

Chapter 9

Dynamics of Public Training in a University Setting: Promoting Excellence through Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The case presented in this chapter submits a general consensus about the role of leadership in a university public training program. Focusing on short training programs provided by the Centre for Continuing Education of the University of Botswana, there are some indications that the effectiveness of these training is compromised by a number of issues. Emerging from reflective evaluations and experiences from coordinators are issues of relevance, feedback loop, inclusiveness and training goals. In the light of our understanding of different goals of training, it becomes clear that current public training at the University of Botswana focus more on the conceptual understanding along with occupational at the expense of other areas of public training. The analysis reveals some shortcomings in a number of aspects that calls for a multi-task, multi-skilled leader who can serve well as a strategic decision-maker, partner with clients; skilled designer and marketer of training programs.

ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND

Originally the University of Botswana (UB) was part of the University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland (UBBS). UBBS was opened on the 1st of January 1964 through an agreement between the governments of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. In 1975, Lesotho decided to nationalise the Roma campus of University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. This resulted in Botswana making a call

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1624-8.ch009

to the public to donate beasts and sorghum (which became part of the logo) to fund its own university, hence the famous phrase of ‘Motho le Motho Kgomo’ (One Man, One Beast) in the country (Bailey, Cloete & Pillay, n.d). The “One Man, One Beast” fundraising campaign was launched to raise money for the construction of Botswana Campus of the University of Botswana and Swaziland. Contributions of all types were made including chicken, eggs, sorghum, money and goats (Bailey, Cloete, & Pillay, n.d). The dream of owning a local university became a reality in 1982 (University of Botswana, 2013/14). Its strong ties with the public emanates from this background.

The University of Botswana operates as a public institution or state owned enterprise offering undergraduate and post graduate programs. A public institution is an institution that is run for public use. The University is thus funded through public funds channelled through the ministry of education. As a public institution with the above people oriented fund raising history, the university has an obligation to pay back to the public by offering programs at a reasonable price. Such an obligation has made it imperative to come up with an engagement strategy as a means to facilitate collaborate with government, industries and the community (Cloete, Bailey, Pillay, Bunting, & Maassen, 2011).

The University’s vision is “to be the leading centre of academic excellence in Africa and the World” (University of Botswana, 2013/14). Excellence is to be achieved through the following areas: delivery of teaching and learning; advancement of knowledge and understanding through research and application; and improve economic and social development through engagement with government and business community. Another component of achieving excellence is through its primary missions of teaching, conducting research and engagement with the community. In order to achieve these activities, the University uphold a set of values which include academic integrity, cultural authenticity, professional and ethical standards, public accountability, and many more (University of Botswana, 2008).

Like any institution of higher education, the University has a governance structure. Externally there is a chancellor who oversees the entire functions of the University. The chancellor is a ceremonial leader since the inception of the University. Working hand in hand with the chancellor is the vice chancellor who is the chief executive officer of the institution and takes care of day to day management of the institution. The vice chancellor is assisted by three deputy vice chancellors who are responsible for three main units; academic affairs, student affairs and finance and administration. The three deputy vice chancellors and the vice chancellor make up the executive leadership of the University. Under the deputy vice chancellors there are deans, directors, and heads of departments. As an educational institution, the core functions of the University are teaching, research and community service as defined by its vision and mission (Bailey, Cloete, & Pillay, n.d)

The university also has a board of directors called the university council which is responsible for propelling the university towards the achievement of its goals. Amongst the council members are prominent figures from the nation and senior personnel within the University, which forms a strong link between the University and the community. The University of Botswana consists of seven faculties and centres. Among the centres is the centre for continuing education. While the faculties offer traditional programs, CCE as a teaching centre sets itself apart with its mandate to offer continuing education and professional development training programs.

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