four interwoven interventions built around routine activities, training sessions, and action learning teams?

In answer to the first research question, the participants perceived the interventions to be very effective in developing their desired leadership skills. The findings revealed four broad impacts from the interventions. These are discussed in subsequent sections.

5.2.1 Participants Leadership development concerning Job Performance

The participants explained that all the interventions aided them in acquiring performance capabilities which helped to excel in their various roles and responsibilities. Through working with different colleagues across the organization while focusing on selected workplace problems, they have been able to generate new ways of handling problems, gained a deeper understanding of why people and activities function the way they do and gained new knowledge from every action.

Coghlan and Brannick (2005) explained that insider action research revolves around taking action to resolve workplace problems. While the action is being implemented, the simultaneous act of studying the outcomes of the actions generates new knowledge that provokes new action. This process of generating knowledge from taking action results in building new capabilities that aid the performance of desired tasks and the achievement of the organization's

objectives. In line with this, researchers argued that insider action research interventions can develop new organizational capabilities, as well as count as an organizational capability. As such, insider action research projects do serve as means and end in the development of organizational capabilities (Mohrman et al., 2006; Roth, Shani and & Leary, 2007). Leadership development in the realm of enhanced performance capabilities has six sub-themes including (a) multi-tasking and inter-tasking capacity, (b) critical thinking capability, (c) strategic thinking capability, (d) developed capacity to manage set-back, (e) developed innovative and improvement mind-set, and (f) developed capacity for sound decision making. These are discussed under the respective dimensions.

Multi-tasking and inter-tasking Capability

Concerning enhanced performance capability, the participants reported developing multi-tasking capability which improved their performance on the job. Gasser and Palfrey (2009) make a distinction between two forms of multitasking. First, conceived (in a narrow sense) as parallel processing, this form of multitasking refers to situations when people engage in more than one activity at a time. The second form tagged task-switching occurs when there is a rapid switch of activities. From the feedback received, the participants referred to the two forms when they talked about multitasking capability.

Wallis (2006) suggests that there is a negative correlation between productivity and the number of tasks one attempts simultaneously. As the number of tasks one attempts simultaneously increases, productivity and quality of work decreases. However, there is no conclusive evidence in the literature on the correlation between multitasking and productivity (Gasser and Palfrey, 2009). Nevertheless, the reality of my workplace is that employees are saddled with many responsibilities, some of which must be attended to simultaneously or inter-tasked. Participants insist that various interventions helped them to increase their capacity for multi and inter-tasking. Multi-tasking leadership capacity referred to by the

participants was developed through engagement in several interventions (that are demanding on their own) in addition to the busy and long work hours. The logical and consistent manner of working on the workplace problems was transferred to daily activities. Indeed, Misner (2014) emphasized that multitasking job designs can work; it is indeed required in financial services. Especially, in an environment where there is resource squeeze for training and development.

Critical thinking capability

Densten and Gray (2001) affirm that critical reflection is at the core of leadership development, and regular reflection enhances leaders learning and makes them more effective. During the need assessment data gathering, participants confirmed that they lacked time to think or reflect because of multiple tasks they handled simultaneously which already made them work long hours including weekends. A typical day entails rushing from one meeting to another, solving problems that have been allowed to escalate, and attending to assignments that have become urgent because they were not attended to at the right time. Amidst the daily storms, there was no time for critical thinking or reflection.

Participation in the various interventions enabled the participants to develop critical thinking ability through deep reflective and critical thinking processes, which required participants to consider all dimensions of a problem, question basic assumptions and practices, challenge own and other people's views, and continuously evaluate interventions to take further actions. The reflective process encourages the generation of multiple views which must be challenged to gain a deeper understanding, new insight, and knowledge. As Stoeckel and Davies (2007) suggest, the participants confirm that reflecting with others provoked new perspectives and personal development through learning on learning. Owing to the nature of the workplace problems handled, participants imbibed the culture of reflection in action. Reflection is therefore embedded in the daily routine, and not as a separate activity.

Strategic thinking capability

Mumford, Campion and Morgeson (2007) argued that strategic thinking skills were most needed at the senior level in organizations. Strategic thinking capability referred to skills required to consider or view issues from a whole picture perspective, which includes the articulation of vision, strategic planning, problem-solving, and evaluation of alternatives.

The view that strategic thinking was most needed at the top echelon of the organization was consistent with the traditional view of leadership as a hierarchical position which ensured that decisions taken considered the overall business objectives or vision of the organization.

Nevertheless, the participants in my investigation across levels in the organization insisted that their strategic thinking capacity had been tremendously enhanced. In the course of searching and deploying solutions to workplace problems, participants realized that some problems were wicked. Problems are considered wicked when they are complex and novel. Solutions that seem apparent often end up escalating the problem or sometimes generating other problems. To avoid worsening the situation, participants should leverage strategic thinking skills newly acquired, to search for a deep understanding of issues surrounding a problem before agreeing and deploying actionable solutions. Also, they capitalized on the presence of members of different units of the organization in the action learning teams. Through this, participants ensured problems were not transferred to another part of the organization by considering all its dimensions and impacts, while finding solutions. This informed the reason why emphasis placed on strategic thinking capability was the same across all the levels. It is therefore difficult to agree in the context of this study that strategic thinking is most needed at the topmost hierarchical level in the organization.

Acquired the capacity to handle a temporary setback

Baumard and Starbuck (2005) insist that failure is useful for organizations and their members if they learn to manage it. From the various interventions, participants learnt that events will not always turn out the way they want. Failure or temporary setback is therefore inevitable. A lot of workplace events depend on chance. Although, the common assumption by the members of the organization is that they are usually in control of relationships, events, and transactions even when these situations depend totally on chance (Drummond, 2001).

The whole process of evaluating actions as they are being implemented requires that participants be receptive to alternative perspectives or evidence. Some of the alternative perspectives focus on a proactive analysis of what could go wrong while implementing the agreed solutions. This prepares the participants for the fact that things may not work as planned. The envisaged alternative course of actions in case the initial solution failed and prompt search for new solutions help develop the capacity to handle a temporary setback. It is however important to recognise that the failures that occur during investigations are relatively small in terms of impact and loss of resource. It is uncertain how the organization would react if the failures resulted in a loss of large sum or business. Cannon and Edmondson (2005) confirm that large failure experiences less learning than small ones. Organizations struggle to learn from large failures as mourning over the failure can completely overshadow the learning.

Developed Innovative Capability

Abbott and Weiss (2016) argued that action learning supports innovation that requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders to achieve the desired goals. In line with this perspective, innovation can be considered as an interactive and iterative phenomenon. In innovation-driven by action learning, unlike the traditional innovation management process that is linear – structured and

controlled through phases by people considered as experts – the driving force for development rests in the action learning process which comprises learning about learning (Olsson, Wadell and Odenrick, 2010; Abbott and Weiss, 2016).

Through continuous reflection on various problems, looking at events from new perspectives, and taking into consideration all dimensions of an event, participants developed innovative capacities.

Developed Decision Making Capability

Bad decisions most times are the result of the process through which the decision was arrived at and the way the human mind works (Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa, 2006). One of the reasons why people make bad decisions is because they engage in simplification through mental shortcuts in the process of sense-making. Engagement in the act of mental shot cut results in glossing over important details, dimensions, or aspects of reality. This creates situations where the quality process for decision-making is compromised or ignored, as common sense mode blinds us from obvious possibilities. The concern is not what common sense reveals; rather it is what it conceals (Drummond, 2001).

Action learning and action research provide a framework and platforms that make it possible to unearth all the dimensions of a problem, evaluation of alternatives, and prevention of predictable disaster in decision making. Participants are thereby encouraged to explore all dimensions of a problem and seek multiple perspectives before arriving at actionable solutions. Discussions with the participants revealed that they considered the activities as a form of due diligence that they carry out to ensure that the most suitable decisions are taking at all times. On day-to-day activities, evidence exists that the adoption of processes learnt from the investigations helped participants avoid waste of resources and service issues, usually caused by decisions taken that are blind to the need of others.

5.2.2 People Leadership

Raelin (2003) emphasised that members of an organization could experience and emerge as leaders through daily interactions with various stakeholders. Therefore, participants rely on actions and thoughts that elicit good working relationships with the stakeholders of their communities. The people leadership capabilities have three sub-themes including: (a) conflict management, (b) effective listening, and (c) development of one-on-one relationship. These were discussed in the following sections:

We learnt to manage conflict

Widely held views in literature posit that an optimal level of conflict is required in every organization for effectiveness (Cahyono and Hartijasti, 2012; Medina et al., 2005; Rahim, 2002). In interactions, conflict occurs due to differences or incompatibility of goals and interests. The absence of conflict indicates collusion, malicious compliance, or a culture of silence. However, for conflict to be productive, it must be maintained as cognitive.

When a conflict of opinion or thought arises in discussions among the participants, it is often difficult to find an acceptable position agreeable to all conflicting parties. If the discussion revolves around verifiable evidence, the use of statistics, data, and theory often provides the window for reaching an agreeable position. However, there are instances where the difference is based on matters of opinion. As illustration, while exploring solutions to identified workplace problems, participants propose diverse solutions that were sometimes based on personal experience or future expectations not backed by any evidence. Over time, participants through various interventions learnt that the views expressed by colleagues were judgmental positions. Nevertheless, they can agree on the next steps without engaging in a compromise or premature concurrence seeking because they recognize and subject all their views to critical examination. It is

important to mention that the conflicts arising from the interactions are not managed because participants want to keep their social relationships with others. Conflicts, recognized as necessary and cognitive by the participants, helped the team in exploring all suggestions and views before embarking on implementing solutions. This helped individual participants to be more creative.

We developed an effective listening capability

Baker, Jensen and Kolb (2005) highlighted that action research and conversational learning were built based on continuous learning and change towards the desired behaviour. Through the process of attentive listening to others' points of view and reconsideration of one's view, effective listening and conversational learning emerge.

To practice everyday leadership as means of influencing actions, thoughts, directions, and decisions, an effective listening capability is essential. Effective listening helps leaders to: (a) gain a better and deeper understanding of ideas or problem being discussed, (b) challenge own and other people's assumptions from an informed position, (c) empathize with others, (d) gain the trust of others, and (e) aid the development of the one-on-one relationship (Bommelje, 2013).

The impact of attentive listening is evident in the area of improved service delivery. By listening attentively to colleagues to achieve a proper understanding of the issue being discussed, participants mentioned that they were able to find solutions to problems that initially seemed insurmountable.

Developed capacity for building one-on-one and one-with-many relationships

Viewed as an influence relationship, leadership rests on sustainable relationships that focus on a common purpose. This type of relationship is collaborative and

non-coercive. It builds shared commitments through interactive growth and development (Raelin, 2003).

One of its impacts is evident where mutual support and unsolicited feedback are given to one another. Through relationships built through the various programmes, participants gained a better understanding of their colleagues. This put them in a position where they can provide routine and frank feedback to their colleague regardless of the nature of the issue involved. This continues to be useful in preventing the escalation of problems amongst others and thereby allow the beneficiaries of feedback to deploy their energies to productive use instead of fighting fires.

5.2.3 Developed Capability for Thought and Change Leadership

Thought and change leadership capability transformed the way and manner improvement and service delivery aspects of routine work are carried out. Without being in a position of authority, participants can provoke change through the constant search for new and improvement to processes, possibilities, and solutions to problems. In this wise, leadership is earned through communication and sharing new thoughts and insights. Along this line, members learn that leadership is achieved through leading thoughts which help the team to consider all dimensions of a problem and ensure decisions are not made through hasty concurrence. This is supported by the idea espoused by the concept of catalytic leadership which suggests that individuals can inspire or provoke change without being in a position of authority (Rory, 2012). Two leadership sub-themes are covered here. These include: (a) leveraging on the power of questions, and (b) development of process leadership skills.

Asking the right questions

Marquardt (2007) argued that "leaders who use questions successfully will truly empower people and change organizations". The participants confirm that the

act of asking questions which they imbibed from the interventions stimulated continuous cycles of thinking, learning, action, and results. Participation in the interventions made it clear that to gain a deep understanding of any event, situation and problem, the right questions must be asked. This requires the capacity to resist the temptation to adopt quick and obvious answers. Rather, the path of leadership requires consideration for solutions that have been thoroughly reviewed through thought-provoking questions that get to the heart of the problem. Adams (2010) emphasized that the "potential transformation of participants — from answer-driven problem solvers to more thoughtful, strategic, collaborative, and inquiry-based ones — is the generative gift of action learning."

Evidence of this abounds in numerous daily activities and interactions. To achieve the desired objectives, effective leaders continually need to listen, reflect and learn. They can achieve this by leveraging the power of questions. The careful use of the right questions ensures that assumptions and misunderstandings are surfaced; right solutions are delivered.

Developed Process Leadership Capability

Trehan and Pedler (2009) emphasized that process skills were fundamental to process-based leadership development. Processes represent a very important part of any organization because a lot of work is organized as routines and documented in the standard operating procedure manual. To support the achievement of individual and organizational objectives continuously, the processes and routines must constantly change to reflect current and future realities. The leadership mindset requires the person managing or engaged in the process to acquire a continuous improvement approach to ensure continuous relevance.

Numerous teams in the organization are considering appointing someone in the respective team as the champion or anchor for improvements. Due to the

consciousness raised by participation in the project, individuals and teams continue to propose processes and products related to improvement and changes. A lot of these projects require the support of the Information Technology (IT) team. For proper coordination and management of the projects, the IT team suggested the idea of having a project anchor in each team. Consciousness generated from the investigation continues to create the quest for automation.

5.2.4 Organizational culture leadership

Evidence obtained from the participants' responses confirmed that participants' behaviour and perspective of leadership align with that of the organization's culture. This change is underpinned by a change in assumption and knowledge of what constitutes leadership. Constant reinforcement of the core values, mission, and vision of the organization aided leadership development. Reinforcements serve to encourage trainee leaders to focus on areas they require improvement or acquisition of new capability as a necessary step for leadership development within the organizational context (Sharkey, 1999). Leadership development relating to organizational culture leadership has five sub-themes including: (a) Have different assumption and view of leadership, (b) Developed broadened leadership thinking, (c) Developed network-based leadership, (d) Developed community of committed participants and employees, and (e) Take responsibility for self-development. These are discussed below.

Have a different assumption and view of leadership

Sharkey (1999) argued that leadership interventions provoke change in the leadership assumptions and behaviour of participants, but do not cause change to organizational culture. In support of this assertion, the participants expressed the fact that interventions made them appreciate and imbibe the organizational culture better.

The impacts of the intervention across the numerous dimensions rest on this. Considering the various impacts of the study already discussed, leaders are viewed by the participants as a tool that entails influencing people and processes to accomplish individual or collective goals.

Developed broadened leadership thinking

Leadership development can be considered as successful if the participants develop an understanding of leadership that is consistent with how leadership is conceptualized in a study (Bowerman, 2003). In this regard, the understanding of leadership practiced and lived is shaped by our actions. The key focus of this investigation is to expand the leadership base of the organization by building leadership throughout the organization. The reason for embarking on this initiative is to ensure that all employees operate as owners of the business and can support the organization's drive to achieve its strategic business objectives. The findings of this investigation revealed that this has been successful as participants reported numerous positive impacts which were obvious to all stakeholders.

Adopted network-based leadership and formed a community of committed employees

Individuals need to consciously form and maintain network relationship that provides benefits to themselves and the organization (Uzzi, 2008). Networking is often perceived as an activity that requires time and best achieved through activities outside working hours. Wellington et al. (2003) insist that networking should be integrated into daily work activities to enhance workplace effectiveness. Through working with different participants from different units in the organization, participants leveraged experiential learning to develop their skills on how to collaborate, cooperate and relate with others in handling any tasks and any situations.

The teams the individuals worked with during the investigation have become their new and additional 'constituencies'. Indeed, no group in the organization today is stronger in terms of commitment to achieve desired objectives than these constituencies that individuals now belong to.

Take responsibility for self-development

By taking responsibility and learning from their experiences, individuals engage in everyday leadership development (DeRue and Ashford, 2012). As participants pay greater attention to their activities and learn from experiences, they continue to discover the endless opportunities and events in the organization through which they can develop their leadership capabilities daily.

5.3   What initiative provided the participants the most effective platform to develop and practice leadership?

From the responses of the participants, the most effective development was realised from the action learning intervention. Illustrations to buttress the leadership developments they experienced usually came from the action learning intervention. This is because action learning provides an opportunity to learn in real-time from real organizational issues. The participants operate in an environment that enables them to practice the core action learning principles including challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and leveraging theory to inform practice. Also, it provides an environment and context, which offer individual participants the opportunity to develop along the needs identified before the commencement of the investigation. It, therefore, provides the participants the platform to focus on what is important for their development, instead of a prescribed list of skills.

Leonard and Lang (2010) argued that action learning is better than other leadership development approaches if the focus is to develop the ability of

leaders to learn rapidly in real-time. Nevertheless, all the interventions aided the leadership development of the participants. All the channels worked together in achieving positive development.

5.4 Summary

Data generated through qualitative interviews, during action learning phases, and participants' observation indicate that participants experienced and developed everyday leadership capabilities along four broad critical dimensions discussed. This is enacted through the various actions taken in carrying out their day-to-day routines. In addition to this, they enacted leadership acts in problematic situations or when necessary to ensure smooth working relations with their colleagues and other stakeholders. The numerous illustrations revealed how leadership is enacted in their day-to-day tasks and conversations.

The participants placed different emphasis on the impacts and benefits of the interventions, but there was a remarkable recurrence of responses and themes as they used similar words and accounts to reflect their experience. Whereas the four-interwoven suit of interventions contributed to their leadership development, action learning was mentioned as the most impactful of all the channels. This is in line with the widely-held view in the literature that action learning is the most effective leadership capacity development platform if leadership development rests on learning while solving problems and taking effective actions (Leonard and Lang, 2010).

Nevertheless, all the various channels contributed to the leadership development of the participants. Apart from the inherent benefits of these channels, positive impacts were achieved largely because participants before commencement of the investigation identified their needs, co-created the interventions and channels of delivery, and took ownership of their development.

Chapter 6 - My Reflections

6.0 Introduction

My reflection will revolve around four dimensions: (a) Reflection on the efficacy of action learning; (b) Reflection on the research outcome. That is, how the experiential-learning action-oriented leadership development initiatives aided participants to learn and develop leadership capabilities; (c) Reflection on my research experience. That is, how I have developed as a learner and practitioner through the insider action research; and (d) Reflection on my leadership development. That is, the kind of leader I am becoming from this investigation.

6.1 My Reflection on the efficacy of ALAR

Vince (2012) insists that any method of learning, notwithstanding the level of efficacy attached to it, is subject to the influence of organizational power relations and their effects. These factors work to limit the scope and impact of individual learning and organizational change expected from a learning programme. The power relations mean that: a) members in learning sets are not all equal; b) action learning to 'learning inaction'; and c) political dynamics are present in all organization and sub-sets created within it. Thus, power relations create contradictions about how learning methods are understood, used, and felt. Therefore, it is important not to have unquestioning enthusiasm for action learning. Users of action learning methods should acknowledge the contradictions and allow them to inform and enrich practice (Vince, 2008; Vince, 2012; Vince, Abbey and Langenhan, 2018).

In my investigation, I observed the existence of power relations in the action learning sets interactions. As illustration, action learning suggests that the members of learning sets are equal regardless of their hierarchical level in the organization. This tradition of action learning set has implications for set members.

Position leaders and their followers in action learning set groups find it difficult to imbibe this mind-set. For position leaders, the mindset suggests that they are losing control, as the platform tries to make them equal to people who report to them. With this kind of attitude observed from the position leaders, open criticisms and critical appraisal of issues were sometimes considered as a display of lack of respect for 'seniors'. Furthermore, subordinates in a high power distance culture expect a high level of supervision and believe that those in the position of authority are entitled to special privileges. This shows that people understand and accept the hierarchical order in which everyone knows their place. This implies that subordinates expect to be told what to do.

Furthermore, some of the participants saw action learning as a task force and as such, it was considered not different from other teamwork they were involved in before. The real concern of these participants was that several special projects and team works carried out in the past were not implemented. Therefore, there was initial skepticism that the action learning intervention will not be any different. Furthermore, some of the participants (hierarchical heads of units) were not used to being challenged by people considered as 'junior officers' openly and unrestricted. As action learning promotes the active challenge of taken-for-granted assumptions, some of the participants were initially not comfortable with a situation where 'junior' members challenged their views and positions. To overcome the initials barriers, we engaged in initial training, highlighting the inherent traditions of action learning and the significant differences between action learning and task force. I anchored the sessions organized for providing explanations on action learning and highlighting its benefits. While the training sessions were very useful in providing an understanding of the tenets of action learning, the full acceptance and embrace of action learning as leadership development intervention were achieved after going through a full cycle of action-evaluation-reflection-action. The participants were very excited that the solutions agreed were implemented immediately. This is contrary to the task force they have been involved with in the past. In special projects referred to by the

participants, solutions are crafted for people and implementation commence after the completion of the work of the special project team. In the case of action research and action learning, people to be affected by the actions and changes were involved in the process of designing and crafting solutions, generating data, and reflecting on the solutions. This, from experience, is a reliable process for effective change and development (French, 2009).

In addition, action learning and action research (ALAR) are time-consuming. In a high-pressure work environment like my organization where employees already work long hours, participants' availability could hinder interventions requiring additional time commitment. The time required for the programme can be a barrier to participation and leverage of the platforms for development. Also, ALAR demands that participants act in new ways. This sometimes entails abandoning age-long practices or traditions that may be difficult to drop in a short time. As an illustration, young members of my organization are used to answering to a constituted authority (for example supervisors and group heads). The new approach to leadership espoused in the organization requires everyone to practice leadership. This is somewhat alien to the participants. Action researchers need to recognize that old ways do not disappear suddenly. It takes time to nurture and sustain a new approach. Rost (1997) aptly captured this:

"Changing paradigms is very, very difficult. Changing belief systems is agonizing. Putting aside old models and theories is painful. Changing our authority-oriented behaviours is hard. Learning new skills is arduous. Collaboration is time-consuming. Thinking new thoughts is strenuous. Proposing significant changes is risky. Developing diversity is an uphill battle. Getting an agreement is tough. The politics of it all is toilsome. And on and on."

Nevertheless, the reviews I carried out during and after the sessions revealed that: a) action learning programme provided a veritable platform through which my colleagues were able to learn leadership skills, whilst solving problems important

to us and the organization; b) leadership skills learnt while solving the identified problems were easily transferred to the work point; c) participants received immediate feedback from cohorts during the learning sessions which enabled them to ascertain and gain quickly the benefits of their new behaviours; and d) the organization benefited from developing leaders through cost-effective means, as well as solving long-standing and important problems.

6.2   Reflection on the outcome of the interventions

The interventions capitalized on opportunities in the organization to facilitate learning and development. For a period of over 18 months, participants have been involved in action learning, case reviews, presentations, and mentoring. At the time of commencing the project, the focus of the organization was how to achieve breakeven after recording losses in the first three years of operations. The interventions were considered by all as leadership development platforms as spelt in the participant information sheet which they all read before voluntarily agreeing to participate, as well as a platform for resolving organizational problems.

6.2.1 What we did well

First, I noticed the formation of partnership among the participants to co-create and co-design an organizational leadership development. Although the participants were rookies with regards to the method of investigation and nature of the interventions like action learning, a combination of enthusiasm to learn, prior experience, and motivation to develop leadership capability resulted in the swift and effective lunch and operation of the programmes. It is important to stress that participants voluntarily chose to participate. This is driven by the potential for personal-development they envisaged and the strategic impact of the programmes on the organization.

Second, the learning set activities that focused on workplace problems connected with the strategic focus of the organization. Breakeven is of strategic interest to the organization. The initial problems selected by the team members reflect the strategic goals of the organization. This generated a lot of voluntary participation and interests. Any activity around this time focusing on or related to achieving business objectives would generate massive support by every employee. It is therefore not a surprise that participants were highly motivated and passionate to work together to solve important workplace problems.

Third, as mentioned above, interventions connected with the strategic direction of the organization. The more the action learning teams focused on the selected workplace problems, the greater the learning for the participants and the positive impacts on the entire organization. This ensures the support of management. In fact, management did not make any open communication about its support for the programme. However, the provision of the resources required for activating some of the actionable solutions and public statements concerning the positive impacts on performance attributable to the interventions are evidence of total support of all the interventions. While management support is useful, the strategic focus and the effectiveness of the interventions are pivotal in achieving the support of all.

Fourth, this documentation reflects my experience. The completion of the thesis report marks the end of the investigation for satisfying the requirement for the award of DBA. However, the interventions continue to operate as they have taken lives of their own. The legacies remain. This helped in achieving the objective of institutionalizing leadership development platforms and interventions that is continuous.

Fifth, we developed a group identity. The action learning teams were labelled BEST 1 to 6. BEST is an acronym formed from the first letters of Break-Even Strategic Team. The name was suggested by one of the action learning teams and

adopted by all. The word BEST was extended to other uses. Participants were happy to flaunt the fact that they belong to a BEST team. You often hear "I am BEST .…". This resulted in increasing the number of people that opted to voluntarily participate and the creation of action learning team 6. Everyone was breathing learning and development, fuelled by the associated benefits. The action learning teams became a community of practice and the primary constituency of the members.

Sixth, the process of selecting the anchors for the monthly sunrise session changed. Before the investigation, anchors are nominated by management staff. Anchors are usually team leaders and 'senior' members of the organization. With the adoption of the platform as a leadership development intervention, anchors were selected from the pool of volunteers, regardless of their roles or levels in the organization. This increased the level of attendance and participation during the sessions as participants realized that everyone was free and encouraged to participate.

6.2.2 What could have been otherwise done better?

The effectiveness of some of the solutions decided by the action learning teams was impaired by team members who did not carry out the solutions as instructed or did not carry it out at all. This impacted the progress of the teams, especially when the culprit is a senior staff of the organization. Although this was corrected through the review and reflection mechanism of action learning, nevertheless it elongated the time taking to complete the resolution of the problem. Having six active action learning teams in operation at the same time requires a lot of time on my part. As the investigation progresses, periodic sessions were organized where the teams met to perform a joint critical review of the effectiveness of actionable solutions implemented by individual teams. This helped greatly in managing the action learning team activities.

6.2.3 Key changes in the organization

Every action research must have an intended change. For this research, the intended change includes the desire to ensure that participants change their pattern of thinking and acting by practicing leadership regardless of their functions and levels in the organization. Considering that action research focuses on organizational issues, the resolution of the issues is expected to result in changes for the organization. However, Coghlan (2006) warned that in researching the actions of everyday life, the challenge remains how to account for changing nature of familiar situations. At the time of starting the interventions, the organization was struggling to achieve breaking even profitability agreed with the group office. Several positive changes are noticeable in the organization as a direct impact of the various interventions. Some of these key changes are discussed below:

i. There was an obvious and substantial improvement in all key performance indicators of the organization. The effect of the actionable solutions implemented by the action learning teams began to show positive impacts. As an illustration, one of the six action learning teams focused on "how can we generate foreign exchange (FX) for the organization"? Before the creation of the action learning teams, the average monthly FX transaction is about USD1 million. By the end of 2016, the average monthly FX transaction increased by over 100%. Indeed, the revenue contribution from the FX activity became significant.

ii. An increasing number of employees began to demonstrate willingness to voluntarily take on challenging tasks. The action learning model has been adopted as a model for solving significant workplace problems in the organization. Before this investigation, members of the organization avoided challenging tasks (especially if it is not their direct responsibility) because they were not sure that they could deliver on the assignment. Embolden by the

positive experience from this investigation, more employees are actively seeking challenging tasks.

iii. The organization is experiencing an increase in the number of process improvement projects. Participants are leveraging the improvement mind-sets they acquired by critically reviewing processes in the organization. Virtually all the teams in the organization have at least one process improvement project in progress. The ultimate objective of these projects includes cost saving, fast turnaround, excellent service delivery, etc.

iv. There is a sharp increase in the level of camaraderie in the organization. Colleagues are looking out more to assist one another. In the second module (Change and Crisis Management) I introduced the mantra 'Let's do it together' as one of the strategies adopted to institutionalize the corporate culture of my organization's group office in the Côte d'Ivoire subsidiary. This created a good bonding amongst the employees across all levels. However, with the exit of most of the pioneer staff and lack of a platform that ensured continuity, the impact diminished. Further to this investigation, the spirit of 'Let's do it together' is returned and became stronger.

6.2.4 My Key Learnings

i. Leadership development that relies on self-learning practices requires a lot of effort and commitment from the beneficiaries. Telling people what is expected from them to be considered as a leader will provoke a minimal reaction. The focus should be on creating platforms that enhance individuals' capability to learn from their own experience.

ii. Proper conceptualization of leadership is key in leadership development intervention. The engagement of participants on different perspectives of leadership and the perspective adopted for this investigation was crucial in ensuring that they understood the context of the study and they engaged in self-development and the development of others. An alternative conceptualization of leadership as a tool available to select few in the

organization or conferred as the complementary status of hierarchical position would at best serve a limited purpose.

iii. Leadership development will be effective when the people are empowered to self-develop. It is not sufficient to create platforms for learning. Beneficiaries must feel the opportunity and power given to them to create their own learning experiences.

iv. Alignment of leadership development with the organization's strategic focus is a powerful approach. The initiatives require commitment from the participants. If development relies on an action-oriented platform like action research, it is important to uncover issues that are viewed by the organizational members important (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010).

6.2.5 Key learnings by Participants

i. The participants no longer see themselves as employees or the company as an employer. They learnt that it was possible to practice leadership in everything they are involved in, regardless of whether they are in a hierarchical position or not.

ii. Participants learnt how to look at issues differently. They understood the need to always keep an open mind, challenge taken for granted assumptions/practices, and constantly seek new ways of approaching all their endeavours.

iii. Capability to decipher emerging problems and issues, and the ability to respond to them positively were acquired or enhanced. This learning experience occurred because participants consciously engaged in learning from their activities. Evidence in the literature revealed that learning from experience will most likely occur when individuals mindfully engage in the experience (DeRue and Ashford, 2010; DeRue and Ashford, 2012).

iv. Participants learnt that they have to take responsibility and ownership for their development. They realized that leadership could not be trained effectively. Rather, leadership should be learnt. Apart from bringing about changes in the

organization, action research is concerned with developing the self-help competencies of organizational members. This ensures that no member of the organization is consigned to a dependent relationship (Raelin, 2003).

6.2.6 Key learnings by my organization

i. The organization learnt that developing leadership does not mean putting people in a position of authority. Those in hierarchical positions were usually the ones considered as trusted and competent individuals who could be relied upon to harness human and material resources to achieve desired objectives. In many cases, the positions are given based on seniority in terms of cumulative work duration or experience. Through this investigation, the organization learnt that there is a need to separate leadership from formal or hierarchical supervision to enable leaders to emerge. This entails activities and interventions that enable employees across all levels of the organization to see themselves as leaders, be seen by others as leaders, and develop capabilities to lead effectively (DeRue and Ashford, 2012).

ii. Building leaders is a tough and demanding endeavour. It is time-consuming and requires the full commitment of everyone in the organization. There is no quick fix approach to it and it must be sustained through continuous and inclusive development platforms.

iii. The absolute cost of investment in learning and development could be minimized by leveraging work-embedded development approaches. On the other hand, the return on investment in leadership development would be much greater if organizations invested in developing capabilities predicated on the learning of leadership from lived experiences (DeRue and Ashford, 2012).

6.3   Reflection on my research experience

This section focuses on my action research experience as a scholar-practitioner working on an investigation that aims at ensuring that participants lead from wherever they are in the organization. It is important to highlight that I did not set out to build or create leader styles or personality types. Rather the plan is to create a suite of interventions through which people take ownership of their leadership development by focusing on their identified needs and capabilities. My reflection on research experience will revolve around the key issues encountered and how they were handled.

Before starting the research, I had mixed (negative and positive) feelings. I was fearful that I may not be able to complete the investigation within the time planned considering the amount of time required to be committed to the action research investigation and the demand of my job. On the other hand, I was excited by the fact that the investigations will result in the acquisition of leadership capabilities by my colleagues and myself; and solving the problems of the organization.

Learning and innovation rest on having the right environment where people can openly express themselves and engage in frank conversations which challenge old practices and taken for granted assumptions (Baker, 2004). Such an environment requires withholding judgment, mutual respect, and trust, the habit of effectively listening and staying open to others' points of view to help the team to arrive at the best solutions. I discovered during the research that this type of environment might have to be created as it may not exist in the organization. As an illustration, some of the participants in the action learning team did not adjust easily and quickly because everyone is equal as far as membership of the team is concerned. People not used to having their views questioned started picking offense when their views were challenged during sessions. Some participants and their informal group members might have opted out of the study but for quick

intervention. I leveraged political entrepreneurship in dealing with negative reactions to criticisms and opposing views, especially ones offered by participants considered as juniors. To resolve the problem, I put myself in the place of the people that reacted negatively. I engaged them informally in frank and honest dialogue, paying attention to what is not said. This enables me to ensure that they surface the real concerns that they have. Issues tabled bothered the perceived threat to status. Through the process of dialogue, the concerns were satisfactorily addressed. During the engagement process, I also realize that the members of the action learning team did not have a personal relationship. Owing to this, members sometimes attach other meanings to innocuous comments. I started the process of building personal relationships among the team members through exercises such as asking each person to tell others what people don't know about them. The insight gained about the members through the exercise set the stage for constructive dialogues and exchanges experienced subsequently. Without leaving my world and entering the world of others, it would have been impossible to progress hitch-free with the research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). It was "evident that the ability to execute political entrepreneurship was a critical success factor in long-term insider action research projects" (Björkman and Sundgren, 2005). I exercised political entrepreneurship in ways that ensure the maintenance of the political conditions without comprising the project or my position in the organization (Raelin, 2003).

As a project carried out through action research that focuses on the resolution of numerous workplace problems, it is very easy to be lost in the actionable solutions at the negligence of the research. In the process of data generation through interviews and participant observation, I consciously focused on leadership enactment instead of leadership acts. Leadership acts are linked to role-bound expectations of leadership. A leadership act focuses on a specific event or performance. The emphasis and purpose of the act are on the leadership action and not on the result of the action. On the other hand, leadership enactment is the representation in action which rests on taking action amid varying contexts

and situations. As such, leadership enactment may extend beyond location in a role or situation (Mistilina, 2005). Besides, I maintained a log of events and observations. This aided the research data generation at various stages of the investigation, as I go with the story as it evolves.

Coghlan & Brannick (2010) warned that action research has a degree of messiness and unpredictability. It is real-life action involving continuous interactions among construction, planning, action, evaluation, and further actions. I have to deal with unforeseen issues from six learning sets at various stages of the action cycles. These issues must be resolved immediately as the various actions being taken disrupt the old order in the organization. As an illustration, some of the actions entail changing processes. The changes were obtrusive. As the changes became effective, some transactions in progress were negatively affected as they could not be handled by the operators. The action learning teams involved had to quickly carry out a review. Critical questions were asked as a means of gaining insights into all the dimensions of the issues generated. This resulted in new actions which addressed the problems generated by the previous action. As new actions are taken, fresh issues are generated which require immediate attention. To address the emergencies, some of the action learning team members abandoned their primary roles to 'fix' the issues. These issues generated other problems as the work left undone was input to other teams' activities. Sometimes, things got very messy. We leveraged the core action research team to provide support to put the situation under control.

6.4   Whom am I becoming as a leader?

The single most important responsibility of leaders is to develop themselves and others; and continuously help the organization adapt to change (Allio, 2009). From this, the primary focus of a leader should be helping to develop individual and organizational capacity by creating habits and practices of continuous learning. However, what constitutes leadership is still a subject of debate. Before

the commencement of the DBA programme and the thesis project, I am usually confused when asked if I am a leader. Sometimes I describe myself as a transactional leader. In other times, I see myself as a transformational leader. This is might be because my initial perspective views leadership as the role of someone in front of others.

My current thinking about leadership having been exposed to leaderful leadership (Raelin, 2003), and other emerging perspectives of leadership partly motivated the focus of my investigation. After months of working with the participants on the research project, my identity as a leader has shifted from the previous perspective which considers leadership as an act of a strong man. I am becoming an inclusive leader as my view of leadership perspective and practice has shifted to one of leadership as a collaborative, relational, and democratic process. In the realm of leadership, inclusive leadership is a collective process in which organizational members engage effectively in leadership roles that come with and without formal authority and processes that enable groups to work together in meaningful ways (Day, 2000). Inclusive leadership entails giving every member of the organization, opportunity to learn and practice leadership from wherever they are in the organization. It involves recognizing that every perspective, opinion, and view is important. Inclusive leaders aim to cause the transformative effect of learning in the workplace by making provision for the most vulnerable. In inclusive leadership, the leader views leadership as something available to everyone in the organization. Based on this, and through this investigation, I continue to create settings through which people develop and unleash their leadership capabilities. This new way of thinking created or reinforced the following beliefs and practices:

i. Knowledge is socially developed and organizational change is a socially constructed process. The enthusiasm and passion generated by the action-oriented interventions are unparalleled in the life of the organization. All the participants were excited to be part of the process which created immerse

learning, personal development, and the creation of new organizational capabilities.

ii. In line with the tenets of action research, I am more strongly committed to improving my personal and professional practice and that of others in the organization through the process of reflexive and reflective practice.

iii. I recognize that my frame is biased by my personal experience which may conflict with the worldview/experience of others. It is essential that I critically examine my beliefs, assumptions, and practices; and encourage others to do so.

iv. To operate effectively as an inclusive leader, I need to have a deep understanding of myself. A deep understanding of self and professional practice requires regular and continuous reflection on own thoughts, actions, and professional practices.

To enable members of the organization to continuously think differently, I believe that leadership development should emphasize experiential activities that encourage emerging leaders to solicit and embrace new perspectives from different sources.

6.5   My journey as a scholar-practitioner

The job of a scholar-practitioner is demanding and oftentimes complicated (Schein, 2009). I am expected to use theory to advance practice and vice versa. I must manage wicked problems while engaging in evidence-based practice. Obvious and obscure solutions to wicked problems sometimes generate problems. I must therefore live a permanent life of enquiry (Marshall, 1999) reviewing solutions, situations, and events even when there is no obvious problem or threat. Considering that no problem is context-free and knowledge is socially constructed, I recognize that 'I am part of the problem, and the problem is part of me' (Landy, 1995). I am also expected to be an astute political entrepreneur.

My journey as a scholar-practitioner followed a painstaking and demanding learning path. The journey commenced in 2012 when I started the DBA programme. Within the taught modules, I gained knowledge of key concepts that I found useful in practice. I developed the habit of thinking and acting differently. The exposure to critical reflection and critical reflexive thinking (Marshall, 1999) enabled me to learn and imbibe practice the act of challenging taken for granted assumptions, focus on helping employees of my organization develop adaptive capabilities, and continuously search for the most suitable and next practice. Another key event in my development as a scholar-practitioner occurred from mastering the use of qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods as means of generating knowledge, useful for solving business problems (Shah and Corley, 2006; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012). During problematizing the workplace problems of the various modules and class participation, I developed competency in the use of Action research which aims at taking action while focusing on chosen workplace problems and creating knowledge about the action (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007).

I confirm that the use of the action research process for my thesis and to solve my workplace problems is extremely transformative for me and the participants exposed to its principles for the first time. As an illustration, the adoption of the democratic and participatory principles of action research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010) constitutes a great learning and turning point in my development, having worked for over 14 years using the 'carrot or stick' leadership style.

As a scholar-practitioner, I learnt and recognized that the single most important duty of a manager is decision making. This is also the riskiest and the toughest (Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa, 2006) because poor decisions can cause irreparable damages to the organization and its stakeholders. Apart from the fact that problems are wicked, individual, group, and organizational characteristics might undermine the quality of decisions. I affirm that it is critical to pay attention to the process through which the decisions are arrived at and the way the human mind works (Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa, 2006). Therefore, as a scholar-

practitioner living a life of enquiry (Marshall, 1999), I always undertake a deep, thorough and painstaking investigation to unearth all the dimensions of a problem as a precursor for finding actionable solutions (Landy, 1995).

6.6 Summary

My organization was faced with the challenge of increasing the capacity of its leaders with less time and scarce financial resources. Four interwoven and inexpensive interventions were deployed to aid my colleagues in the development of interpersonal and strategic aspects of leadership.

Several action research and action learning procedures were deployed to achieve this goal.

The reviews I carried out during and after the sessions revealed that: a) action learning programme provided a veritable platform through which my colleagues were able to learn leadership skills, whilst solving problems important to us and the organization; b) leadership skills learned while solving the identified problems were easily transferred to the work point; c) participants received immediate feedback from cohorts during the learning sessions which enable them to ascertain and gain quickly the benefits of their new behaviours; and d) the organization benefited by developing leaders through cost-effective means, as well as solving long-standing and important problems.

Chapter 7 – Conclusions, Contribution to Knowledge, limitations, implications and future research

7.1 Conclusion

Leadership as a field of academic study has been preoccupied with the task of identifying the most successful leadership practices and the means of development (Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009)

This action research was designed to help build the leadership base of my organization by helping participants and all employees to develop and practice leadership from wherever they are in the organization. The design considers leadership as acts and enactments from and through day-to-day activities rather than roles or functions. Through the various platforms and interventions, we embarked on the development of the leadership capacities of our employees regardless of their roles, functions, and levels in the organization.

Based on the findings, the insider action research intervention has been successful as leadership development results from the participation in the investigation. Participants acquired four broad capabilities. These are performance capability, people leadership, thought and change leadership capability, and organization culture leadership.

The learning and development are evident from the way employees interact with one another, how they leverage internal resources to resolve workplace problems, and use critical thinking in enhancing individual, team, and organizational performance. Apart from these, it also assisted in building community identity and provided the participants with a great platform for discussing what is of great importance to them. Consistent with the position of Larsson and Lundholm (2010) I also argued that leadership can be understood from practical accomplishments.

Participants emphasize that the opportunity provided to transfer learnings acquired through interactions and actionable solutions to important workplace problems (and on a real-time basis) made learning and development effective. The inherent features of the interventions and platforms used in this study - including the creation of an environment that encouraged reflexive and reflective thinking, the duration of the programmes, the sustained pace that participants were engaged in the learning through participation in team programmes, the frequency of the opportunity to receive and give feedback and one to one coaching – made it possible for individuals to acquire the desired capabilities.

I established that through the continuous, inclusive, and low-cost interventions, the employees that took part in the action research investigation exhibited leadership in their daily work through active influence on their thoughts and actions and that of other members of the organization. Another evidence from this investigation suggests that leadership can be learned. It is incumbent on individuals and organizations to capitalize on events, opportunities, and platforms for achieving leadership development. The organization, therefore, needs to create a process and systems that enable members to learn especially by taking action and engaging in reflective practice in different contexts and situations.

I, therefore, argue that if leadership is considered as a process, interpersonal influence, and tool available to everyone, it can be developed in a continuous, inclusive, and low-cost manner. Organizations do not need to make a huge investment in developing the leadership capacity of their employees. This approach of embedding leadership development interventions into everyday work is consistent with the findings of Larsson and Lundholm (2010) who argued that leadership could be found amid mundane work.

I conclude further that the leadership development intervention must be a continuous exercise to sustain the impact of the interventions. The need of the members of the organization is subject to change on an ongoing basis considering the dynamic nature of the internal and external environment. As a result, it is necessary for the organization to periodically assess the development needs of the organization as a routine practice. This has several benefits. It will provide the members of the organization with the opportunity to know their needs and take ownership of their development. In addition, the organization will be in a position to deploy appropriate interventions.

Lastly, organizations and other stakeholders want to know which of their leadership development practices are the most effective. My findings from this investigation confirmed that action learning is the most effective leadership development platform, compared to the other three interventions deployed. This supports researches that maintained that action learning is the most effective leadership development platform (Leonard and Lang, 2010; Leonard and Goff, 2003; Giber et al., 2000 cited in Leskiw and Singh, 2007).

7.2 Contribution to Knowledge

For those interested in the development of leadership base of their organization through continuous, inclusive, and low-cost interventions, my investigation revealed:

i. The development needs of individuals, as well as that of the organization, must be shaped by the individual members based on the understanding of their own needs and the strategic direction of the organization. I discovered that there is no significant difference between the leadership development needs and learning of the employees at different strata of the organization. The participants across all levels expressed the same needs and reported improvement along the same paths. The responses from the interviews were

similar among participants at different levels in the organization. Job function appears to be a more important determinant of leadership development needs and focus. The investigation revealed that participants in back-office functions had needed to acquire the capacity for innovation and improvement more than the participants working in the front office. On the other hand, the participants in front-office functions required capacity for relationship management more than those working in the back office.

ii. For work-embedded leadership development intervention based on distributed perspective to be successful, employees across all levels of the organization must see themselves as leaders and should be willing to take responsibility for developing their capabilities to lead effectively. Thinking about and creating the mindset that leadership is a tool available to everyone will aid the separation of leadership from formal supervision, and will provoke the emergence of leadership at all levels in the organization. Before establishing leadership needs, efforts must be channelled towards ensuring that leadership, as a tool available to everyone, makes sense to the beneficiaries and stakeholders.

iii. Learning and challenging initiatives must be embedded into routine activities to achieve the desired leadership development outcomes. By this, I mean that members of the organization should have access to platforms that challenge them to look for solutions to identified or envisaged workplace problems. This is not the same as on-the-job training, which usually focuses on understanding job content and how to carry out work assignments in line with expectations or established standard operating procedures. This requires a continuous improvement mindset by constantly challenging assumptions and established norms.

iv. A leadership development structure based on one-best way of learning or a leadership model based on one-size-fits-all is not likely to achieve the desired

objectives. The platforms created as interventions should be structured in such a way that it forms part and parcel of the organization's way of conducting activities. Leonard and Goff (2003) suggest that In-house leadership development initiatives can produce measurable and observable improvements in all operational aspects of the organization if properly structured and effectively executed.

v. The environment must be conducive for leadership as a tool available to everybody. To increase the number of leaders in the organization, existing leaders must act as models to emerging leaders by exhibiting and encouraging the desired behaviours. Allio (2005) argued that leadership depends primarily on what leaders do, and not on their qualities or style. Therefore, it is important to recognize that leadership is not about the characteristics or style of individuals considered as hierarchical leaders. It is about the actions taken by every member of the organization. In addition, the involvement and support of the top management in the in-house leadership development efforts will aid the success of the improvements desired from the various interventions (Leonard and Goff, 2003).

vi. Successful leadership development required leaders and organizations to focus on supporting the mindful engagement of their employees on their own experience (DeRue and Ashford, 2010); as well as to provide a platform and support system, that would enable them to take advantage of their experiences. Learning from experience on its own does not lead to development. Experiencing an event on its own does not translate into learning and leadership development. The important aspect is the meaning and sense that the participant derives from the event for influencing active analysis and future behaviour. What is important is how the learners continuously and consciously engage in learning about the experience.

7.3 Limitations

As an action research investigation, the study is based on participants drawn from one organization, and the interventions tailored to the leadership development needs of the employees and the organization. Generalization from the study becomes difficult bearing in mind that the study was carried out in a specific context with its unique dynamics. It may therefore be necessary to consider the specific context factors in generalizing or leveraging on the findings in other contexts or settings. Nevertheless, the leadership development problems faced by my organization reflect that of many young organizations, especially those lean resources. The adopted leadership development approach and findings from the investigation were transferable to other organizations in both financial and other sectors. In addition, the design of the research provides an opportunity for the participants to experience learning in multiple situations that they encountered through action learning, mentoring, and case review. These situations reflect learning and development opportunities available in practice regardless of the sector or size of the organization.

Our data and findings indicated clearly that the participants experienced learning and development which they transferred to the workplace through everyday leadership practice. However, from the interviews with the various participants, the degree of learning, impact and transfer to work activities varied. This research was not designed to measure the degree of impact experienced by the different participants.

Leadership as a concept is open to multiple interpretations and understanding. As such, it is difficult to define leadership in concrete and generally acceptable terms. For this study, we define leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (Yukl, 2013). At different stages during the investigation, this

perspective of leadership was shared with the participants. Nevertheless, this does not eliminate the possibility that some participants may have a different meaning and understanding of the concept of leadership.

Leadership development is not a rapid process. It takes time to determine and execute a leadership development programme. It might require years for the full impact to be felt (Swearingen, 2009). Considering that this thesis should be concluded within a specified time, the impacts of the various interventions yet to emerge might not have been fully captured.

7.4 Implications

A continuous, inclusive, and low-cost leadership development strategy of this nature has several implications for scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners in their role as agents of leadership development. Though this study has been carried out in an organization in West Africa, the theoretical discussions and principles have application beyond its immediate setting.

Transforming an organization's environment from the traditional top-down leadership orientation with its implications for leadership development approach to one of inclusive orientation requires nurturing and time. The result of this investigation revealed that working on workplace problems inside or outside one's primary responsibility is an important way of building leadership capacity. This suggests that organizations must incorporate action learning-oriented assignments into the primary responsibilities of their members as a matter of routine. By providing such platforms, employees can learn from experience through real live engagements with core company activities by leveraging and collaborating with others.

In addition, in a labour market with a dearth of employees, with prerequisite skills and a rapid growth industry where employees' turnover is high, expanding the

leadership base of the organization becomes a top priority. Achieving this in the traditional way requires huge investment, in addition to managing disruption to work if the organization desires to involve all the employees. Considering the findings that leadership development is associated with work practices and finding solutions to workplace problems, the organization needs to take full advantage of the day-to-day opportunities (events and situations) that could facilitate leadership development through learning from self and others. As Coghlan (2003) emphasized, action research is opportunistic in nature as the research focuses on problems that already exist in the organization rather than creating the problem for research. Therefore, managers and leaders must capitalize on opportunistic events happening in their organizations to enhance the leadership capacities of their employees through continuous and cost-effective leadership development initiatives.

For organizations to leverage on such opportunities and events happening in the organization for leadership development, there must be an equal focus on the development activities as well as performance goals. Employees will seek development opportunities when they are conscious that they are expected to leverage the performance of their job as a source of leadership development. It is important to highlight that the learning that occurred has been facilitated by the fact that development needs were identified and discussed before the commencement of the investigation.

7.5 Future research

We hope that this investigation will encourage further research into leadership development through continuous, inclusive, and low-cost approaches, to enable organizations to leverage events and opportunities in the organization to grow their leadership base sustainably. The measurement of the impact of the interventions like many other studies relies on the self-report by the participants and data collected through participant observation. Future research should

focus more on impact measurement relying less on the self-report but rather on the evidence-based measurement of the effectiveness of the interventions from the participants and organizational dimensions such as turnover and job performance. Besides, as earlier discussed, research was not designed to measure the degree of impact experienced by the different participants. Research that provides insight into the degree of impact experienced by the participants will provoke the deployment of more effective and customized interventions.

7.6 Summary

The key outcome of this research is the leadership development capabilities acquired by the participants. Through these capabilities, participants can practice leadership from all positions in the organization. The organization simultaneously developed capabilities to adapt to future changes. Action research is inherently transformative for action researchers, research participants, and their organizations (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010; Greenwood & Levin, 2007). The adoption of the process and traditions of action research for resolving the workplace problems through the democratic and participative engagement of all internal stakeholders resulted in positive change and building of leadership capabilities for the participants, the insider action researcher, and the organization. The impact of the acquired capabilities started quickly. Apart from the fact that the impact is felt immediately, learning is transferred to the workplace on a real-time basis, the changes are noticeable. As an illustration, my capability and those of the participants to collaborate and manage relationships increased tremendously. This has created a work environment where members actively seek multiple views and support one another in achieving desired objectives. It is indeed factual that action research "changes people's practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions under which they practice" (Kemmis, 2009). This means that their ways of living, doing things and

relating have changed through the formation and emergence of new patterns. I, therefore, conclude that everyone can be a leader.

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Appendix A

Ethical Approval of the Research Study

Dear Isiaka Ilori Ajani-Lawal,

I am pleased to inform you that the DBA Ethics Committee has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below:

Committee Name: DBA Ethics Committee
Title of Study: Workplace leadership development for young professionals through continuous, inclusive and low cost strategies: a case study of a financial institution in West Africa
Student Investigator Isiaka Ilori Ajani-Lawal
School/Institute: School of Management
Approval Date: 4 September 2015

The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

- The researchers must obtain ethical approval from a local research ethics committee if this is an international study
- University of Liverpool approval is subject to compliance with all relevant national legislative requirements if this this is an international study.
- All serious adverse events must be reported to the Sub-Committee within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the Research Integrity and Governance Officer (ethics@liv.ac.uk)
- If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Committee of the amendment.

This approval applies to the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Committee should be notified.

Kind regards

DBA Ethics Committee
University of Liverpool Management School in Partnership with Laureate Online Education

Participant information Sheet and Statement of informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

Committee on Research Ethics

Participant Information Sheet

I (Isiaka Ajani-Lawal) am currently undertaking an online professional doctorate in Business Administration at University of Liverpool. As part of this programme, I am conducting an insider action research which focuses on a workplace problem. Action research requires a researcher working with members of organization focus on a workplace problem with the aim of deploying actionable interventions to resolve the problem. Please take time to read the following information and feel free to contact me if there is anything you would like me to clarify.

1. **Title of Study**

   Workplace leadership development for young professionals through continuous, rapid, inclusive and low cost strategies: a case study of a financial institution in West Africa.

2. **Version Number and Date**

   This Participant Information Sheet (PIS) version one (1) is issued in July 2015.

3. **Invitation Paragraph**

   I would like to invite you to participate in the research project that I plan to carry out. Prior to deciding whether to participate in the project or not, it is important you understand the purpose of the study and how you will be involved if you decide to participate by reading the all the information provided carefully. Please feel free to ask questions on anything you require clarification and further information from me. You can also discuss with your friends and relatives if you wish. I will like to highlight that you do not have to accept this invitation. You should only accept to take part if you want to.

   I have provided information about the study in this information sheet. I will subsequently ask you to sign the consent form if you choose to participate in the study.

4. **What is the purpose of the study?**

As a brief background to this study, some of the employees of the organization currently have responsibilities for which it is required that their leadership skills be enhanced for them to improve on their performance. The focus of this research will therefore be to understand and deploy leadership development initiatives that are cost effective and inclusive in nature. The primary objective is to assist employees and the organization to realise their potentials by developing employees' leadership skills through inexpensive, continuous and all-inclusive means. In line with this, the specific objectives of the investigation include:

a. To gain understanding of the current and future leadership development needs of the organization.
b. Implement of actionable solutions and initiatives focused on developing leadership skills of employees in order to address the identified skill gaps.
c. Develop and institutionalize model/framework for engaging in leadership development through low cost and continuous approach.

5. Why have I been chosen to take part?

Participants will be chosen (depending on if they decide and agree to participate) through purposive selection process that considers representation across all functional units of the organization, representation across levels and whether the potential participant have supervisory roles or not. Specific individuals from the units are chosen because they are considered as people who can purposefully inform the understanding of the research problem, the exploration of solutions and the implementation of agreed initiatives. Other characteristics considered include longest duration of stay in the unit and possession of first-hand experience about one other areas of the bank having worked there. In all, 17 people are expected to be direct participants that will be form into research and action learning teams. However, other member of the organization will be involved in one or more of the initiatives to be implemented.

6. Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether you will like to take part or not. It is important for you to note that you are at liberty to withdraw at any time without providing any reason for your decision. Kindly note that there is no disadvantage or negative consequence if you choose to withdraw your participation.

7. What will happen if I take part?

If you decide to take participate in the study, you will be required to play one or more of the following roles:

S/N	Role	Primary responsibility	Time Required
1	Member of the action research team	i. The team is responsible for exploring, implementing and evaluating the initiatives required to achieve the objectives of the project. ii. Translation and interpretation from English to French and vice versa for the benefit of those who required such.	This required periodic meeting. The specific time and duration will be agreed among team members. I estimate that this team will on the average meet fortnightly. Each meeting will last about two (2) to three (3) hours.
2	Member of the action learning sets	Identification of a workplace problem and resolution of the problem using action learning steps.	This required periodic discussion and review sessions. The specific time and duration will be agreed among team members. I estimate that this team will on the average meet fortnightly. Each meeting will last about two (2) hours.
3	Mentor	Mentoring assigned mentees.	Each mentor will be assigned not more than two mentees. Meeting time, frequency and place to be agreed between mentor and mentees.
4	Participant in focus group session.	This is a one-off session.	The session is expected to last between two to three hours.
5	Interviewee (you will be asked to give your opinion)	i. Respond to leadership development need assessment questions. And/or; ii. Provide views on progress you are experiencing with regards to leadership skills you desire to acquire or enhance.	Interview is expected to take average of 30 minutes.
6	Anchor leadership development training.	Anchor one hour training session on given subject.	Duration of the session is one hour. Anchor will be chosen on rotational basis. Individual can play the role of an anchor maximum of two (2) times in a year.

Please note that the interviews and teams' sessions will be audio recorded and stored securely.

8. **Expenses and / or payments**

Participation is voluntary. Participants will not be eligible for or given any direct or indirect reward or reimbursement.

9. **Are there any risks in taking part?**

Participation in this research might require that you are a member of the research or learning teams. Every member of the teams is expected to actively participate in the discussions and activities of the team. There is a potential for discomfort arising conflict if discussion are focused on person rather that the issue. While this will have minimal impact, necessary steps will be taken in form of training of participants to prevent transiting from issue to personal.

10. **Are there any benefits in taking part?**

The research is focused on leadership development using action research tradition. The various interventions and initiatives to be deployed are for developing or enhancing leadership skills of the participants. Participation in this research will translate to improved performance for the participants through the leadership skills acquired or enhanced.

11. **What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?**

If you have a concern or unhappy about any aspect of this study, please feel free to contact Isiaka Ajani-Lawal (also reachable via +22502439090 or isiaka.ajanilawal@yahoo.com). I will do my utmost to answer your questions. If you are still unhappy and wish not to discuss with me further, you can contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, kindly provide details of the name or description of the study.

12. **Will my participation be kept confidential?**

Yes. All information that will be collected from you if you decide to participate will be kept confidential. Your name and any personal details will not be stated in the thesis, except you give express permission. In addition, I will ensure that it will not be possible for anyone to identify you from your responses. All data will be stored in my computer. The computer and the files are password protected. Also, physical data/records will be stored in lockable compartments to which I have exclusive access. The data will be stored for five years after the completion of the study.

13. **What will happen to the results of the study?**

The general findings of the research will be presented in the thesis report of the action research that I am conducting. When completed, a copy of the research findings will be sent to you via email if you request for it. The research will be presented in form of thesis to my thesis supervisor for approval and thereafter to University of Liverpool. On completion of the thesis, the report may be developed further into a journal paper for publication.

14. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw from the study anytime you want without offering explanation for your decision. Information and data collected from up to the time of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy this can be done. Otherwise, you may request that the information and data be destroyed and your name removed from all the study files. Please note that the data and information you gave can only be removed if we receive you request before the results are anonymized.

15. Who can I contact if I have further questions?

If you have any questions or clarifications or enquiries, please feel free to contact Isiaka Ajani-Lawal who is reachable via +22502439090 or isiaka.ajanilawal@yahoo.com

Thank you for reading and for the time you will take to consider whether you will participate or not.

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

Committee on Research Ethics

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Workplace leadership development for young professionals through continuous, rapid, inclusive and low cost strategies: a case study of a financial institution in West Africa.

Researcher(s): Isiaka Ajani-Lawal

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 31-07-2015 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any question or questions, I am free to decline.

3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.

4. The information you have submitted will be published as a report; please indicate whether you would like to receive a copy.

5. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications. In addition, if I am being quoted, it will be done in such a way that it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.

6. I understand and agree that my participation will be audio recorded and I am aware of and consent to your use of these recordings in reports, publications and other research outputs.

7. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research.

8. I understand and agree that once I submit my data it will become anonymised and I will therefore no longer be able to withdraw my data.

9. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Participant Name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

Principal Investigator:
Name
Work Address

Work Telephone
Work Email

Student Researcher:
Name: **Isiaka Ajani-Lawal**
Work Address: 11 Avenue du senateur Lagarosse, Abidjan-Plateau, Abidjan
Work Telephone: +22502439090
Work Email: Isiaka.ajanilawal@gtbank.com

[Participant Consent Form Version 1. July 2015**]**

Needs Assessment Interview Questions

Leadership Development Needs Assessment Interview Questions

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Brief description of the project (as introduction):

I am currently undertaking an online professional doctorate programme in Business Administration (DBA) at University of Liverpool. As part of the programme requirement, I am conducting an insider action research which focuses on: workplace leadership development for young professionals through continuous, inclusive and low cost strategies. In line with the design of the study, I am conducting preliminary interviews to ascertain the leadership skills development needs of my colleagues. Our leadership development needs assessment discussions will be approached from three dimensions – leading the organization, leading others and leading oneself.

Questions:

1. Do you consider yourself as a leader in the organization?
2. What leadership skills do you consider critical for success of individuals and organization?
3. Which of these skills do you consider the most important?
4. What competencies do you think is helping your current leadership performance?
5. What are the leadership capacities that you think you need to acquire?
6. What leadership capacities do you need to improve on to be more effective as a leader?

7. How do you think that your leadership capacity can be developed or improved considering the focus of this study?

8. What factors may hinder effectiveness of leaders in the organization?

Thank you for participating in this interview. I will like to assure you again that your responses will be kept confidential.

Source: These questions have been drawing leveraging on insights from Nupponen (2006) and Taylor, Taylor and Stoller (2008).

<u>**Appendix D**</u>

Impact Assessment Interview Questions

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<u>**Leadership Development Impact Assessment Interview Questions**</u>

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Brief description of the project (as introduction):

I am currently undertaking an online professional doctorate programme in Business Administration (DBA) at University of Liverpool. As part of the programme requirement, I am conducting an insider action research which focuses on: workplace leadership development for young professionals through continuous, inclusive and low cost strategies. Further to the various interventions implemented to achieve the objectives of the investigation, I am conducting interviews to ascertain the impacts of the leadership development efforts.

Please note that your views and opinions will be you solely for the purpose stated.

Questions:

1. Which one of the following leadership programmes did you participate in?

S/N	Programme
1	BEST Team Project
2	Sunrise leadership series session
3	Case review sessions
4	Mentoring relationship

2. What role did you play under the programme you participated in?

3. In what ways does/do the programme(s) you participate (d) in assist you in developing leadership skills? (please provide illustrations)

4. Considering your explanation in 3 above, explain with examples the improvements you have experienced in the way you perform your daily endeavours or routines tasks.

5. What aspect of the programs listed in the table above that you participated in had the most impact on your learning and leadership development?

6. What activities or events have been most beneficial in helping your become better as a leader

7. Overall, describe how your leadership development was affected by the various programmes/projects.

8. What obstacles do you think exist in the organization that may prevent everyone from practicing leadership?

9. Is there anything else you will like to share about your experience from participating in these programmes?

Thank you for participating in this interview. I will like to assure you again that your responses will be kept confidential.