

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP: A MAJOR FACTOR IN ORGANISATIONAL LONGEVITY IN GHANA

Akua Frimpong

Abstract

Many Ghanaian organisations, public or private, do not last long in the system due to ineffective leadership or management. Lack of personal leadership in the lives of leaders or managers in Ghana has been identified as a major cause of the short "life span" of organisations in Ghana and Africa. Leaders and managers in Ghana lack personal leadership because of flaws in the leadership foundation in Ghana. Flaws in the leadership foundation are traced to the misunderstanding of what leadership or management position is all about. This may be a legacy Ghanaians inherited from the colonial masters, as well as their own cultural orientation. The exercise of self-discipline by current and aspiring leaders and managers is the only way to correct these flaws and get leaders to lead and managers to manage effectively for organisational survival in Ghana.

Introduction

State owned enterprises in Ghana date back to the colonial period and especially to the post -World War II. For example, the British organized a number of public utilities, such as water, electricity, postal and telegraph services, rail and road network, and bus services. To foster exports, Agricultural Produce Marketing Board was founded in 1949. In addition, the colonial government established the industrial Development Corporation and the Agricultural Development Corporation to promote industries and agriculture. In the mid 70s, the National Redemption Council under I. K. Acheampong also emphasized state enterprises. The Acheampong government established a number of new enterprises and partly

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- 2) Ward, R. D., Improving Corporate Boards: The Boardroom Insider Guide Book, John Wiley & Sons, 2000.
- 3) Walter J. Salmin, Crises Prevention in Corporate Governance, HBS Press, Boston 2000.
- 4) Statement attributed to Jim Wolfensohn, King Report on Corporate Governance, South African Institute of Directors, March 2002.

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or wholly nationalized a number of foreign-owned companies.

In 1984 there were as many as two hundred and thirty five (235) state enterprises in Ghana, but in 2007, one can count the number of state enterprises in the country on one's fingers. We can think of a few survivors like the State Insurance Corporation, the State Enterprises Commission, State Transport Company Ltd. etc. The fate of the state enterprises in Ghana since the colonial period is not different from private enterprises started by Ghanaian business people.

There seems to be a high "mortality rate" of most commercial enterprises in Ghana and, by extension, Africa. The problem is we have never approached the subtler tasks of building organisations, of enhancing their capabilities for innovation and creativity or crafting strategies and designing policy and structure through assimilating new disciplines. Perhaps, this is why, all too often, great organisations in Ghana pass quietly to the ranks of mediocrity. In fact, the average life span of many corporations in Ghana (both private or public) is less than a quarter of a century, yet there are corporations around the world that have been in business for over 200, 500, even 700 years. Organisations led by expatriates do seem to survive in Ghana while those established by Ghanaians and under Ghanaian leadership do not. If organisations under the leadership/management of Ghanaians show signs of liquidation and are divested or taken over by expatriates, the organisations survive and do well.

We have all watched in astonishment as one good Ghanaian-managed company, with all the potentials, after another collapse. This results in loss of billions of cedis to the government, individual investors, as well as loss of jobs for hundreds of people. Examples of such companies are the Ghana Food Distribution Corporation, Ghana National Trading Company, Ghana Shoe Factory Corporation, Ghana Jute Factory, Black Star Line,

Ghana Airways, and many more. After much inquiry and investigation into the causes of these collapses, it has been discovered that one of the primary causes in virtually every case has been flaws in the leaders and managers leadership foundation. Though the leaders of these companies may have been gifted, intelligent, and apparently extremely effective, there were fissures in their leadership foundation that had been purposely ignored.

This article argues that the key to institutional success and longevity, is for leaders, aspiring leaders, and/or individuals to overcome flaws in our leadership foundation by exercising personal leadership in their own lives. In an attempt to make a clear argument, some basic flaws in the Ghanaian leadership foundation will be discussed. The article will also examine the nature and implications of personal leadership concept for leaders or managers in Ghanaian organisations.

Flaws in Our Leadership Foundation

Leadership has been defined and discussed in many different ways. According to Clinton (1988), the former U.S. President, leadership can be defined as "... a dynamic process in which a person with certain capacities influences a specific group of people toward certain purposes for the group." Tannenbaum, Weschler, and Massarie (1961), "Leadership is interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specific goal or goals. ...Leadership is the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of organisation"

Leadership can therefore be broadly defined as: "Influence processes affecting the interpretation of events for followers, the choice of objectives for the group or the organisation, the organisation of work activities to accomplish objectives, the motivation of followers to achieve objectives, the maintenance of cooperative relationships and

team work, and the enlistment of support and cooperation from people outside the group or organisation." (Pierce and Newstrom, 2000).

Leadership is portrayed in the above definitions as an interpersonal process that involves the exercise of influence the ability to bring about change (i.e. "change in behavior, opinions, attitudes, goals, needs, values, and all aspects of the person's psychological field", French and Raven 1959). These definitions of leadership are by implication contrary to traditional authoritarian, hierarchical leadership styles where people are virtually forced to worship their leaders or managers. In this article, we focus on positive influence that will make an organisation effective as well as live long.

We agree with Bennis that: "Leadership is the key determinant for success or failure of an institution and that the five characteristics that are required of a leader are technical competence, people skills, conceptual skills, sound judgment, and character." The last characteristic, according to Bennis, is the element that will make or break a leader. Bennis stipulates that leadership can be said to be a combination of competence and character. If you look at failed leaders, it is a failure of character not competence. He maintains that leadership is about influence through character. Character is integrity and integrity is morality which has got to do with "walking one's talk." Integrity is also knowing right from wrong and doing right. Integrity can be defined as the value you place on yourself as a person. Integrity or character therefore becomes an extremely important component of leadership.

Companies that will survive the future are those that have or developed leaders of integrity, leaders who are not corrupt, leaders who see and know what effective leadership is all about, leaders of character. The late U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated that "The supreme quality of leadership is integrity. Without it no real success is possible, if it is on a section gang, or a football field, in an army or in an office". Covey states that

"...90% of all leadership failures are character failures". We believe that we can all think of some recent examples without looking too hard. It cannot be emphasized enough in today's world and more especially Ghana, that integrity, is the most integral quality of leadership, personally and in organisations.

Ghanaian Mindset about Leadership

One factor that this writer believes influences the behavior of Ghanaian Leadership is the perception of what the Akan calls "Oburoni Dibere" (literally meaning "white person's position"). With Ghana's political independence, Ghanaians assumed responsible positions in the political, economical, religious and other spheres. Today, our worldview of leadership is greatly affected by the legacy. When the Ghanaian is appointed or elected to a leadership position, she/he has "di bere", literally an "eating time", or "dib ea" an eating place. To the Dagomba, she/he has "grabbed." The expression of leadership position of the Baganda's of Uganda translates that the leader "has fallen into things". Thus, we see in the whole of Africa a trend where followers, relatives, and friends flock to door steps to enjoy with us what we have to "eat" or "grabbed" or the good things we have "fallen into." (William Addai, 2002).

Leadership positions are seen in Ghana as opportunities to acquire wealth, to rule over people, and to be worshiped as a king. As a result of this deep seated understanding of leadership position which may have something to do with our cultural value orientation, mindset, or legacy from the colonial masters, leaders see amassing wealth at the expense of the organisations they lead or manage as one of their major functions and not as a corrupt practice. Relatives, townsmen and women, and close friends also expect leaders/managers to extend their riches to them. Thus, this deep-seated idea about leadership and pressure from close relatives and friends "force" leaders not to handle resources properly. They do not see themselves as account-

able to the organisation or to anyone.

The ways we define, allocate, and control social power do affect organisation. Our society has a hierarchy orientation and value "social stratification" in which power and authority are centralized. Organisational structure is tightly controlled and managers behave in ways that reinforce their standing. People show deference to those in authority so they do not verbalize criticism or feedback even when asked to do so. Planning is often autocratic and paternalistic. Top Managers make decisions without consulting people at lower levels. In turn, lower level employees expect managers to take initiative to care for and protect them.

Leaders know their place and act accordingly. They do not mix socially with those under their leadership. They do not cultivate "sharing" or openness between themselves and those under their leadership. People expect them to lead autocratically and they do so. As a result, some of the things that we expect from our leaders as a people can be destructive.

If leaders could be responsible for and accountable to their organisations, if leaders could be able to develop future leaders for their organisations, if they could see the need for shared leadership and do away with autocratic leadership, then this article advocates for renewal of their worldview. Both leaders and followers must reform their thinking on leadership and "followership". The only way out is for them to have knowledge about and to practice personal leadership.

Personal Leadership

Personal leadership is our ability to successfully lead our own life that provides the firm foundation from which we can lead others. This implies that one cannot lead/manage others until one can lead/manage one's self. It is the desire of an individual to take charge of his/her own life.

Personal leaders realize that leadership is not a position or title, but an outlook on life and their role in the world.

All effective enduring leadership must be built on the foundation of effective personal or self-leadership. We saw from the above that leadership is about influencing people by the use of personal character which is mainly about integrity. This means that for one to be able to influence others positively, one should have developed one's own character through self discipline. This is what we call personal leadership which is a continuous journey. If leaders try to use manipulative strategies and tactics to get other people to do what they want while their characters are flawed, then they and their organisations cannot be successful over time.

If there is little or no trust, there is no foundation for permanent success. If leaders learn to lead themselves, they will have what it takes to lead things and people. By so doing they can beat the bottom line because they will unleash the energy and talents of others. They will also become role models and mentors and so influence aspiring leaders to do the right things. These will go a long way to establish lasting organisations in our society.

In effect, leaders are expected to consistently exercise influence over their own lives. They must influence themselves to make the changes necessary to become more productive and effective human beings and leaders. They must have the ability to influence themselves to change the destructive habits and practices (manipulating people and misusing resources in organisations to enrich themselves) that may be keeping them from realizing their potential. They must be effective in mobilising the various resources in their own lives - physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and financial - to achieve the beneficial goals they have determined will move them in the direction of their life mission and the mission and vision of

their organisations/companies. It is only after they have been able to lead themselves that they can transform existing paradigms and practices through their use of influence and the mobilisation of necessary resources to realise something more beneficial and more effective at achieving their organisation's stated mission. Leaders must be vigilant to do the same thing in leading of their own lives if they are to build organisations that last. We believe that leadership is a dynamic process and that in every human transaction, someone is leading and someone is following.

Empowerment of the individuals is a top priority for many organisations that have realized that a command and control leadership style is not the way to get the most out of their people. We suggest that effectively leading self is a prerequisite to truly leading others.

Personal leadership is therefore about disciplining one's self to develop the essential traits needed to do the right thing and preserve success. Personal Leadership is consciously designing our personal lives by centering our lives on correct principles or laws of the universe that pertain to human relationships and human organisations (Covey, 1991). It is not about allowing other people, default cultural values and beliefs, and circumstances to shape our lives by default. Personal Leadership is our self-confident ability to crystallise our thinking so that we are able to establish an exact direction for our own life, to commit yourself to moving in that direction and then to take determined action to acquire, accomplish, or become whatever that goal demands.

Leading self is not a lower order than leading others or leading organisations. Leading self is the ultimate prize of life. It is not only central to organisational success; it is central to positive and joyous survival and success in life and the lives of organisations. In today's business environment, there are countless opportunities for everyone to truly make a difference in their organisation.

Leading self means making contributions that count; with a colleague, with a customer, in product development, and so on. When all leaders and followers make these contributions in their organisations, organisations are bound to survive all odds and live longer.

By promoting the concept of self-leadership, leaders must be vigilant. They must be constantly asking whether the existing paradigms in their lives must be transformed. Can they influence themselves to make the changes necessary to become more effective and productive human beings and leaders? Do they have the ability to influence themselves to change the destructive habits and practices that may be keeping them from realising their full potential? How effective are they at mobilizing the various resources in their own lives - physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and financial - to achieve the beneficial goals they have determined will move them in the direction of their personal mission? These are some of the critical issues that must be addressed if leaders are to master the art of personal leadership.

Practice and Personal Leadership Development

Personal leadership development begins with one's personal reality. One should have a clear understanding of one's destination. Individuals require the opportunity to begin the journey of self-awareness about who they are and how they see and feel about their contributions to their environments. Self-awareness is the ability to choose your response in a given situation by subordinating feelings to values. Developing self-awareness is to learn to lead from your strengths, to become more aware of your weaknesses and develop strategies so that weaknesses do not become limitations. This helps people to develop a much deeper level of understanding of the assumptions they make about how they influence, lead, and interact with others. In the end, everything comes down to individual leadership. This

means we have to know who we are as individuals and how we want to be. Until this becomes clear, and it may take a long time, an individual's potential contribution stays, at best, a far goal.

Personal leadership has to do with personal or self discipline in which character is developed. It has to do with how to break with old paradigms or character. Personal leadership emphasises character development which makes one become a highly effective leader. It is about centering your life and your leadership of organisations and people on true principles. Your effectiveness is predicated upon certain inviolate principles - natural laws in the human dimension - that are just as real and unchanging, as such laws as gravity in the physical dimensions-. Examples of these basic principles are fairness, equity, justice, integrity, honesty and trust. These principles are woven into the fabric of every civilised society and constitute the roots of every family and institution that has endured and prospered. People who recognise and practice these principles move toward survival and stability while those who do not practice them move to disintegration and destruction.

These principles help us to change habits, develop virtues, learn basic disciplines, keep promises, be faithful to vows, exercise courage, or be genuinely considerate of the feelings and convictions of others. As we clearly identify our values and proactively organise and execute around our priorities on a daily basis, we develop self-awareness and self-value by making and keeping meaningful promises and commitments. These practices will definitely go a long way to make our organisation live longer and to serve better. Significant breakthroughs often represent internal breaks with traditional ways of thinking. Stephen Covey refers to these as paradigm shifts. The way to begin developing a sense of Personal leadership is to approach it as a discipline, as a series of practices and principles that must be applied to be useful. It is about controlling ourselves and giving our lives to higher principles, causes, and purposes rather than

focus on power, wealth, fame, position, dominion and possessions. We control ourselves to be ethical - to get rid of deeply embedded habits and beliefs that destroy our character and organisations. We discipline ourselves to become people of integrity.

When people align their personal values with correct principles, they are liberated from old perceptions and paradigms. Centering life on correct principles is the key to developing rich internal power in our lives. With this power, we can realize many of our dreams and those of our organisations. When we observe real character development, we gain the strength to break with the past, to overcome old habits, to change our paradigms. Effective organisational leaders are able to transform existing paradigms and practices through their use of influence and the mobilisation of the necessary resources to realize something more beneficial and more effective at achieving our group's or organisation's mission.

Like most things worth having, personal leadership does not come easily to a person. On the other hand, living a philosophy of personal leadership does not require a magical formula. Nor is it available to only a few. It is actually available to most but what it requires is a commitment to balance a sense of purpose and values. If personal leadership had a motto, it would be this: "Before I seek to change or motivate others, I must first learn to change and motivate myself. I must first become the change I wish to see in others."

Steps to Develop Personal Leadership

The following proven, simple but sometimes difficult to follow steps will help us to develop more success through personal leadership. We must develop the conviction and courage needed to accomplish change. You can make personal changes even though these changes will take time and effort. The essential steps are:

- Write your goals down. Know yourself and

your present condition so you can be realistic.

- Where are you going. Writing your goals crystallizes your thoughts and forces you to be realistic and logical. You are able to build a solid foundation.
- Develop an action plan. A large dream can be overwhelming so break your goals down into manageable pieces.
- Define the steps necessary to accomplish them. Then put the steps into a logical sequence.
- Do the most important step of all: schedule your action steps. Make appointments with yourself to accomplish your action steps so that your busy life and the many competing demands on your time do not derail you. When you plan, you will take the steps necessary to create future success.
- Track and measure results so you know where you are. Items you track and measure get accomplished. When you make steady progress, you are much less likely to experience personal doubts. As you track your success you can enjoy your accomplishments.

Characteristics of Personal Leadership

The best way one can describe personal leadership is to discuss some of its desired traits. Most leaders who exercise personal leadership realize and accept the fact that there is a spiritual element to life. They may not totally understand it or always sense it, but they know it is there. In this paper, we define spirituality as "the process of living out a set of deeply held personal values, of honoring forces or a presence greater than ourselves." It expresses our desire to find meaning in, and to treat as an offering what we do. This spiritual element

provides a number of specific characteristics that cannot be found or nurtured anywhere. Practitioners of personal leadership know the purpose of their existence must go far beyond the pursuit of the "whoever dies with the most toys wins" philosophy of our modern society. They know that every day of life is a precious gift and an endowment to become something even better.

Personal leaders have a plan for their lives. They have personal mission statements, life strategic plans, setting of goals or a personal punch list. It is all about giving our lives direction or establishing a clear path for our lives. The mission statement is based on correct principles that help us develop character that produce a moral and ethical work force; that provides excellent service to the organisation's (or the individual's) customers; and assume corporate social responsibility involvement within its community and environment. It requires improving business and social conditions that leave the place better off than we found it. Unfortunately most leaders live their lives without a plan. They bob up and down, left and right, over and under, depending on the tempest of the sea. They become victims of circumstances and allow time to improve decisions they are unwilling to make for themselves.

A mental break-through comes when we take the vague ideas and goals rolling around in our heads and put them on paper as a personal mission statement. When done correctly and reviewed often, it has the potential to magnify our focus and increase our desire for achievement at a higher level. Personal leadership is about living out a set of deeply held personal values which are based on principles. Such that we can be seen as principle-centered leaders. By consciously choosing and directing the course of our lives, we can create successful and harmonious outcomes for ourselves, and be positive influences outwardly for those we lead. We must develop characters that produce moral and ethical work force that provides excellent service to the organisation's (or the

individual's) customers and assume corporate social responsibility involvement within its community and environment, through improving business and social conditions (following grandma's edict "leave the place better off than you found it");

Leaders who practice personal leadership accept risks and responsibility. Personal leadership is not about comfort zones or the status quo; it is about the passion for continual personal growth and improvement. Every positive and healthy change that has ever occurred in human civilisation has only come about by great struggle and by rejecting the way things are as "good enough". Personal leaders accept the challenge to make things better...to inspire others to become better...to win! In contrast, our mentality about leading makes us accept only a very limited degree of risk and accountability. Therefore we do not seek to become winners; we just try not to lose! Such an attitude "kills" organisations.

Personal leadership is about being accountable for attitudes and actions, thus there is the need to do a regular self-analysis. Personal leadership is also concerned with the knowledge and acknowledgement of our strengths and weaknesses. It is about working hard to build on these strengths and using them to propel life in a positive direction. It is about working to correct or at least modify our weaknesses. This means that it is indeed important to analyse our faults and acknowledge them. It is productive to accept responsibility for them and becomes determined to change.

Personal leadership is about having and living by principles which become moral and ethical guides as we lead. Principles like integrity, honesty, kindness, open-communication, and treating others with dignity are the hallmarks of effective leaders who that lead those long lasting companies. Personal leadership is about self competition. The real question is not "did I win," but "how did I do today". It does not make sense to compare ourselves to others because we can only control our

own performance. Self-competition means we try to do better today than we did yesterday because we constantly try to perform at a personal best... Thus, for personal leaders "winning or losing against others becomes a secondary consideration and even irrelevant.

It takes personal leadership to be truly genuine and authentic. Genuineness and authenticity are vital in a leader if his or her organisation is to survive for long. People come to believe in leaders and see them as worthy of trust when they realise that these leaders have followers' best interest at heart. Leaders interested only in wellbeing, agendas, and advancement, will not be willingly followed. A genuine and authentic leader is truly compassionate. He understands the suffering of his workers and is ready to suffer along with them. Their courage will inspire others to make needed sacrifices. Such a leader sees himself as a steward and so is accountable and responsibly handles resources entrusted in his care.

Personal leaders display expertise in leadership skills and confidence in their abilities. Such leaders do not see leadership as a position to amass wealth or manipulate people; but as a reciprocal relationship between them and the workers who choose to work in their organisations. They are creative and as a result move their businesses from "pause" or "collapse" mode to "fast forward" by becoming creative. Leaders need to see business organisations through different perspectives.

Leaders who lead themselves are proactive and so believe that "all things are possible". Leaders who exercise personal leadership lose the ambition to build monuments to themselves and establish large companies that bear their names to prove their success in life. Instead, they become interested in leaving a positive legacy. They eventually come to the conclusion that a lasting legacy with real value is in people. As a result, they seek to inspire and motivate others to reach their own potentials and fulfill their own dreams.

In addition, these kinds of leaders want to deeply give something back to the world. They want to impart what they have learnt to others to help make their lives more productive and fulfilling. This may be in mentoring others or serving the community. Such leaders, will do their best to treat their workers with respect, help them to become better persons and so create a healthy organisational climate that will make the organisations live much longer. These traits are the ideal we should all strive for. Leaders with such qualities are very difficult to come by in Ghana. As a result, most Ghanaian organisations "die" prematurely. It is extremely important that, as a nation, if we want to have a better life and organisations that will serve us better, we learn to exercise personal leadership at all levels in our lives.

Conclusion

It will suffice to conclude this paper by saying that the most important trait in organisational leadership is personal leadership. Personal leadership is about seeking continuous improvement and correcting our own personal flaws. No one can give what he does not have. Therefore, it is only when leaders have been able to control their own lives by becoming principle-centered that they can lead effectively. It is proposed that one of the main causes of the liquidation of Ghanaian organisations is the lack of personal leadership on the part of the leaders of these organisations. Self-discipline by leaders will go a long way to check corruption, manipulations of followers, and other bad leadership/managerial practices in organisations. Personal leadership, whether at the CEO level or at the supervisory level, will bring great personal rewards to a person. The person as an effective personal leader, will develop a strong success attitude that gives him freedom to choose his own path to success.

Personal leadership is a discipline that can be learnt and a must for all leaders as well as those aspiring to lead. A leader is responsible for

developing latent and potential talents. Effective leaders are those who have developed themselves to be men and women of integrity. If leaders do what they say, if agreements are followed through, and promises are kept, these serve as indicators that the leader is a person of integrity and is, therefore, trustworthy. However, deceptions, cover-ups, and false promises indicate dishonesty and lack of integrity. Integrity is not a virtue we are born with. Integrity is a decision and a choice we make over and over. The leader must allow integrity into every part of her life. This means that leaders in businesses and companies should have some basic principles and should be willing to stand by them. Lack of personal leadership brings an inevitable decline and fall of the leader and his organisation.

Before we can exercise effective leadership that will withstand the hostile element of our culture and society, serious preparatory work must be done on those areas of our lives that will provide a firm foundation on which an effective leadership career can be built. We believe that all effective and enduring leadership must be built on the firm foundation of personal-leadership. It is the ability to successfully lead our own lives that provides the firm foundation from which we can lead others as well as ensure organisational longevity. Personal leadership helps leaders center their lives and their leadership of organisations and people on certain true principles which will help them overcome the pull of default cultural beliefs, indiscipline, corruption, etc.

The key to dealing with the leadership challenges that face us today is the recognition of a principle-centered core within both ourselves and our organisations. Personal leadership says leading is not just to a new understanding of how to increase quality and productivity, but also to a new appreciation of the importance of building personal and professional relationships in order to enjoy a more balanced, rewarding and effective life in long-lasting organisations.

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THE "ABC" OF INTERCULTURAL NEGOTIATIONS

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Abstract

Globalization of the world economy has resulted in an increased interdependence between nations around the world. Cross cultural skills have therefore become increasingly important as more and more people from different countries study, work, and live together. The paper examined two main aspects of culture; first, as a dynamic concept, and second, as both a barrier and a bridge in cross-cultural negotiations. The discussion leads us to conclude that what is different is not necessarily inferior and what is familiar is not always the best. We argue that while the development of intercultural competence may be difficult to learn and apply, when we accept the boundedness of our rationality and awareness, we will be more willing to open ourselves to self discovery to minimize intercultural differences in negotiations.

Introduction

Globalization of the world economy has resulted in an increased interdependence between nations around the world. More and more companies not only do business abroad but they also have subsidiaries as well as joint ventures or strategic alliance partners in other countries. Cross cultural skills have become increasingly important as more and more people from different countries study, work, and live together (Matejovsky, 2005). This increasing interdependence of people has made negotiations very important in domestic, national, and international discussions. It is therefore not surprising that negotiation has become one of the most popular business school courses beyond the core requirements (Thompson and Leonardelli, 2004).