

Bridging the Gap: The Role of Executive Education Centers in Leadership Development in the MENA Region

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Abstract

Executive training centers play a vital role in developing public leaders by offering targeted programs that enhance leadership skills and competencies. Through a combination of coaching, classroom instruction, and experiential learning, these institutions aim to equip leaders with the tools needed to navigate complex organizations, drive strategic initiatives, and foster innovation. However, there is a growing skepticism about the effectiveness of these programs in truly contributing to leadership development. This study explores the theoretical underpinnings of executive training centers and analyzes case studies from Egypt, UAE, and Jordan. It concludes that while these centers are important, they face various challenges that limit their impact and hinder its efficacy, especially in the MENA region.

Keywords: *Executive training centers, Leadership, Public Leaders, Education Centers.*

1. Introduction

Leadership in the public sector is a critical element that shapes the effectiveness and efficiency of governance and public service delivery. As societies face increasingly complex challenges, ranging from economic instability and public health crises to social inequality and environmental sustainability, the need for strong, visionary leadership becomes paramount. Effective public sector leaders not only navigate these challenges but also inspire and mobilize teams to achieve strategic objectives that align with the public interest.

Public sector leadership encompasses a diverse range of roles and responsibilities, reflecting the multifaceted nature of government organizations. Leaders in this domain are tasked with administering vast resources, setting strategic directions, and managing relationships across various stakeholders, including government entities, non-profits, and the communities they serve (Çetin, 2015). Unlike leadership in the private sector, which often focuses on profit maximization, public sector leadership is fundamentally about public value creation—ensuring that services meet the needs of citizens while upholding principles of transparency, accountability, and equity. Despite the critical role that leadership plays in public administration, investment in leadership development remains insufficient. Many countries have recognized the need for comprehensive strategies to cultivate future leaders who can navigate these complexities effectively (Andersen & others, 2015). Such strategies often include training/education programs that emphasize transformational leadership styles, characterized by inspiration, motivation, and

fostering a shared vision among team members, which have been shown to enhance organizational performance in public settings (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022)

In this context, executive training/education centers play a crucial role in the development of leadership skills and management capabilities across various sectors, as these centers have the potential to bridge the gap between theory and practice by bringing public policy research and expertise to a broader community (Rasmussen & Callan, 2016). Executive training/education centers are tailored to meet the specific needs of organizations and individuals; as they provide specialized training programs designed for executives, managers, and business leaders, focusing on enhancing their strategic thinking, decision-making, and interpersonal skills (Flanagan, 2023). The programs designed by these centers often include a mix of theoretical frameworks and practical applications, utilizing methods such as case studies, simulations, and interactive workshops to foster an engaging learning experience.

Though tailored to specific roles, leadership-training programs for directors, managers, and executives typically emphasize both hard and soft skills. Hard skills are the technical competencies required to carry out job responsibilities, while soft skills are the personal attributes, such as communication and empathy that are crucial for inspiring and guiding teams.

While it is widely recognized in the developed countries (Rasmussen & Callan, 2016), the significance of executive training/education centers in cultivating the capabilities of public leaders is becoming increasingly apparent in the MENA region. Driven by the distinctive governance, economic, and social challenges confronting the region, these centers are emerging as crucial tools for enhancing leadership development within government institutions. This paper aims to investigate the methodologies employed by these centers, the effectiveness of their programs, and their overall impact.

2. Research Problem and Questions

Despite the increasing investment in executive training programs for public administrators, there is limited empirical evidence assessing their effectiveness and impact on governance outcomes. Many programs vary significantly in structure, content, and delivery methods, leading to questions about which approaches yield the best results. Therefore, this research seeks to provide a better understanding for the role of executive training centers in developing transformative leaders who can navigate complex public sector challenges.

By doing so, this research aims first, to identify the best practices in MENA region by analyzing and comparing various training methodologies employed by different training institutions in UAE, Jordan, and Egypt. Second, to understand the factors that could contribute to the success or failure of these training/education programs in achieving their objectives.

In order to fulfill the primary objective of this paper, the research seeks to address three fundamental questions:

1. What are the principal roles of executive education centers in shaping public leaders and administration?
2. Which training methodologies are most efficacious in cultivating the skills requisite for effective public administration?

3. What factors contribute to the success or failure of executive training programs in attaining their intended objectives?

By addressing these research questions and conducting a comparative analysis of various training centers in the MENA region, this paper seeks to provide a holistic view of the role of executive training centers in cultivating effective public leaders. The study will also illuminate the principal challenges confronting these centers in their efforts to adapt to evolving environments and propose recommendations for decision-makers to optimize the benefits derived from the programs offered by these centers.

3. Conceptual Framework

This research paper is based on two main concepts, which are Public Leadership and Executive Training Centers.

3.1. Public leadership: it is widely defined as the process of mobilizing individuals, organizations, and networks to formulate and enact purposes, values, and actions aimed at creating valued outcomes for the public sphere (Hartley, 2018). This definition emphasizes not only the role of formal leaders but also the influence of various actors across different sectors, public, private, and voluntary, who contribute to public discourse and action. In simple words, Leadership is the ability of individuals in public service to influence others, plus guide, and manage public resources effectively while addressing community needs.

A variety of literature differentiate between two types of leadership styles; hard and soft leadership. This differentiation has evolved in more nuanced approaches that are known as "Transactional and Transformational Leadership". While transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees by internalizing organizational values and goals, transcending self-interest to achieve collective objectives, transactional leadership involves the use of contingent rewards and punishments to align individual goals with organizational objectives (Jacobsen, Andersen, Bøllingtoft, and Eriksen, 2021)

In this context, it is important to mention that public leadership is affected by a variety of factors, including the intricate political environment with its competing interests and values. Additionally, rapid social changes, such as demographic shifts and technological advancements, present new challenges for leaders. Furthermore, the specific governance structure, whether centralized or decentralized, influences how leaders engage with stakeholders and implement policies (Crosby & Bryson, 2017).

3.2. Executive training/education centers: these centers are defined as institutions providing specialized training/educational programs aimed at enhancing leadership skills, managerial competencies, and strategic thinking among public sector leaders. The concept of executive training has evolved over the years, adapting to the changing needs of the public sector. In MENA region, the concept can be traced back to the early 20th century when many MENA countries were under colonial rule, focusing primarily on administrative training to ensure efficient governance in colonies (Blackburn, Harrington, Vidler, and Weddle, 2021). However, as nations gained independence, the emphasis shifted towards building a competent civil service

that could support nation-building efforts. While early programs focused on technical skills, modern programs emphasize leadership, strategic thinking, and innovation.

In this regard, training programs are considered the ways through which executive training centers deliver their knowledge and mechanisms to promote the effectiveness of leaders in either public or private sector. Effective executive training programs often include a combination of coaching, classroom instruction, feedback, and experiential learning. These components aim to develop leaders' abilities to manage complex organizations, inspire teams, and drive change.

The paper uses the concepts of "education" and "training" interchangeably. It posits that executive training centers can significantly influence effective leadership. By offering pertinent training programs, these centers can harmonize theory with practice, fostering skilled public leaders who can enhance institutional performance. Nevertheless, to optimize program effectiveness, several key considerations and challenges are crucial, which the study will draw the attention to it in its last part.

4. Methodology

This research depends mainly on the Case Study Approach, which is considered as a qualitative research method that involves an in-depth, contextual analysis of a specific subject, event, or phenomenon. This approach is widely used across various fields, including social sciences, business, education, and health, to explore complex issues in real-life settings .

This research employs a collective case study methodology to investigate general phenomena across multiple cases simultaneously. By analyzing selected case studies from prominent executive training/education centers in the MENA region, including the National Training Academy (NTA) in Egypt, Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG), and the King Abdullah Institute of Governance (KAIG) in Jordan, this research aims to identify successful program elements and outcomes. These centers were selected due to their government affiliation and specific focus on leadership development.

In addition, through a desk analysis, the paper navigates the literature relevant to the topic of the study, besides offering some global and regional statistics about the subject of the study, in order to support the main findings related to the executive training centers in MENA regions that are analyzed in the research paper.

5. Findings

In a comparative framework between case studies, this section will address the main question of the study. It will explore the principal roles of executive education/training centers in shaping public administration, identify their specific and best methodologies, and finally analyze the factors that influence the success or failure of their programs in achieving intended objectives.

5.1. Role of Executive centers between theory and practice:

As the complexities of public sector challenges grow, executive education centers provide structured learning environments that equip leaders with the necessary skills, insights, and ethical frameworks to navigate their roles effectively.

5.1.1 Training and Education roles in theory:

The literature in leadership development determined some major roles for these centers in shaping public leaders and enhancing administrative capacities, these roles include:

- **Skills Acquisition:** One of the primary functions of executive education centers is to foster leadership development through targeted skill acquisition. Programs are designed to enhance critical competencies such as strategic thinking and decision-making, negotiation, conflict resolution, and crisis management. These skills are essential for public leaders who must navigate the intricacies of policy implementation and stakeholder engagement (Tushman, O'Reilly, Fenollosa, Kleinbaum, & McGrath, 2007).
- **Capacity Building:** These centers aim to build capacity within organizations by enhancing individual and team performance. By offering tailored training programs, they help public leaders understand their roles more effectively and improve their operational capabilities. This capacity building is critical for fostering a more efficient and responsive public administration (Aina, Igbokwe, Ibrahim, Aladeshawe, Mmrikwe, Jegede, Ajuwon, and Aigbogun, 2024)
- **Networking Opportunities:** Executive education provides a platform for public leaders to connect with peers across various sectors. This networking fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing, enabling leaders to learn from each other's experiences and best practices. Such interactions can lead to innovative solutions to common challenges faced by public administrations (Gonyea, 2023)
- **Research and Insights:** Many executive education centers are affiliated with academic institutions, allowing them to leverage cutting-edge research and insights into governance and public policy. This academic backing ensures that the training content is grounded in the latest theories and practices, equipping leaders with relevant knowledge to address contemporary issues (Gonyea, 2023).
- **Customization of Programs:** These centers often tailor their programs to meet the specific needs of organizations or governmental bodies. By aligning educational content with the unique challenges faced by public leaders, executive education can drive meaningful change within administrations.
- **Focus on Ethical Leadership:** In an era where ethical governance is paramount, executive education emphasizes the importance of integrity and accountability in leadership roles. Programs often include discussions on ethical dilemmas and frameworks for making principled decisions, which are essential for maintaining public trust (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi. 2012).
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Executive education promotes lifelong learning among public leaders, encouraging them to stay updated with evolving trends and practices in governance. This commitment to continuous professional development helps ensure that leaders are well-prepared to adapt to changes in the

political landscape and societal needs (Marathe, Gupta, Ramachandra, & Kakani, 2020)

5.1.2 Training and Education roles: MENA Experience:

MENA education/training centers practices are not far from theory, which can be analyzed in different aspects as follows:

- **Mission Alignment:** established in 2005, MBRSG focuses on enhancing the skills of public sector leaders and improving government performance. This goes in line with the mission of KAIG, which emphasizes good governance in Jordan, addressing local challenges while promoting accountability and transparency, while NTA's mission is closely tied to national development goals, particularly in empowering youth and women in leadership roles. It serves as a catalyst for human development, aiming to bridge the leadership gap in Egypt, which aligns with Egypt's Vision 2030.
- **Program Diversity:** The three case studies, while offering diverse leadership development programs, differ in their specific focus. NTA provides a wide range of programs tailored to different levels of leadership within the public sector, including specialized initiatives for women and other special programs that specifically match the needs of the target organization. MBRSG, on the other hand, offers fewer but highly specialized programs aimed at senior leaders, ensuring a focus on high-impact governance issues. KAIG, meanwhile, offers programs focused on foundational governance principles, essential for building capacity within the Jordanian public sector.
- **Training Methodology:** While the case studies share similarities in their training methodologies, they also exhibit distinct approaches. MBRSG effectively blends theoretical knowledge with practical insights, ensuring that leaders are well-equipped to address contemporary challenges. NTA's experiential learning approach fosters practical skills through real-world applications, making its programs highly relevant to participants' daily roles. KAIG's collaborative approach with various stakeholders ensures that its training is aligned with the evolving governance needs in Jordan.
- **Impact on Governance:** The different training approaches employed by the case studies result in varying impacts on governance. NTA's focus on youth and women positions it as a transformative force in Egyptian governance, potentially leading to a more inclusive leadership landscape. MBRSG's emphasis on research-driven governance strategies helps shape effective policies that can lead to sustainable development in the UAE. KAIG plays a crucial role in strengthening institutional capacity in Jordan, promoting a culture of accountability that is vital for effective governance.

Figure 1- Primary comparison between case studies

| Feature | NTA (Egypt) | MBRSG (UAE) | KAIG (Jordan) |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date of Establishment | 2017 - 2018 | 2005 | 2010 |
| Mission | Empowering Egyptian public sector leadership | Advancing governance practices | Promoting good governance |
| Key Programs | Presidential Leadership School, Women Leadership School, State Leadership School | Executive education programs | Specialized training for public sector leaders and employees |
| Training Approach | Experiential learning with tailored programs | Academic rigor combined with practical application | Collaborative approach with stakeholders |
| Target Audience | Public sector leaders at various levels | Senior government officials | Public sector leaders and employees |

To conclude this section, NTA, MBRSG, and KAIG each contribute uniquely to leadership development within their regions, aligning with the theoretical roles of executive education centers in shaping public policy and administration. While each institution is committed to fostering effective leadership capable of navigating contemporary challenges in governance, their approaches differ in terms of the priority given to a certain role. MBRSG prioritizes research in training and educating leaders, NTA focuses more on practical training, and KAIG balances both approaches with a focus on specific values to improve the performance of leaders and institutions.

5.2. Navigating the effectiveness: a Framework of best techniques:

Identifying the most effective methodologies for executive training centers is crucial for achieving optimal outcomes. To do so, we must delve deeper into the specific tools and techniques employed by these centers to enhance the performance of leaders.

5.2.1 Mixed Techniques:

The leadership literature highlights some major techniques and tools deployed in the training programs for the leaders. These tools include the following:

- **Experiential Learning:** it is a process where individuals gain knowledge and skills through direct engagement in experiences. This approach often involves simulations

and role-plays, real-world problem-solving scenarios, and interactive group activities that reflect the complexities of leadership roles (Morris, 2019). By engaging in these activities, executives can apply theoretical concepts in practical situations, enhancing their decision-making skills and situational awareness (Mastering Leadership with Experiential Learning, 2023).

According to a 2020 report by the Association for Experiential Education, 90% of participants in experiential learning programs reported improved problem-solving skills and an enhanced ability to evaluate complex situations. Further statistics shows good results for experimental learning; a survey conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership revealed that organizations investing in experiential learning reported a 50% increase in leadership efficacy compared to those sticking to conventional training approaches (What role does experiential learning play in enhancing leadership skills for managers, 2024). Some of the best organizations that have successfully implemented experimental learning for leadership include Starbucks, University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, Tech Innovations Corp, and National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS).

- **Coaching and Mentoring:** Coaching and mentoring have become increasingly popular, in part because of the limitations of classroom education. Coaching, whether one-on-one or in group settings, is a cornerstone of executive training. This personalized approach allows leaders to explore their strengths and weaknesses with the guidance of an experienced coach or mentor. Mentoring programs often pair less experienced leaders with seasoned professionals to facilitate knowledge transfer and professional growth (Comte, & McClelland, 2017). A study by the International Coach Federation reporting a 70% improvement in work performance for individuals who have a coaching relationship (The Impact of Mentorship on Leadership Growth and Development). In addition, a recent study by the Association for Talent Development found that 75% of executives attribute their success to mentorship (The future of coaching and mentoring in the workplace).
- **Structured Training Programs:** Many executive training centers offer structured programs that combine various learning formats, including workshops, seminars, and online courses. These programs often focus on essential leadership skills such as strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and effective communication. For instance, the Program for Leadership Development at Harvard Business School integrates both in-person and virtual sessions to create a comprehensive learning experience (Day, Bastardo, Bisbey, Reyes, & Salas, 2021).
- **Peer Learning and Group Discussions:** Peer learning involves executives sharing insights and experiences with one another in a collaborative environment. This technique not only enhances learning but also fosters a sense of community among leaders. Group discussions and projects are common practices that encourage diverse perspectives and collective problem solving (Croswell, 2024). This technique goes in line with another method known as "case studies analysis"; where lecturers, along with executives/trainees, analyze real-world case studies to learn from both successful and failed leadership scenarios. This method provides practical insights that can inform future decision-making processes.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Feedback mechanisms are structured processes that gather, analyze, and utilize information about performance, behavior, or outcomes to inform

improvement and development. Feedback exercises are integral to leadership development, providing leaders with insights into their performance and areas for improvement. Structured feedback sessions help executives refine their communication skills while enhancing their self-awareness (Habba, 2024, April 3).

Feedback has various forms, such as a 360-Degree Feedback that involves collecting feedback from various stakeholders within the organization, including peers, subordinates, and supervisors. In addition, there are other forms like anonymous surveys, real-time feedback, Constructive Feedback Training, etc. The integration of robust feedback mechanisms within executive training programs is essential for fostering effective leadership development.

Figure (2) - A brief summary of famous learning techniques

| Learning Technique | Mission | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Experiential Learning | To provide hands-on experience in real-world scenarios. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhances self-awareness - Improves decision-making skills - Fosters teamwork and collaboration - Builds resilience and adaptability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be resource-intensive - May require skilled facilitators - Risk of insufficient debriefing |
| Coaching | To offer personalized guidance and feedback. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases self-awareness - Targets performance improvement - Develops specific leadership skills - Provides objective perspectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May be costly depending on the coach's expertise - Success depends on the coach-mentee relationship |
| Mentoring | To facilitate knowledge transfer from experienced leaders. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accelerates career advancement - Enhances job satisfaction - Builds confidence and self-esteem - Provides personalized support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of mentoring can vary significantly - Potential for mismatched mentor-mentee pairs |
| Role-Playing | To simulate real-life leadership challenges. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boosts confidence in handling difficult situations - Encourages immediate feedback - Improves communication skills - Enhances empathy and perspective-taking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May feel artificial to participants - Requires careful design to be effective |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Case Study Analysis | To analyze real-world scenarios for practical insights. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develops critical thinking skills - Enhances problem-solving abilities - Provides context for theoretical concepts - Encourages collaborative learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May not always reflect current realities - Can be time-consuming to analyze thoroughly |
| Peer-to-Peer Learning | To facilitate knowledge sharing among peers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages collaboration and teamwork - Increases engagement through shared experiences - Promotes diverse perspectives on problem-solving - Fosters a sense of community among participants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May lead to inconsistent quality of information shared - Requires a commitment from all participants - Potential for dominant voices overshadowing quieter peers |
| Feedback Mechanisms | To provide constructive insights on performance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages continuous improvement - Fosters open communication culture - Enhances self-awareness and accountability - Supports skill refinement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May lead to defensiveness if not delivered properly - Requires a culture of trust to be effective |

The methodologies employed by executive training centers are diverse and tailored to meet the unique needs of leaders at various stages of their careers. By integrating experiential learning, coaching, structured programs, peer interactions, case studies and feedback mechanisms, these centers equip executives with the skills necessary for effective leadership in today’s dynamic business environment

5.2.2 MENA Centers: Similar but distinctive Practices:

Although MBRSG, KAIG, and NTA employ similar teaching techniques in delivering knowledge, they vary in their emphasis on specific techniques. MBRSG stands out for its focus on experiential learning, allowing participants to engage directly with real-world challenges. KAIG effectively uses role-playing and simulation exercises, enabling participants to practice decision-making in controlled environments that mimic actual leadership scenarios. NTA emphasizes interactive learning methods, fostering engagement and collaboration among participants.

In addition to the aforementioned teaching techniques, both MBRSG and KAIG incorporate coaching elements into their programs. This personalized support enhances individual growth, a technique not prominently used by NTA.

What is more prominent and effective for NTA is its employing for the Competency-Based Education "CBE" , which allows participants to progress based on their mastery of specific competencies rather than traditional time-based metrics. This personalized approach is particularly effective for adult learners who may have varying levels of experience, ensuring that all participants can benefit from the training.

Additionally, KAIG and MBRSG's structured feedback processes are crucial for developing self-awareness among participants, while NTA focuses on interactive learning methods that engage participants actively in their education process. Their emphasis on peer-to-peer learning fosters collaboration among participants, while the integration of digital tools enhances the overall learning experience

In a brief comparison of focused learning techniques, MBRSG employs a facilitator-centered approach, where instructors guide discussions rather than deliver traditional lectures. This method encourages active participation from students, fostering a collaborative learning environment. The use of case-based learning allows participants to engage with real-world scenarios, enhancing critical thinking skills. KAIG focuses on interactive and experiential learning techniques, such as role-playing and inquiry-based learning. This approach encourages participants to explore topics actively through questioning and research, making the learning experience dynamic and engaging. Collaborative learning is emphasized, allowing students to learn from each other's perspectives. NTA adopts a structured teaching style that combines lectures with practical applications relevant to participants' professional contexts. The emphasis on peer-to-peer learning fosters collaboration among participants, enhancing the overall educational experience. NTA's approach ensures that training is comprehensive while remaining applicable to the specific needs of its audience.

5.3. Factors of success and failure of executive training programs:

While executive training centers does play a crucial role in developing effective leaders within organizations, its success or failure can be influenced by various factors. In this section, we will draw on insights from academic literature and industry practices to identify key elements that contribute to the effectiveness of executive training programs in leadership development.

5.3.1 Organizational Alignment:

- Success Factor: when training initiatives reflect the organization's vision and objectives, they are more likely to gain support from leadership and participants. Research indicates that organizational alignment is vital for achieving desired outcomes, as it ensures that all parts of the organization work together toward common goals (Beer, Finnstrom, & Schrader, 2016).
- Failure Factor: A lack of organizational alignment often leads to programs that do not resonate with participants. Many leadership development programs fail because they adopt a "one size fits all" approach without considering the unique context of the organization. This misalignment can result in disengagement and a lack of applicability in real-world scenarios (Beer, Finnstrom, & Schrader, 2016).

5.3.2 Executive Support and Sponsorship:

- Success Factor: Leadership support helps secure necessary resources, encourages participation, and communicates the importance of development initiatives throughout the organization (Bregman, 2013).
- Failure Factor: Insufficient executive sponsorship can lead to inadequate resource allocation and diminished commitment to training efforts. Programs without visible support from leadership often struggle to achieve desired outcomes, as participants may perceive them as low priority (Bregman, 2013).

5.3.3 Clear Objectives and Goals:

- Success Factor: Clearly defined objectives for training programs ensure that all stakeholders understand the expected outcomes. SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals facilitate focused learning and provide a framework for evaluating success (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014)
- Failure Factor: Vague or poorly articulated goals can result in confusion among participants regarding the purpose of the training. This lack of clarity often leads to disengagement and ineffective learning experiences (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014)

5.3.4 Participant Engagement and Involvement:

- Success Factor: Actively involving participants in the design and delivery of training enhances engagement and ownership over their learning process. Techniques such as peer-to-peer learning, interactive workshops, and feedback mechanisms foster a collaborative environment conducive to skill development (Malagisi, 2015).
- Failure Factor: Low participant involvement can lead to disconnect between training content and the actual needs of learners. Programs that do not consider participant input may fail to address relevant challenges, resulting in poor retention and application of skills (Malagisi, 2015).

5.3.5 Rigorous Evaluation Strategies:

- Success Factor: Implementing robust evaluation strategies helps measure the effectiveness of training programs over time. Continuous assessment through participant feedback, performance metrics, and follow-up evaluations allows organizations to refine their approaches based on data-driven insights (Jacobsen, Andersen, Bøllingtoft, & Eriksen, 2021).
- Failure Factor: A lack of systematic evaluation can lead to stagnation in program development. Without understanding what works and what does not, organizations may continue investing in ineffective training methods (Jacobsen, Andersen, Bøllingtoft, & Eriksen, 2021).

5.3.6 Learning Agility:

- Success Factor: Programs that foster learning agility encourage leaders to adapt their skills and approaches based on changing circumstances. This flexibility is essential in today's dynamic business environment (Rowland, 2017).

- **Failure Factor:** Training initiatives that do not promote adaptability may leave leaders ill-equipped to handle new challenges or shifts within their organizations. Resistance to change among participants can hinder the overall effectiveness of leadership development efforts (Rowland, 2017).

To conclude, the efficacy of executive training centers in leadership development is contingent upon a confluence of interrelated factors. By proactively mitigating potential challenges and capitalizing on opportunities within these factors, organizations can optimize the effectiveness of their leadership development initiatives, thereby positively influencing their overall institutional performance.

6. Discussion and Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study reaffirms that leadership training can actually make a difference for leaders and hence executive training centers play an important role in this process. It also became clear that the combined programs, that include promoting transactional and transformational is most effective; implying that leadership training programs should take into account that leadership requires a varied set of tools, which training programs should be designed to equip and sharpen. In addition, training program based on an action learning design, which combine theoretical learning with practical application and feedback, offer a powerful tool for leadership development.

The comparison between our case studies revealed that while executive training centers in the MENA region share similarities in their program offerings and training methodologies, our comparative analysis highlights distinct approaches and focal points. Its specific mission and objectives often drive each center's unique emphasis on certain tools.

The comparison also showed that there are two ways of training public leaders in these executive centers, either by applying by themselves to the program and succeed in passing all its phases, or by being nominated by their institution for a special leadership program. In both cases, it is crucial for these centers to bear in mind some considerations; such as the type of leaders they are aiming to produce, the cultural background of the trainees that create resistance to change and the nature of work environment in which they work, their ability to digest the program content and then apply it effectively.

Although there is a wide literature, supporting the role that executive training centers could play in leadership development, the past two decades has witnessed a rising literature focusing on the reasons of the failure of these programs as it was mentioned in the third part of the findings. However, some other reasons were ignored; such as the cultural attitudes towards leadership in the public institutions can hinder the adoption of new management practices taught in executive training centers. It is very important to realize that overcoming entrenched bureaucratic norms is essential for successful implementation.

On the other hand, in order to avoid the weak effectiveness of executive centers, training programs has to be resilient in a way that really meets the public leaders' requirements, while navigating the best relevant techniques and tools that match these requirements.

Finally, the study noticed that current literature highlights the significance of feedback and assessment in preventing leadership program failures. Our study reinforces this idea

and proposes a broader, multifaceted evaluation approach. This involves providing immediate feedback to trainees during the program, conducting follow-up assessments every three months, encourage team members to evaluate their selected leaders before and after the program, and delivering comprehensive assessment reports to trainees' institutional leaders to be used as criteria for promoting them later. This multi-faceted approach adds a layer of seriousness to the program and motivates trainees to apply their learnings.

7. Conclusion

Using the comparative analysis for our case studies, the paper highlighted the role of executive training/education centers in leadership development theoretically and in practice, navigating its approaches, methodologies and tools employed to effectively enhance the program outcome, and finally addressing the factors that contribute to the success or failure of the training programs in achieving its objectives.

In conclusion, it is imperative to say that there is no leadership formula. It is rather a long process of learning and experience just like building the general character throughout our life. In order to get the greatest benefit of the program, it is required to embrace the process and actively coach the members to find their own leadership voice. This customized engagement makes all the difference as there is no one size fits all leadership style.

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