



Perceived development needs of managers compared to an integrated management competency model

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Abstract

Purpose – This research sets out to achieve three goals: first, to discover the most important management development areas specified by Finnish managers; second, to discover the intentions of Finnish managers in management development on a personal level and with the support of organizations; and third, to compare the above mentioned aspects and to compare those also with competency models presented in the literature.

Design/methodology/approach – The empirical data were gathered through an internet survey. The sample consists of 2,500 middle and senior managers from different industries in the Finnish private sector. Altogether 794 responses were received, giving a response rate of 32.

Findings – This study revealed that there are a lot of managers who do not have any specific development intentions for themselves. In organizations where management development was both well organized and connected to strategic management, managers were more consciously aware of the development needs at a personal as well as at a general level. Additionally the study revealed that the development intentions of the managers differed from the ideas presented by the scholars in literature on management competencies. Technical and business skills were emphasized, while social skills and intrapersonal skills were neglected.

Research limitations/implications – More detailed qualitative study is needed in order to understand managers' personal interpretations of their development needs.

Practical implications – Managers in organizations should first be educated in management competencies, management development and learning issues, before they can become thoroughly conscious about their own competencies and development needs. Those who can provide help in these matters are human resource professionals, researchers and consultants.

Originality/value – The paper provides useful information on the development needs of management.

Keywords Managers, Competences, Management skills, Career development, Finland

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In a continuously changing environment it has become impossible to manage successfully without sustained personal development. The managers of organizations face the globalization of business, rapid technological change, continual reorganizing and competence-based competition. These developments challenge the skills, competencies and capabilities of managers in organizations. In light of these dynamic changes, managers' competencies also need to be renewed on a regular basis. Thus, management development should be seen as a crucial strategic tool (McClelland, 1994; Jackson *et al.*, 2003). Management development, in the context of this paper, can



be defined as the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in managerial roles and processes (see McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004).

The concepts of skills, competencies and capabilities are all applied when discussing management development. Their definitions, however, seemingly remain unclear. "Skills" have been defined, for example, as specific expertise which can be taught and which is applied in operational work activity. They are linked to requirements of particular work roles. "Capability" has been defined, for example, as an ability to apply both skills and competencies in a particular context in such a way that it is perceived to add value (Kakabadse and Korac-Kakabadse, 2000; Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003; Jackson *et al.*, 2003).

The most common concepts used in recent literature on management development are competency and competence, which are often used interchangeably. The terms are attributed multiple meanings depending on the context and perspective and they can be classified as work-oriented definitions and multidimensional definitions (Garavan and McGuire, 2001). In its broadest sense, "competency" refers to the sum of experiences and knowledge, skills, traits, aspects of self-image or social role, values and attitudes a manager has acquired during his/her lifetime (Pickett, 1998; Parry, 1996; McLagan, 1998; Mumford, Zaccaro, Johnson, Diana, Gilbert and Threfall, 2000). There is some agreement that there are more and less observable elements of competence (Garavan and McGuire, 2001).

In general, however, the dominant view is that managerial competencies can be developed through training and exercise (Fletcher, 1992; Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro and Reiter-Palmon, 2000). According to the more humanistic views, people can only be supported and motivated to use their capacities (Spencer, 1983).

A variety of approaches have been used to identify the competencies associated with effective performance (Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro and Reiter-Palmon, 2000). These include observing managers at work, observing them performing simulated work activities (for example in assessment centres), asking them about their response to critical incidents, as well as about their beliefs in the competencies that are necessary for them to perform their roles effectively (Hayes *et al.*, 2000). In particular, structured and unstructured interviews and questionnaires have been used to elicit such beliefs (e.g. Rifkin *et al.*, 1999).

Garavan and McGuire (2001) present two main perspectives concerning the notion of competencies in the literature. The first perspective is based on developmental humanism and views employees as possessing a high degree of self-control and self-regulation. The second and more common perspective is grounded more in utilitarian instrumentalist philosophy. It advocates that rational management of employees leads to achieving the ultimate aim of increased competitive advantage. Thus, identification of critical management competencies is often meant to serve as part of a company's strategic organizational planning. Nevertheless, in many organizations management development is still often perceived as an isolated process, which does not contribute significantly to organizational development and performance. Consequently, the responsibility for management development is often left to the managers themselves. It is therefore dependent on their own perceptions and motivation as to which areas they intentionally seek to develop or whether they participate in various development processes.

This paper focuses on managers' own intentions towards management development. To facilitate this, the research set out to achieve three goals:

- (1) to discover the most important management development areas as specified by managers;
- (2) to discover the intentions of managers towards management development on both a personal level and with the support of the organization; and
- (3) to compare those management development areas mentioned above with the competency models presented in the literature.

A detailed review of current thinking on executive development, as reflected in the literature, was the starting point for the research and forms the framework for this study. The data for the study were obtained primarily from an internet-survey conducted in 2003.

Towards an integrated competency model

According to Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) a competency model is a descriptive tool that identifies the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behavior needed to perform effectively in an organization. The noted benefits are many. These identified competencies form a basis for the planning and development of all the human resource management (HRM) activities. Furthermore, they help in the communication of a company's strategic intentions and needs, and give organizations a "common language" that can be used to discuss performance, selection, development, advancement and succession planning. However, competence models have also been subject to criticism. Indeed, they have been criticized for producing idealized lists of qualities, which contain almost everything. There also have been questions raised concerning attempts to disaggregate lists of managerial competences that may have universal application (see, e.g. Burgoyne, 1990; Stuart and Lindsay, 1997; Rifkin *et al.*, 1999). There are typically implicit assumptions made in research that a common set of competencies is required from all managers. There is research evidence, however, that the demands for certain competencies vary considerably, not least depending on the variety of job-related demands (see, e.g. Hayes *et al.*, 2000). Garavan and McGuire (2001) have pointed out through a thorough investigation that certain weaknesses exist concerning some of the philosophical and epistemological dimensions of competency and their usage. First, the competencies are usually seen as a specific set of attributes that are context-free. The meaning of internal organizational context is in this sense often ignored. Second, many descriptions of competency do not consider the role of the employee and their experience.

In spite of the variance in priorities and emphasis on different competencies in different management contexts, it can be assumed that some degree of generalizability exists. Indeed, it is argued that many of the competencies managers need are transferable and generic in nature, which subsequently form the basis for all organized management development (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly and Marks, 2000).

Competency models have been organized in a variety of ways. They have been categorized, for example, in terms of two broad skill categories (Klagge, 1998), three types of skills (Mumford, 2000), four competency domains (Katz, 1974; Pavett and Lau, 1983; Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003), six competencies (Conger, 2001) and ten skill categories (Carrington, 1994). In the relevant literature, it is even evident that the terms

competence and skills are used interchangeably. Nevertheless, there exists considerable doubt surrounding whether competencies can be extensively categorized and labelled as they often overlap, and thus commonly suffer from over ambiguity. On the other hand, even more confusion and mystification may arise in any further discussion about managers' capabilities and performance, if there is no agreement as to the elements that support them.

In this paper, the categorizations of managerial competencies mentioned above are analysed in more detail. To this end, additional relevant literature has been referred to in the reasoning process (for example Garavan and McGuire, 2001). After conducting the iterative classification process, six clusters of managerial competencies could be established when integrating elements from different competency models introduced in the literature. They are:

- (1) technical competencies;
- (2) business competencies;
- (3) knowledge management competencies;
- (4) leadership competencies;
- (5) social competencies; and
- (6) intrapersonal competencies.

The pyramid form was selected as the most appropriate visualization with regard to the structure of these competencies. Accordingly, the categories of skills are displayed through a hierarchical model, which follows the idea of the qualification model developed originally in German industrial sociology (Figure 1). Indeed, the structure closely corresponds with the iceberg model of Garavan and McGuire (2001) where skills and knowledge form the tip and the less visible elements exist at the bottom, beneath the surface. Rifkin *et al.* (1999) also produced a hierarchical model visualized as a pyramid through empirical research among technical managers. The model presented in this paper differs from theirs in that they do not specify the generic



Figure 1.
Hierarchical model of
management
competencies

competencies, but focus on the function of different types of competencies and their interrelations.

The model presented in this paper exhibits the main competence categories that are generally regarded as important in managers' job roles. The competences can be seen as a continuum from personal-related competencies to work-role related competencies (Rifkin *et al.*, 1999). The closer to the top a competence is, the more it is connected to education and specific work experience. The closer to the bottom the competence is, the more it is connected to a manager's personal traits and personal growth as a human being. In this sense, whilst the upper level competencies are easier to develop, those on the bottom are more difficult (Garavan and McGuire, 2001). It is argued here, in line with Garavan and McGuire (2001), that "competence is a holistic concept, which consists of technical, management, people, attitude, value and mental skill components". It is the combination of all these, which forms the basis for a manager's subsequent behavior and performance. In other words, the closer to the foundation of the pyramid the competence lies, the more fundamental it is to a manager's potential performance (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991; Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Parks, 1985).

Technical competencies are those a manager needs in handling the contents of the processes or functions that s/he is responsible for (see for example Katz, 1974; Pavett and Lau, 1983). They refer to the ability to use tools, procedures, and techniques in a specialized field. They usually represent skills and knowledge in which the manager has specialized, for example as part of his/her education. Typical examples include finance and accounting, computing, engineering and chemistry.

Business competencies are needed in management-related work in any business (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003) with many of them being generic in nature. They typically represent areas of management training/education found in such programs as the MBA. These competencies include, for example, strategic perception, decision making and board management (Institute of Directors, 1995), the ability to think in terms of systems and knowing how to lead systems, as well as giving vision, meaning, direction and focus to the organization (Scholtes, 1999). The leveraging of internal and external resources to respond customer needs would also fall into this category (Rifkin *et al.*, 1999) along with planning, monitoring budgets, forecasting costs and revenues, cutting costs, mapping strategies, evaluating performance, and organizing necessary reports (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). Because of their close connection to general business knowledge and tasks, they have been referred to as crucial meta-cognitive skills for managers (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly and Marks, 2000). These skills are needed in management, which are in turn distinctive from those needed in leadership (Bennis, 1979). In short, they make a manager capable to manage things.

From the competencies mentioned above, knowledge management competencies can be distinguished as a separate cluster, which reflects the special current and future demands of managers. It would seem that this area seemingly overlaps with both business and leadership competencies. However, according to the knowledge management literature, it is arguably justifiable in the current business climate to separate this area from the more traditional aspects of management and leadership. Indeed, it is suggested that managers should not only be proficient in information handling on a personal level, but also capable in the management of information processing, learning and development at the group and organizational level (Ekvall

and Arvonen, 1991; Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999; Viitala, 2002). Knowledge management competencies includes, for example, information search, concept formation and conceptual flexibility (Katz, 1974; Pavett and Lau, 1983; Cockerhill *et al.*, 1995), analytical understanding (Institute of Directors, 1995), complex problem solving skills and solution construction skills (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly and Marks, 2000), an understanding of learning, development and improvement (Scholtes, 1999) as well as facilitating and tutoring the learning of others (Luthans and Lockwood, 1984; Yukl, 1994; Senge, 2000). These competencies form a sort of bridge between cognitive-based skills and social skills.

Leadership and supervisory competencies refer to leading people. They concern the exercise of power to some degree (Stogdill, 1974). They refer to a manager's capability to direct people, support people and participate people (House and Mitchell, 1974), facilitate people and empower people (Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999). They also comprise the competencies needed in creating a common purpose with subordinates, managing diversity, supporting creativity and creating community (Rosen, 1996). These competencies overlap with knowledge management and social competencies. Compared to social competencies they are more tightly connected to relationships between a manager and his/her subordinates in an organization. Compared to knowledge management the focus is more on people issues. These competencies are generic and transferable.

Social competencies or interpersonal competencies refer to coping in the manager's social relations (see Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). They include a manager's ability to build and maintain relationships with different stakeholders. This means, for example, understanding people and their behavior (Scholtes, 1999), social judgment skills (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly and Marks, 2000), communication and interacting with others (Institute of Directors, 1995), motivating people and handling conflicts (Morse and Wagner, 1978). These competencies also refer to core areas of leadership, insofar as it is conceptualized as influencing other people towards the attainment of group or organizational goals (see Stogdill, 1974). In slightly more depth, interpersonal skills have been categorized into four components: a disposition to put oneself in the place of another person, a skill to get it right when one tries to anticipate another person's expectations, a skill to incorporate the information about the other person's expectations into one's subsequent behavior, and self-control to stay focused on the other person's expectations (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). These competencies overlap with leadership skills and intrapersonal competencies.

Intrapersonal competencies lie deep in the managers' personality (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). They are closely associated with the trait approach to leadership. Along with traits, the social role, self-image, motives and values have all been included in this area of competency. The important capabilities are self-confidence, proactive orientation and achievement orientation (Cockerhill *et al.*, 1995), social judgement skills (Zaccaro *et al.*, 2000) as well as conflict resolution (Klagge, 1998), and tolerating and mastering uncertainty (Nordhaug, 1998). According to Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003), intrapersonal competencies generally contain three main components: core self-esteem, attitudes toward authority, and self-control.

People are often poor judges of their own performance as leaders (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). While they can often evaluate business skills rather effectively, leadership skills on the other hand are much more difficult to evaluate. Nevertheless,

whether the perceived development needs are accurate or not, they do impact on the choices managers make concerning their own development. Thus, a number of academics and scholars in the field of management development have suggested that improving self-knowledge must be the basis for all true management development (e.g. Pedler *et al.*, 1986). Competency models could thus serve as one potential tool for helping managers in self-reflection and development. They could also serve as a tool for building collective comprehension concerning management in an organization. Management, after all, is also a collective and cultural phenomenon.

In the next section those competencies that managers themselves intend to develop in the near future are reported. They reflect their perceptions on important managerial competencies and their personal development needs. The concept of intention is grounded in cognitive psychology that attempts to explain or predict human behavior. Intentions can largely be said to refer to motives. In management development, for example, managers who are committed to a programme of action are said to be motivated (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). Indeed, it is viewed that behavioural intention is derived from attitudes, and becomes an immediate determinant of behaviour.

The study

The survey reported below is one of the first large-scale attempts to chart the current state of management development at a national level in Finland. The survey, conducted by a research group at the University of Vaasa, encompasses several areas of interest concerning management development, namely its focuses, methods, and strategic linkages. The sample consists of 2500 senior managers from different industries in the Finnish private sector. The data was gathered through an Internet survey among members of The Finnish Association of Graduates in Economics and Business Administration. The survey instrument consisted of Likert-type scale questions and four open-ended questions. The questions relating to this study are presented later in this paper.

Altogether 794 responses were received, giving a response rate of 32 percent. They represented the following list of responsibilities: general management (20 percent), accounting (30 percent), marketing and sales (29 percent), research and development (2 percent), production (2 percent), logistics (1 percent), human resource management (6 percent), communication (1 percent) and other areas (9 percent).

This empirical study aspired to provide answers to the following questions:

- How do managers perceive their organization's ability to support management development? This question provides information about the opportunities and developmental support that the company offers to its managers.
- What are managers' perceptions concerning management development needs in general?
- What are the managers' own perceived development intentions both now and in the near future?

Managers' perceptions of management development in their organizations

First, we investigated how managers feel that their organizations support management development. The survey revealed that management development is still often far from being systematic. Approximately only 40 percent of the respondents could agree that

management development is a systematic process in their company. Only a little more than one quarter of the respondents could agree with the statement, that the goal of management development is clear and well known. Slightly less than one-quarter of the respondents was of the opinion that management development is based on careful analysis of development needs. Furthermore, the strategic link seemed to be tenuous. Indeed, roughly one-third of the respondents felt that management development is connected to the company's strategies. A little less than half of the respondents felt that management development programs could have an influence on strategies (see Table I).

Managers' perceptions of important general areas for development

The following open question was posed to the managers: "What are the most important development areas for managers in organizations?" This question was targeted at the general level and did not refer to the respondents' personal needs. Altogether 615 managers of the total 794 specified one or more development area for managers. The total amount of suggestions was 1,179. These suggestions could be clustered into 15 broad topics. A list ranking the current areas of management development needs produced by managers is presented in Table II.

The managers were asked about the areas which they view as the primary development areas for all managers in organizations. The most important areas represented both human and strategic aspects. The top three were: leadership and supervisory activities (25 percent), knowledge management (12 percent) and strategic management (10 percent). Developing processes and functions was the next important (8 percent) and equally important were knowing the field and business surroundings. Change management was mentioned in 7 percent of responses.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Totally disagree			Totally agree	
Management development is a systematic process	11	30	21	32	7
The goals of management development are clear and well-known	10	35	29	24	3
Management development bases on careful analysis of development needs	14	37	26	20	3
Our leader is interested in management development and participates in it	6	24	22	34	14
Management development is connected to the company's strategies	8	33	25	29	4
Our business strategies demand management development	4	19	33	34	8
Management development programs may have an influence on strategies	6	19	29	41	5
Management development is supported by other HRM-practices (appraisal, career development, payment etc.)	9	28	20	37	7

Notes: Figures are percentages.

Table I.
Managers' perceptions of management development in their own organization

Table II.
Management
development needs as
perceived by managers

Development area	All suggestions	
	(%)	<i>n</i>
1. Leadership and supervisory activities	25	293
2. Knowledge management	12	141
3. Strategic management, management by goals	10	118
4. Developing processes and functions	8	99
5. Knowing the field and business surroundings	8	95
6. Change management	7	80
7. Communication	6	75
8. Human resource management	6	73
9. Time management	5	55
10. Internationalization and globalization	3	38
11. Cost and efficiency management	3	34
12. Organization climate and organization culture	2	29
13. Capability to understand the general view	2	24
14. Development of technology	1	1
15. Other development areas	2	15

Managers' current intentions towards management development

Further on in the questionnaire, the managers were asked to respond to an open question about their personal development needs during the present year. The question was: "During this year, in which areas are you going to develop your competencies with the support of your organization?"

Only 515 managers of the total 794 answered this question. Those respondents who did not provide an answer stated that they are not planning to develop any competencies (36), they do not know whether they will (seven) or they simply remained unanswered (236). When this question is compared to the previous one, it can be noticed that whilst one hundred managers could see the need for management development at the general level, they do not, however, mention any development needs at the personal level (see Table III).

The length of time that the respondents had been in their present positions had no statistical relation to the reporting of personal development intentions. Additionally, no statistically significant variation in development intentions could be found within different age groups of managers. Even board membership did not produce any significant differences. Women, on the other hand, seemed to be somewhat more active in their management development intentions ($p = 0.02$). One-quarter of them did not relay any intentions, while one third of men did not state any intentions in management development.

Table III.
Intended areas of
management
development

	%	<i>n</i>
Managers who did not mention any areas	35	279
Managers who mentioned one topic	46	366
Managers who mentioned two topics	18	141
Managers who mentioned three or more topics	5	43
Total amount of respondents	794	

There were altogether 748 items mentioned for current development areas. They were categorized separately by two researchers resulting in 23 topics at the end of the process (see Table IV). They consisted of more concrete and operation level issues than those areas cited for management development at the general level. The top five topics were leadership and supervisory activities (12 percent), sales and marketing, client management (10 percent), human resource management (9 percent), accounting and cost management (9 percent), and strategic management (7 percent). The responses reflected largely traditional themes, corresponding with the typical contents of MBA programs.

Furthermore, the respondents were questioned about their primary development areas for the next three years (see Table IV). The question was: "During the next three years, in which areas are you going to develop your competencies?" Every third manager (32 percent) did not provide an answer to this question. Five of the managers informed that they are not going to develop themselves whereas six of them stated that they do not know whether they will or not. The rest of the respondents (67 percent) had some idea as to what would be their main development areas during the next three years. The top five areas were the same as those listed in the current development areas, but the order was changed. Now human resource management was listed as the first (14 percent) area with leadership and supervisory coming second (12 percent).

Discussion and conclusion

Managers' intentions to develop their competencies are exhibited diagrammatically in Figure 2. The 23 different areas for development which were derived from the intentions of managers are clustered into fewer competency categories according to the competency model presented earlier in this paper. In accordance with the regrouping principle, the previous categories of "leadership and supervisory skills" and "team management" are, for example, now included in the same category, namely "leadership and supervisory skills." Managers' responses to open questions were analysed in instances where some of the former labels were difficult to replace (for example "others" and "change management"). The proportion of all responses in each competency category is expressed in percentages. The overall view concerning the development focus among managers changes fairly substantially when the development intentions are grouped into broader categories as shown in Table IV.

The managers claimed that leadership and supervisory activities are the most urgent development areas among managers in general. Interestingly, it also appeared that most of them think that this does not concern her/himself. The distinctively most popular competency category cited in personal development is that of general business skills, which refer to, according to the responses, very traditional knowledge areas such as strategic management, marketing, accounting, logistics, developing processes and functions and so on. As many as 55 percent of the development intentions concerned these business skills during the current year and 61

during the next three years. The category of technical skills was ranked second in popularity. Indeed, every fifth response relating to the manager's personal development area focused on technical skills in the current year while 16 percent claimed that they intend to develop them during the next three years.

These results contain several messages about a range of management development issues, which are to a large extent all interrelated. First, they reflect the pressures that

Table IV.
Management
development intentions of
managers over time

	Intentions concerning personal management development during the current year	(%)	Intentions concerning personal management development during the next three years	(%)
1.	Leadership and supervisory activities	12	1. Human resource management	14
2.	Sales and marketing, client management	10	2. Leadership and supervisory activities	12
3.	Human resource management	9	3. Sales and marketing, client management	10
4.	Accounting and cost management	9	4. Accounting and cost management	10
5.	Strategic management, management by goals	7	5. Strategic management, management by goals	9
6.	Developing processes and functions	5	6. Own professional competence	5
7.	Language skills	5	7. Internationalization	4
8.	Communication	5	8. Communication	4
9.	Own professional competence	4	9. Knowledge management	4
10.	Automatic data processing	4	10. Language skills	3
11.	Technology	4	11. Technology	3
12.	Knowledge management	4	12. Developing processes and functions	3
13.	Internationalization	3	13. Knowing the field and business surroundings	3
14.	Knowing the field and business surroundings	3	14. Change management	2
15.	Project management	2	15. Automatic data processing	2
16.	Change management	2	16. Business skills in general	2
17.	Team management	1	17. Project management	2
18.	Law	1	18. Law	1
19.	Product expertise	1	19. Networking	1
20.	Capability to understand the general view	1	20. Time management	1
21.	Taxation	1	21. Capability to understand the general view	1
22.	Business skills in general	1	22. Product expertise	1
23.	Others	6	23. Others	3

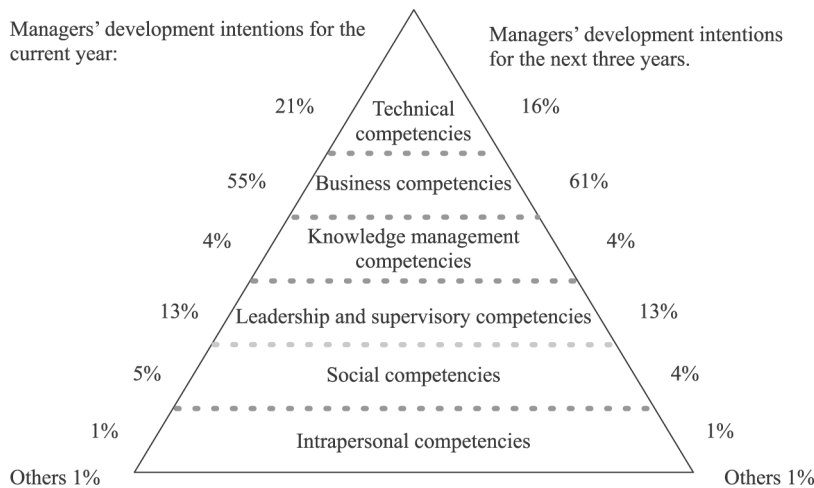


Figure 2.
Managers' development
intentions according to the
integrated competency
model

managers are under and the kinds of evaluations they thus have to make in organizations today. In particular, short-term profit planning is placing increased pressures on the efficiency of processes and functions. Second, the results partially reflect a belief that managing things remains the prime area for concern in management as opposed to leading people. Third, the findings imply a rapid obsolescence of business knowledge. Indeed, all of the respondents already had a master's degree in business. Fourth, we gain a better understanding about the priorities of management development in companies. However, these tentative conclusions drawn from this study still warrant further in-depth research in order to confirm their overall validity.

The category of leadership and supervisory competencies was ranked as the third priority. While every fourth manager thought them to be the most important development area among managers in general, only 13 percent of respondents included them into their personal development intentions. This might be explained by several factors. First, the managers may perceive that they do not need development in this skill category. Second, the managers are possibly not evaluated or rewarded for development in those areas. Third, the company may not support development in those areas. Fourth, managers do not believe that those areas are important for effective performance for themselves or for the company. These views are of course at least partially mutually reinforcing. Again, however, these speculative explanations would need further research.

Nevertheless, the results partially reflect rapid changes in working life, as well as continual changes in management skills and knowledge. Simultaneously, intellectual capital has become a crucial factor for gaining competitive advantage. Counter-intuitively, despite the popularized discussion on the importance of knowledge management, only few managers aimed to develop their competencies on this area. It would therefore appear that knowledge management has not yet been internalized as a core feature of a manager's work or as a theme in management development.

Social competencies represented only a minor development area (5 percent this year, 4 percent in next three years) in terms of managers' intentions to develop themselves. They have been argued to be crucial to a manager's performance, as well as for any employee in modern business life. Despite the widespread belief that social competencies can be developed, the managers in this research did not aim to do it personally. Intrapersonal competencies were even more neglected. Only few managers expressed any intention towards developing themselves in that area. The most popular theme within this theme was "personal time management." The lack of intentions towards developing "the traits and motives lying below the surface and closer to the core" (Garavan and McGuire, 2001) or "foundation of the pyramid of competencies" is distinctive here. This could be interpreted as a strong message about values and beliefs concerning effective management performance at present. Indeed, the focus in organizational management development support is seemingly not on social or intrapersonal competencies. This demonstrates a strong contradiction between literature on "good managers" and reality.

The basic assumption throughout this paper has been that managers' own perceptions and intentions concerning their development needs have a crucial importance on their subsequent development. This study revealed that there are a lot of managers who do not have any specific development intentions for themselves. Although 35 percent of the respondents could specify the important areas of management development at a general level, they did not, however, express any development needs at a personal level.

The study also revealed that the development intentions of managers differ from the ideas presented by scholars in the literature on management competencies. Indeed, technical and business skills were emphasized, whereas social skills and intrapersonal skills were largely neglected. Only few managers acknowledged that knowledge management capabilities were something to be developed. Whatever the reasons are, this nevertheless provides some insights into managers' interpretation of management development. More specifically, it seems that managers are adopting quite a narrow focus on their competencies, emphasizing mainly work-specific skills.

Competency models have been criticized for their attempt to formulate universal models for varying contexts, and for viewing competencies as work-role characteristics without interpreting the overall situation (Garavan and McGuire, 2001). However, competency models produced by researchers or organizations could serve as tools when managers formulate their own perceptions about his/her development needs. They should thus be adopted as a starting point when formulating individual and organization specific development needs, rather than as complete lists to be followed.

It can be stated that the managers' consciousness and interpretation of their development needs should be supported in organizations. Their personal beliefs surrounding development needs will obviously lead to action. Those beliefs are therefore crucial. The concept of competency is, however, not an easy one to capture. This study has revealed that managers' own managerial competency is often understood narrowly and content-specifically. This leads to the idea that managers in organizations should first be educated in management competencies, management development and learning issues, before they can become thoroughly conscious about their own competencies and development needs. Those who can provide help in these

matters are human resource professionals, researchers and consultants. All these requirements also necessitate the involvement of top managers.

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