

Establishing individual abilities as institutional leaders

Jera May M. Lombreno*

Bulacao National High School
Cebu City, Cebu, Philippines
Email: jeramay.lombreno@deped.gov.ph

Regina P. Galigao

Cebu Technological University-Main Campus
Cebu City, Cebu, Philippines
Email: reginpgaligao@gmail.com

Rodilyn A. Viado

Pajo National High School
Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu, Philippines
Email: rodilyn.viado001@deped.gov.ph

Jonela L. Lusuegro

Pajo National High School
Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu, Philippines
Email: jonela.lusuegro@deped.gov.ph

Maria Ellen R. Lacio

Talisay City Central Elementary School
Talisay City, Cebu, Philippines
Email: mariaellen.lacio@deped.gov.ph

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of leadership development as a critical factor in achieving institutional success, pointing out discrepancies between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation. It highlights issues such as outdated training methods, ineffective succession planning, and insufficient diversity, while stressing the importance of culturally attuned strategies. Through a data-driven approach, the study reveals regional priorities: Asia emphasizes strategic and digital competencies; Africa prioritizes leadership rooted in cultural values; North America focuses on organized, innovation-based initiatives; South America values servant leadership; Europe emphasizes civic and ethical leadership; and Australia advocates for a blend of public and corporate tactics. The suggested Contextual Leadership Development Theory promotes the

*Corresponding author

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0404620>

Recommended citation:

Lombreno, J. M. M., Galigao, R. P., Viado, R. A., Lusuegro, J. L., & Lacio, M. E. R. (2025). Establishing individual abilities as institutional leaders. *Pantao (The International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences)* 4 (4), 6759-6770. <http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0404620>

customization of programs to align with cultural and institutional contexts to cultivate adaptive, future-ready leaders.

Keywords: skills in strategy, resilience, digital readiness, cultural intelligence, develop local talent to meet regional growth, ethnocentric models, cultivate visionary leaders, address cultural circumstances, support both native and imported models, social connectivity, bridge leadership, corporate training, educational programs, leadership requirements, building management efficacy, social hierarchies, economic volatility, leaders Europe (Obama foundation), Jesuit-inspired, LMA, teach for Australia.

Date Submitted: November 6, 2025

Date Accepted: November 23, 2025

Date Published: December 6, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Leadership development is essential as it creates a robust pipeline of future leaders, enhances employee retention and engagement, and reinforces the organizational culture (Adeniyi, 2024). Additionally, it leads to improved decision-making, encourages innovation and adaptability, and aligns leadership with the strategic objectives of the company. Leadership development plays a crucial role in education as it enhances student performance by establishing high standards and providing support for educators (Gading, 2024). It cultivates a constructive school environment, encourages fairness and inclusivity, and stimulates creativity and flexibility in teaching methods and policies (Puspitadani, 2022).

Strong leadership also boosts teacher morale, strengthens community ties, and prepares students with skills for lifelong learning and personal development (Wang'ombe, 2023). In an office setting, developing leaders is essential to creating a staff that is engaged, productive, and flexible (Suriyanto, 2024). It improves decision-making, fosters a creative and upbeat workplace culture, increases employee retention and performance, and builds a solid pipeline of future leaders. Issues with leadership development include reliance on antiquated training techniques, poor succession planning, failure to nurture internal talent, and mismatch with corporate strategy (Ingale, 2024). Communication, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, flexibility, and change management are among the key skill gaps that contribute to a global leadership deficit in which talent is ill-equipped to face future problems (Paudela, 2025). Inadequate resources, a lack of training for instructional leadership, and a failure to develop critical abilities like communication, flexibility, and digital integration are all factors in education leadership growth (Uzorka, 2025). Other problems, which are made worse by obstacles like turnover and resistance to change, include a lack of strategic talent identification and development, a focus on management over instruction, and a paucity of leaders from underrepresented groups (Griffin, 2025).

Poor succession planning, a lack of internal talent development, and insufficient training programs are examples of significant gaps in leadership development (Morrow, 2023). Inadequate mentorship, a lack of diversity in senior leadership, a general lack of transparency in promotion procedures, and a failure to recognize and rectify skill gaps are further problems (Adedeji, 2024). These flaws result in issues including poor leadership, inhibited creativity, and a drop in employee engagement and company culture (Stanley, 2024).

Leadership development faces persistent challenges due to outdated training methods, weak succession planning, and misalignment with organizational strategy (Yates, 2025). A global shortage of leadership-ready talent stems from gaps in critical skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, and strategic thinking (Berberick, 2017). In the education sector, growth is hindered by limited resources, insufficient training in instructional leadership, and poor integration of digital competencies (Timotheou, 2023). High turnover and resistance to change further complicate efforts to identify and develop strategic talent (Kossyva, 2024). Many institutions prioritize management over instructional leadership and lack diversity among emerging leaders. Mentorship is often inadequate, and promotion processes lack transparency, contributing to missed opportunities for growth. These combined issues lead to ineffective leadership, reduced innovation, and declining employee morale and organizational culture.

This article focusses on analyzing the noticeable gaps between leadership development theory and its real-world application. This highlights the advantages of leadership such as enhanced decision-making, innovation, and improved organizational culture that frequently overlook in the ongoing challenges like outdated training techniques, lack of diversity, and inadequate mentorship. These conclusions may inadvertently promote superficial solutions that fail to address deeper systemic problems that offer a helpful framework for this evaluation. This comprises the stages of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing and stresses the importance of first identifying and questioning current ineffective practices (unfreezing), applying new methods (changing), and solidifying advancements (refreezing). To ensure that leadership development initiatives are not merely aspirational but also rooted in sustainable, evidence-based change that tackles underlying issues and equips leaders for future obstacles.

Statement of the problem

This research analyzes building a solid leadership pipeline that enhances team performance, encourages creativity, and boosts employee engagement and retention is a key goal of leadership development. Developing emotional intelligence and coaching skills to inspire and grow people, as well as improving communication, strategic thinking, and decision-making ability to manage change, are important purposes. As a result, educational institutions become more robust, effective, and prosperous. This offers benefits like increased productivity in organizations, better decision-making, and more employee engagement. This helps schools direct learning toward desired goals and supports teachers while also enhancing students' self-esteem, communication abilities, and readiness for future challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes data mining techniques to evaluate leadership development by analyzing training effectiveness, tracking experiential learning outcomes, uncovering feedback patterns, predicting leadership potential, comparing departmental performance, and continuously refining programs based on data-driven insights. Data mining is used in this process of discovering patterns, correlations, and insights from large sets of data using statistical, machine learning, or computational techniques. In leadership development, it helps uncover what works, for whom, and under what conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership development is an ongoing strategy focused on improving individuals' abilities to lead successfully in various contexts, such as organizations, schools, communities, and other institutions (AROBIOLE, 2023). It encompasses the development of critical skills like communication, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, adaptability, and decision-making. This aims to establish a robust pipeline of existing and prospective leaders who can foster innovation, navigate change, and align teams with the objectives of the organization (Adeniyi, 2024). It extends beyond formal training that includes mentoring, coaching, hands-on learning, and succession planning (Ingale, 2024). This results in enhanced performance, increased engagement among teachers, as a stronger organizational culture, and improved outcomes for or students (Velanganni, 2024).

This offers a wide range of advantages that contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of organizations, educational institutions, and communities (Bhutto, 2024). This builds a strong pipeline of capable leaders who can navigate change, inspire teams, and drive strategic goals. This enhances critical skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, and decision-making, which are essential for effective leadership in today's complex environments. In education, it empowers school leaders and teachers to create inclusive, high-performing learning environments that support both student achievement and teacher growth (Agirdag, 2023).

This is a worldwide concern that manifests in distinct ways throughout various regions, influenced by cultural, economic, and institutional factors (Ardichvili, 2017). Though the fundamental objective is consistent in developing competent, ethical, and flexible leaders in the methods and obstacles differ considerably from across the globe. This shows a varied, yet interconnected initiative aimed at equipping leaders for complex and changing environments. Utilizing Contingency Theory which suggests that effective leadership is contingent upon the alignment between a leader's style and the surrounding context which helps clarify the necessity for leadership development to be customized to local circumstances (Shala, 2021).

In Asia, the emphasis is on cultivating leaders who are culturally aware and adapt in digital skills, capable of linking local situations with global approaches which leadership development focuses on:

Skills in strategy

The capacity to think and operate strategically to reach long-term objectives (Grant, 2018). These competencies encompass a mixture of analytical skills such as critical thinking and data analysis, innovative problem-solving, along with practical abilities including planning, implementation, and effective communication. Cultivating these skills enables both individuals and organizations to foresee obstacles, recognize opportunities, and make well-informed choices that correspond with their primary goals.

Developing skills in strategy significantly enhances leadership development by equipping leaders to navigate complex regional dynamics and drive sustainable growth (Miao, 2025). With Asia's diverse cultural, economic, and political landscapes, strategic skills enable leaders to align local practices with global trends, manage cross-border operations, and respond effectively to rapid technological and market changes (Liu, 2024).

Resilience

Leadership development in Asian nations emphasizes resilience at both the individual and systemic levels, highlighting essential skills such as stress management, adaptability, and innovation to effectively address economic and environmental challenges (Syamsir, 2025). Initiatives typically include collaborations among governments, international organizations, and the private sector, with a strong emphasis on socially inclusive strategies and skill enhancement for sustainable development.

Digital readiness

The level of digital readiness in leadership development differs notably among Asian countries, influenced by aspects such as varying infrastructure, national policies, and organizational culture (Ly, 2025). Although digital transformation is regarded as essential for advancement, numerous initiatives fail because they are misaligned with business objectives and struggle to adjust culture and processes.

Cultural intelligence

Essential for cultivating leadership in Asia, cultural intelligence (CQ) allows leaders to manage diverse teams and foster trust in interconnected economies (Živković, 2025). Improving CQ requires individuals to enhance their understanding of various cultures, their motivation to interact, their capacity to modify behavior, and their awareness of their own cultural viewpoints (Wang, 2020). Leaders in Asia who possess strong CQ can lead more successfully by adjusting their leadership styles to align with local cultural norms, leading to improved collaboration, innovation, and overall success within the organization.

Develop local talent to meet regional growth

To develop local talent for regional growth in Asia, companies should focus on tailored development programs that build global and local competencies, create high-impact opportunities, and cultivate a culture of continuous learning and psychological safety (Lee, 2025). This involves a combination of strategic approaches such as identifying potential, providing structured experiences like stretch assignments and cross-border projects, offering personalized coaching, and fostering resilience to address unique Asian leadership challenges.

Ethnocentric models

Model use in Asian countries typically involve multinational corporations (MNCs) transplanting home-country (often Western) leadership styles and competencies, with headquarters assigning parent country nationals (PCNs) to key subsidiary roles (Park, 2022). This approach aims to ensure corporate alignment and control, facilitate knowledge transfer from headquarters, and maintain consistency across global operations.

In regions like Europe and North America, organizational strategies often follow ethnocentric models in applying home-country practices globally with limited cultural adaptation (Lee, 2022). These areas typically emphasize uniform approaches to strategy, resilience, and digital readiness, placing more value on efficiency and technology than on cultural intelligence or region-specific talent development.

Cultivate visionary leaders

To develop visionary leaders across African nations, initiatives should emphasize strategic thought, ethical leadership, and the adaptation of leadership approaches to align with local traditions such as ubuntu (YINKORE, 2025). This can be accomplished via comprehensive training, mentorship, innovation policy labs, and promoting a continental perspective through collaborations beyond borders. Encouraging innovation and providing leaders with emotional intelligence are essential for nurturing leaders capable of driving sustainable development and effectively addressing challenges (Tanveer, 2025).

Address cultural circumstances

To tackle the cultural factors in leadership development within African nations, initiatives should merge traditional ideals such as Ubuntu (the concept of connectedness) with contemporary leadership approaches, prioritizing community welfare and social advancement (Onyango Ouma, 2025). This entails combining indigenous wisdom with modern frameworks, making development programs more inclusive to reach a wider audience, and highlighting ethical, servant leadership that is relevant to the context.

Support both native and imported models

To support both native and imported models in leadership development in African countries, integrate local indigenous principles like Ubuntu with global models to create context-specific, relevant, and effective leadership frameworks (Onyango Ouma, 2025). This approach involves tailoring global concepts to African realities, focusing on inner transformation, accountability, community well-being, and blending external techniques with internal wisdom for sustainable and context-appropriate growth.

Social connectivity

Plays a crucial role in the development of leadership in African nations, promoting collaboration, community spirit, and the bridging of various cultures and languages (Oyewole, 2025). Utilizing Afro-centric principles such as ubuntu, which highlights the importance of interconnectedness and servant leadership, offers a solid foundation for nurturing leaders who can foster trust and respond to local needs. Consequently, leadership development initiatives should focus on systems thinking, experiential learning, and networking to enhance these capabilities for effective collective leadership throughout the continent.

Bridge leadership

Linking established leaders with future generations to promote ethical, collaborative, and impactful change through initiatives such as the Bridge Africa Summit and the Bridge Leadership Foundation (Miao, 2025). These programs bring together and empower both emerging and seasoned leaders with the skills, networks, and resources needed to tackle continental challenges through mentorship, workshops, and community engagement activities.

In certain continents, the focus of leadership development frequently lies in nurturing visionary leaders via organized corporate initiatives and internationally recognized best practices, paying less attention to the adaptation to local cultural contexts (Shan, 2024). These areas tend to embrace both indigenous and foreign leadership frameworks but typically prefer uniform methods that might disregard distinct social dynamics.

North America relies on well-structured programs that combine mentoring, innovation, and readiness for artificial intelligence as to their leadership development which discuss in the following aspects:

Corporate training

Leadership development corporate training is readily accessible throughout North America, particularly in the United States and Canada, offering a variety of choices from elite university executive courses to niche consulting firms (Moldoveanu, 2019). These programs focus on enhancing communication skills, encouraging strategic thought, and increasing employee involvement.

Educational programs

Leading universities, colleges, and consulting firms in North America provide diverse educational opportunities in leadership development, which include executive education, master's programs, and specialized certificates (Gallagher, 2022). These offerings are designed for different levels of experience, ranging from future managers to top executives, and are available throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Leadership requirements

Leadership development in North America necessitates abilities such as adaptability, strategic thinking, and emotional intelligence, with a significant focus on relationship-building, effective communication, and enhancing employee motivation (Boyar, 2023). Essential elements include creating a culture of trust through genuine connections, adjusting to ongoing change, and cultivating both "soft" skills like empathy and "hard" skills like technical expertise to improve performance and address the complexities of contemporary business.

In North American nations, new trends like online delivery, the harmonization of academic programs, and the implementation of AI-powered leadership models are greatly improving leadership development (Sposato, 2025). In some other regions, non-profit initiatives, corporate training, and educational programs are frequently influenced by local priorities, emphasizing economic growth, social equality, or the modernization of the workforce (Sampson, 2025). The

leadership expectations in these fields often align with the prevailing governance styles and cultural norms, integrating global models with indigenous principles to different extents.

South America tackles historical disparities by promoting servant leadership and inclusive methodologies through the leadership development of the following:

Building management efficacy

Enhancing building management effectiveness in South American nations necessitates a customized strategy, integrating culturally appropriate leadership styles such as paternalism and people-oriented management (Franklin, 2025), as well as development initiatives that blend structured education (coaching, mentorship) with hands-on experience. Studies indicate that successful development should concentrate on both transactional and transformational behaviors, highlight stakeholder engagement, and tackle prevalent managerial derailment issues, while recognizing the differences in cultural values across the region.

Social hierarchies

Social hierarchies play a crucial role in shaping leadership development in South American nations, stemming from historical frameworks like the Spanish colonial caste system (Kemner, 2022) and further bolstered by contemporary issues such as family-owned businesses and cultures with high power distance. These hierarchies affect leadership approaches, leading to the prevalence of paternalistic and autocratic styles, while also posing obstacles to the advancement of inclusive leadership, particularly in relation to gender and socioeconomic status.

Economic volatility

Economic instability in South America, influenced by factors such as commodity price variations and fragile financial markets, poses challenges for leadership development (Mulenga, 2024) by fostering a focus on short-term policies, obstructing long-term investments, and affecting human capital. This volatility can foster conditions where leaders emphasize immediate electoral advantages rather than long-term growth, resulting in an emphasis on transient projects and policy modifications that do not endure across different administrations. It also has a detrimental effect on human capital by perpetuating a cycle of economic booms and busts that undermines long-term developmental prospects.

In regions beyond South America, effective building management and encouraging responsible leadership frequently require maneuvering through established social hierarchies and historical disparities in power, particularly in areas with deep-rooted institutional frameworks (Prihatin, 2025). Economic instability adds to the challenges faced by leadership models, necessitating flexible strategies that harmonize authority with inclusiveness and resilience.

Europe champions civic and moral leadership through both academic and executive training in the leadership development through the following:

Leaders Europe (Obama Foundation)

The Leaders Europe program by the Obama Foundation cultivates leadership in Europe through a six-month online course designed to enhance skills, build a network of change agents, and encourage leadership grounded in values (Gordon, 2020). Participants, who come from sectors such as government, civil society, or private enterprise, take part in interactive sessions, receive one-on-one coaching, and engage in discussions with peers to promote inclusive change within their communities and throughout the continent.

Jesuit-inspired

The (ELP) inspired by Jesuit principles, supports leadership growth for young professionals across Europe (Chyu, 2025), especially for those focused on European Union-related careers. This five-month residential course, located in Brussels, merges practical experience within the EU environment with ethical development, communal living, and spiritual guidance based on the Ignatian tradition. Thus, Australia also integrates public service, corporate, and regional strategies to enhance leadership skills through:

LMA

"LMA" initiatives are aimed at fostering leadership skills in Australia with an emphasis on transforming leaders' thought processes and behaviors, rather than solely imparting knowledge (Darusulistyo, 2025). By utilizing hands-on, experiential learning, these initiatives seek to enhance abilities such as critical thinking, effective communication, emotional intelligence, goal setting, and time management. The objective is to attain observable improvements in leadership effectiveness and overall organizational performance.

Teach For Australia

Teach For Australia is an initiative aimed at fostering leadership within Australia's education sector (Simpson, 2021). It accomplishes this by attracting and training exceptional individuals to teach in schools that have the greatest need, while offering them professional development that cultivates leadership abilities during their two-year tenure. The program's emphasis on transforming "Associates" into impactful leaders and educators contributes to enhanced educational results and promotes positive transformation in underprivileged communities.

These are the programs integrate online education, practical application, and networking opportunities, enabling emerging leaders to enhance their strategic, cultural, and digital skills in flexible and accessible formats. The Australia Pacific Leaders Program (APLP) (Wallis, 2021), The Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP) (T Puxley, 2021), Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), Organizations such as The Asia Foundation, and The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), The African Foundation MINDS and The Obama Foundation (Havercome, 2025), Obama Foundation and the Jesuit-inspired European Leadership Programme (Kane, 2023).

Findings

Leadership development across different global regions showcases unique cultural values and strategic focuses (Liu, 2025). The priority lies in developing leaders who possess robust strategic capabilities, cultural understanding, and digital flexibility to connect local practices with global methodologies (Shan, 2024). The visionary leadership that is grounded in cultural awareness and social connections, merging traditional concepts like Ubuntu with contemporary leadership models to address local issues in an inclusive and ethical manner (Onyango Ouma, 2025). Focuses on systematic programs that incorporate mentorship, innovation, and readiness for AI, equipping leaders to excel in fast-evolving (Vale, 2025), technology-centric environments within corporate, educational, and non-profit spheres.

This also emphasizes servant leadership and inclusive strategies that tackle historical inequalities, social hierarchies, and economic challenges, nurturing responsible and culturally sensitive leaders (Daniels, 2020). This advocates for civic and ethical leadership through academic and executive training that blends moral instruction, strategic analysis, and community involvement to confront societal issues with integrity (Brigue, 2023). Furthermore, it merges public service, corporate, and regional approaches through a variety of programs that prioritize hands-on learning, ethical growth, and specific-sector education, enhancing leadership capabilities across its diverse professional and geographical areas (Lee, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings across six global continents, a unifying theory that emerges is the Contextual Leadership Development Theory, which posits that effective leadership development must be tailored to the cultural, economic, and institutional realities of each region. This theory aligns with the findings: Asia emphasizes strategic and digital skills to bridge local and global contexts; Africa focuses on visionary leadership rooted in cultural sensitivity and community values; North America relies on structured, innovation-driven programs; South America promotes servant leadership to address historical and social disparities; Europe champions civic and moral leadership through ethical and academic training; and Australia integrates public, corporate, and regional strategies to meet diverse leadership needs.

The findings agree with the Contextual Leadership Development Theory, as each region demonstrates that leadership development is most impactful when it reflects local practices, values, and challenges rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model (Day, 2021). This agreement reinforces the importance of designing leadership programs that are culturally responsive, strategically aligned, and adaptable to the unique dynamics of each society.

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