

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND THE ASPIRED MANAGEMENT STYLE: A STUDY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Purpose - The study was to examine the relationship between management development programs (formal education, mentoring, on-the-job experience and assessment) and the aspired management styles (namely altruistic, goal-oriented, innovative, consultative, practical, delegating and moral-based) to be adopted by the respondents.

Design/methodology/approach (mandatory) - Data was collected using survey forms that contained items that measured studied variables. The respondents were below 45 years old and performing professional occupations or in middle to higher level positions (lowest position was administrative executive). The items were adopted and adapted from Juhdi et al. (2012), Dreher and Ash (1990), Culpan and Kucukemuroglu (1993), Selvarajah and Meyer (2005) and Khaliq and Ogunsola (2011). All the items were measured on a 5-point scale, which ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Findings – 399 employees participated in the study. The findings suggested that the respondents were given “moderate” amount of support in building their managerial talents. The significant correlations indicated weak-to moderate relationships between the seven types of aspired management style and the four management development programs. Specifically, the findings indicated that only mentoring had significant relationships with all the seven aspired management styles. As for formal education, it also had significant relationships with all the aspired management styles, except for moral-based style. Assessment was found having significant relationship with consultative style with negative relationship. On-the-job experience was only significantly related to two aspired management styles (which were altruistic and delegating). Delegating style was significantly related to all the management development programs. Moral-based management style was only significant to mentoring. As for the other seven types of aspired management styles, they were significantly related to at least two management development programs.

Research implications – The HR practitioners should emphasize the use of mentoring, given its consistent significant relationship with all the aspired managerial styles. Mentoring program should start with careful selection of mentors who are matched with the right protégés and must be coupled with systematic mentoring programs. Regardless of the insignificant relationships between on-the-job experience and five types of managerial styles, it should never be underestimated because it is very crucial in providing employees the skills of doing and managing business. Assessment might not be related to management style but it does contribute in giving feedbacks to employees.

Research limitations – First, the correlation which ranged from .10 and .32 indicate weak-to-moderate relationships between the management programs and the aspired management styles. Second, the study only measured the first and second level of training outcomes, which are reaction and learning. It would be better if the outcomes are extended to transfer of training (which are behavior and results) which are more meaningful for evaluation.

Originality/value – The paper researched on the outcomes of management development programs by measuring the aspired managerial styles as perceived by the program participants.

Keywords - formal education, mentoring, on-the-job experience, assessment, management styles, Malaysia

PAPER CATEGORY – RESEARCH PAPER

INTRODUCTION

Management development program is part and parcel of any organization. It is designed to increase the overall efficiency of company managers in their existing job positions and to train those managers to understand their responsibility and achieve organizational objectives and goals (Stoner and Freeman, 1992). The program is necessary for the potential managers to be exposed to the reality of the business which is dynamic and competitive. The effectiveness of the management programs might have a momentous impact on their attitude and behavior as managers. According to Morgan (1988), the characteristics of potential managers are they understand the environment, are proactive in management activities, possess leadership skills, have visionary capability and creativity. Given the importance of the programs, they have been increasingly implemented for the last decade (Noe, 2001).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Formal Education and Courses

Work related programs and courses help employees to understand work easily. For example, work related training, seminars and workshops can lead to higher productivity and better output of the employees (Mincer, 1991; Groot and Maasen van den Brink, 2000; Tome, 2007). When employees participate in training & development program, they are able to learn new skills and perform better. Noe (2008) described that sometimes corporate organizations arrange some sort of formal education, training and seminar programs for their employees to gain new skills and knowledge relevant to their jobs. In those programs employees learn from consultants or corporate university teachers about their jobs related skills and knowledge. This is the time when the business practitioners are exposed to the concepts, theories and basics in management. Some of the employees might not have these basics if their academic background is in non-business management areas like engineering, medicine and architecture. Therefore, participating in formal trainings like this would widen their understanding on the dynamic environment of the business. The formal training would be more effective if the programs are conducted outside the organizations like in training centers and educational institutions because the participants will have the opportunity to mingle with new people from various industries.

On-the-Job Experiences

Learning new things can be done in many ways. Hands-on experience can be taught to high potential employees by giving them opportunities to experience real work life challenges such as job rotation, job enlargement and assignment on special projects (Noe, 2008). Job experience is part of management development program and it increases the skills of employees. These programs give employees new working experience and make them capable to do new things. Similar view is also mentioned by Snell (1990) and Van der Heidjen (2002) that if employees get experience by working in different positions, they will be able to perform multiple tasks. It will build self-confidence on the job. This is further supported by Juhdi et al. (2010) who conducted a research on identifying factors that influence employability in the organization. Their study revealed that employees' job experiences enhance their versatility and thus enable them to shift from one task to another. They also have the tendency to be entrusted with new projects and job assignments.

Another common method under on-the-job experience is action learning. According to Peters and Smith (1996), action learning is vital because it gives the "fast-trackers" chance to experience business challenges. It is further supported by Noe (2008) who posits that action learning is able to maximize learning and increase training transfer because it involves dealing with real problems faced in the organizations and making recommendations to senior managements.

Mentoring

Mentoring is an important part of management development programs. Mentoring programs help employees and the organizations to achieve personal and organizational needs (Noe, et al. 2002; Godsalk & Sosik, 2003; Allen et al. 2004). Murray (1991) defines mentoring as a process where an employee learns from his or her manager or high skilled employees and try to be skilled in his or her workplace. Based on a study on 89 high potential employees in an organization, Lueneburger (2012) found that the role of coaches in developing talents is highly significant in determining the effectiveness of potential management. The role of coaches and mentors who are mainly played by managers, senior leaders and CEOs serves not only as role models but more importantly as motivators, sponsors and teachers. Mentoring is very effective for making employee skillful and experienced. It was found by the study of Cockill and Egan (2007) that if any university student gets mentoring facility during the time of study, then he or she tends to perform better in the professional life.

Catalyst (1993) proposed five necessary characteristics of a successful mentoring program. First, formal mentoring program should be linked to the business strategy. Then, it must be supported by the top management and the practice becomes the organizational culture. Mentoring must have constructive planning and monitoring to implement the goal and there must be voluntary participation of the employee. Mentoring programs which are well implemented tend to result in positive outcomes in the employees. In their study, Dreher and Ash (1990) revealed that employees who received extensive mentoring relationships reported getting more job promotions, had higher

incomes and were more satisfied in their jobs than those who received less extensive mentoring.

Assessment Programs

Assessment programs are used to identify the potential and talent of employees for promotion to higher positions, mainly in management posts. The common assessment exercises are like assessment centers, performance appraisals (by self, superiors, subordinates, peers and clients), 360 degree feedback system and conducting psychological tests to assess communication skills, personality, interpersonal skills and decision making style (Noe, 2008). Assessment center is not a place, rather a program which includes various exercises like leaderless group discussions, in-basket simulations and role plays. The program participants will be observed by a number of observers who will rate and evaluate their interpersonal skills, leadership traits, innovativeness, extroversion and many other qualities critical for management positions. The assessment will be coupled with psychological tests.

Edwards (2012) cited a survey conducted among HR practitioners that discovered only 8% of the participating organizations reported using truly systematic methods to assess their high potentials because of the vast amount of time, effort and monetary investment required. Systematic assessment method is implemented by designing multiple ways of gauging employees' managerial potential which consist of performance appraisals and assessment centers, with motivating rewards. The survey also showed that most business corporations used less objective assessments such as performance appraisals. Similar observation was also found by Juhdi et al. (2013) in their survey on 237 employers in Malaysia which revealed that systematic talent assessment was rated as quite uncommon in identifying employees professional and managerial talents. The most popular ways used to gauge employees' managerial potential was performance appraisal mainly by the immediate superiors.

Management Styles

There are different management philosophies and principles established by management specialists in different ages. With the change of world and views of people these philosophies are changed and are changing continuously. There are numerous management styles identified and grouped by different management scholars and researchers. It is clearly evident that the classification of management styles is overlapping and homogenous with slight diversity. It is observed that the variation of management styles arises due to differences in the types of business organization, nature of staff of these organizations and settings. This demonstrates that each country has basic management styles with modifications largely due to the influence of cultural distinctions and peculiarities.

Below are some examples of scholars' works in identifying various management styles:

Likert (1967) categorizes four styles of management; participative, paternalistic, exploitative and finally consultative management style.

Harbison and Myers (1969) classify management styles as autocratic, paternalistic, participative and Laissez-faire.

Minzberg (1973) considers entrepreneurial and strategic planning as forms of management styles adopted by managers in organizational entities.

De gens (1997) advocates the adoption of management of tolerance for learning organizations and knowledge based companies instead of action-oriented management style.

McGuire (2005) explores basic management styles of various different managers and suggested following management styles: charismatic, persuasive, consultative, transactional, transformational and delegating styles.

Blandchard (1994) suggests management styles as directing, supporting, coaching and delegating.

Khandwalla (1995) articulates ten dimensions of management styles such as conservative, participative, bureaucratic, paternalistic, authoritarian, organic, entrepreneurial, visionary, professional and altruistic. Altruism is a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's well-being (Batson, 1991). This is where the need to consider "the others" is emphasized.

Culpan and Kucukemuroglu (1993) identify six dimensions in management styles namely supervisory, decision making, communication patterns, control mechanism, interdepartmental relations and paternalistic.

Kazemian and Ghamgosar (2011) examine from Islamic perspective and mention the main characteristics of the management styles as responsible, sincere, patient, pious, humble and just.

The management styles proposed by the scholars indicated that managers' styles are heavily influenced by their personality, values, attitudes as well as the environments. Despite their individual differences, they act and think based on the organizational demands which might require them to consult with their subordinates, peers and superiors. It is also a normal practice to decide based on the observation made on their clients, competitors, suppliers and shareholders. At times, they are caught in dilemma which forces them either to emphasize on their personal values or based on what is right for the business mainly the shareholders. According to Trevino and Nelson (1999), managers are always faced with difficulties in managing the business and how they think and behave are based on three elements; moral awareness (existence of ethical dilemma), moral judgment (deciding what is right) and ethical behavior (taking action to do the right things).

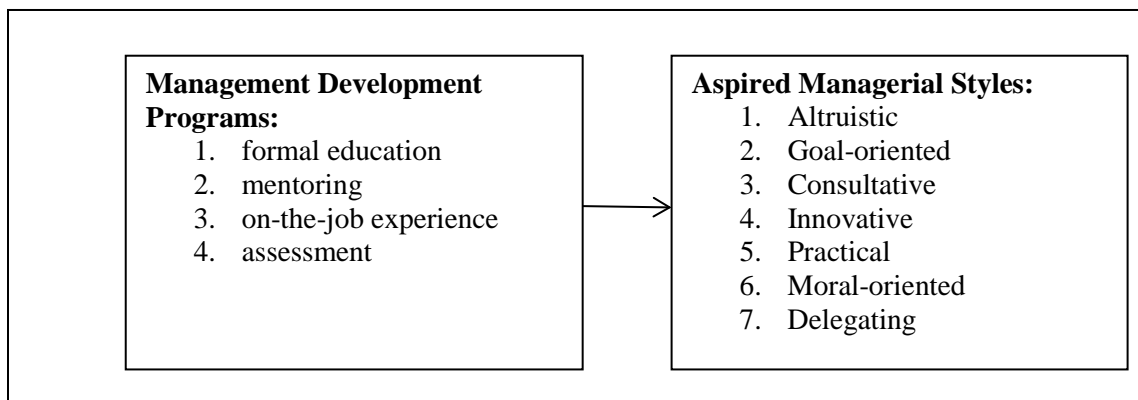
At this juncture, it is worth investigating whether the way their managerial talent is shaped and polished have any impact on the way they exercise their managerial duties. Specifically, the study aimed to measure the outcomes of the management development programs implemented in organizations from the perspective of the program participants. The outcomes were measured based on the participants' attitude in terms of what management styles they will adopt when they are in managerial positions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study sought to examine the relationship between management development programs and the aspired managerial styles of the employees. The intention was indirectly to identify the effectiveness of the programs conducted, whether they produce the expected outcomes. The outcomes can be measured in different levels. According to Noe (2008), one common method to measure the training and development outcomes is using Kirkpatrick's framework which identify four levels from reaction (measuring the program participants' reaction and feedback), learning (measuring the acquired skills, knowledge, attitude), behavior (examining the change in behavior on the job) and results (the change in productivity, performance records, financial performance, etc.).

Given the importance of measuring the outcomes, the present study aimed to measure the effectiveness of management development programs by examining the first and second level outcomes (reaction and learning) of the program participants. For the sake of the study, the participants were asked to indicate their reaction or views on the level of various management development programs (formal education, mentoring, on-the-job experience and assessment) they have received since the last 2 years on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Subsequently, they were asked to indicate their managerial aspirations, in other words, what kind of managers they will be in the future. This is to measure their learning acquisition in terms of what managerial styles they will adopt in the future when they are in the post. Figure 1 indicated the framework which reflected the objectives of the study.

Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the study



DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Data were collected using survey forms that contained items that measured studied variables. Given the objective of the study that sought to examine the relationship between management development programs and the managerial aspirations of the program participants, the respondents must meet a number of criteria. The employees must be below 45 years old and are performing professional occupations or they were in middle to higher level positions (lowest position was administrative executive). This was because these are the people who have the potential to assume higher positions in the organizations. They must have gone through some extent of management development programs such as mentoring, managerial/leadership courses and on-the-job experiences in administration or management.

One thousand survey forms were distributed to employees who meet with the criteria set by the researchers and a total of 413 forms were received but quite a number of forms were poorly responded and thus only 399 were used for further analysis.

The survey form was divided into several two sections. Section A contained 22 items that measured four approaches in management development programs; “formal education”, “on-the-job training”, “assessment” and “mentoring”. The first three development programs were measured using items which were adopted and adapted from Juhdi et al. (2012) and mentoring was measured using items from Dreher and Ash (1990). Items in Section B measured “management aspiration” which used items adopted and adapted from Culpan and Kucukemuroglu (1993), Selvarajah and Meyer (2008) and Khaliq and Ogunsola (2011). All the items were measured on a 5-point scale, which ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

RELIABILITY OF MEASUREMENT ITEMS

All the items were analyzed using principal component analysis with an orthogonal (varimax) rotation. Besides relying on visual observation of the scree plot in deciding on the number of factors to be extracted, latent roots criterion (eigenvalues greater than 1) was also used. Two separate factor analyses were run on items in Sections A and B respectively. The examinations of the correlation matrix indicated that a considerable number of correlations exceeded 0.3 and so the matrix was suitable for factoring. The Bartlett test of sphericity is significant and that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was between 0.799 and 0.910 which was far greater than 0.6. Inspections of the anti-image correlation matrix revealed that all the measures of sampling adequacy were well above the acceptable level of 0.5. In selecting items for each scale, two criteria were used. First, items on a single factor with factor loading of .3 or less were dropped (Hair et al, 1998), and second, to improve scale reliability, items with less than 0.3 item-to-total correlations were deleted from the scales (Nunnally, 1978).

Factor analysis on items in Section A (management development programs) produced 5 factors consisting of items for the respective variables which explained 56.8 percent of the total variance. The cronbach’s alpha for each factor ranged from .708 to .823. Each factor is labeled according to the items loaded. The last factor (factor five) was dropped due to its nature which was not interpretable.

The second factor analysis on aspired management style in Section B produced 7 factors that consisted of items for the respective variables which explained 55.04 percent of the total variance. The cronbach’s alpha for each factor ranged from .616 to .797.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table I presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the study variables. Looking at the mean values of all the management development programs which ranged from 2.9 (assessment) and 3.3 (mentoring), they suggested that the respondents were given “moderate” amount of support in building their managerial talents. Assessment that was rated below 3 indicated the relatively low implementation by the employers in gauging their skills and performance. The significant correlations (i.e. r values) that ranged from .10 to .32 indicated weak-to moderate relationships between the seven types of aspired management style and the four management development programs.

Table I: Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the study variables (N=399)

	Assessment (M=2.9, SD=.67)	Mentoring (M=3.3, SD=.59)	On-the-job experience (M=3.1, SD=.69)	Formal Education (M=3.2, SD=.74)
Altruistic (M=3.4, SD=.48)	.05	.32**	.16**	.23**
Goal-oriented (M=3.5, SD=.56)	-.03	.27**	.09	.26**
Consultative (M=3.4, SD=.64)	-.12*	.20**	.05	.19**
Innovative (M=3.5, SD=.54)	-.01	.17**	.03	.11*
Practical (M=3.7, SD=.52)	.10*	.27**	.05	.17**
Moral-based (M=3.7, SD=.59)	.04	.20*	.07	.03
Delegating (M=3.6, SD=.51)	.14**	.22**	.19**	.23**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Observation from the management development perspective, the findings indicated that only mentoring had significant relationships with all the aspired management styles (p-value >.05). As for formal education, it also had significant relationships with all the managerial aspiration, except for moral-based style (r=.03, p<.05). Assessment was found having significant relationship with consultative style (r=-

.12, $p < .05$) with negative relationship. This is quite surprising because the negative relationship suggested that an individual who is given more opportunities for assessment tend to have lesser aspiration for consultative style when he/she is in managerial post. Another unexpected finding is when on-the-job experience was only significantly related to two managerial aspirations (which were altruistic and delegating styles).

Alternatively, the observation from the aspired management style perspective showed that only delegating style that was significantly ($p < .01$) related to all the management development programs. Moral-based style was only significant to mentoring ($r = .20$, $p < .05$). As for the other seven types of managerial aspiration, they were significantly related to at least two management development programs.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Generally the study findings indicated that management programs are very useful in developing and gauging the potential of employees in the middle level positions. Programs like workshops, seminars, mentoring, job rotation and performance appraisals are very pertinent because the potential employees will be able to identify their weakness, strengths, interests and career prospects. However, as shown in Table 1 on the “moderate” level of management programs as perceived by the employees (ranged from 2.9 to 3.3 on a scale of 1 to 5), we can assume that employers have to give more opportunities for employees who have the talents to move on to higher positions. If employers are unwilling to invest in their human capital, it might affect the ability of the organizations to retain employees who are in the stage of establishing their career. The respondents of the study were below 45 years old and they were holding middle level positions which are considered as critical to the employers. At this stage, they are looking forward to be given more chances for skill development which enables them to acquire experience for the higher positions. Various ways should be adopted by the HR practitioners that include formal and informal management development programs.

It should be noted here that, although the respondents were only asked to “visualize” what kind of management styles they would use in the future, they were actually trying to indicate their managerial attitude based on the experience, skills and knowledge gained during the development process. Therefore, when the study revealed that mentoring was the sole program which was significantly related to all the managerial aspirations, we can suggest that mentoring must be given the emphasis in building managerial talent. As posited by many scholars (Catalyst, 1993; Noe, et al. 2002; Godsalk & Sosik, 2003; Allen et al. 2004), mentoring is very effective in building talents and skills which are imperative to fulfil personal and organizational needs. To foster managerial attitude which encompasses a wide spectrum from being goal-oriented to altruistic to morality, guidance from more experienced figures is very important. At this juncture, it is crucial to design mentoring program systematically which is aligned with the organizational strategies.

Formal education is another management program which was found having significant relationships with most of the managerial aspiration (except for moral-based style). It is a common practice for organizations to send potential employees to formal development programs as a complementary to the informal ones. Many employers

encourage the potential employees to pursue their studies at the tertiary levels like in business and management. However, the tertiary education is quite expensive, time consuming and the courses might not be relevant to the organization. Thus, other formal education programs are available like seminars, workshops and courses which are shorter in duration and the skills/knowledge learned are more applicable to the needs of the employers. The findings suggested that formal education is able to produce managers which are versatile.

Nonetheless, the insignificant relationship between formal education and moral-based style is quite disturbing but plausible. An individual may not learn effectively about morality via formal learning setting. During formal education programs, they may be exposed to philosophies and theories in moral, ethics and values but to foster moral values in an individuals, possibly the more effective approach is through socialization. This is also indicated in the study findings which showed morality was only significantly related to mentoring and not to on-the-job experience, formal education and assessment. Through mentoring, the employees will be guided and nurtured by more individuals who have more experienced in facing dilemmas in decision making. Again, at this juncture, implementing a proper mentoring practice is necessary.

On-the-job experience was found only significantly related to altruistic and delegating management styles. It is quite surprising because numerous studies indicated the importance of on-the-job experience as one of the approaches to equip potential employees with business management skills and knowledge (Noe, 2008; Peters and Smith, 1996; Lombardo and Eichinger, 2000). Furthermore, on-the-job experience is the most common way used by organizations due to its realistic nature as compared to formal education. Lombardo and Eichinger (2000) even posited that every management development program must have the 70 percent hands-on, 20 percent mentoring and 10 percent formal education). Therefore, further investigations have to be conducted to examine this phenomenon.

Insignificant relationships between assessment and four aspired management styles (namely altruistic, goal-oriented, innovative and moral-based styles) were maybe due to the nature of assessment (that comprised of performance appraisals and assessment centers) which was more appropriate for identifying talents and potentials of employees, rather than equipping them with the managerial skills.

Table 1 also showed that only delegating management style which was significantly related to all the four management programs. This finding suggest that management programs are very useful in producing managers who are willing to trust others in decision making, solicit other people's views and let others to exercise independence in performing their respective tasks. Moral-based management style which was found only significant to mentoring and not to the other management programs infers that values and ethics are more effectively learned from guidance and interpersonal relationships with more senior members in the organization.

IMPLICATIONS ON HR PRACTITIONERS

Given the striking results which indicate mentoring as the “super star” of all the management development programs, thus the HR practitioners should emphasize the use

of mentoring. As posited by Groves (2007), the success of mentoring relationship hinges upon the program management and quality of the relationship. Hence, mentoring program should start with careful selection of mentors who are matched with the right protégés. Subsequently, it must be coupled with systematic mentoring programs. Mentoring programs should ensure continuous relationships between the mentors and protégés so that the latter get to learn and receive constructive feedbacks from the former. Given the heavy duties as mentors, it is fair to consider rewarding the mentors as a motivation for them to give support and spend quality times with their mentees.

Opportunities to participate in formal education should be given to employees because that is the time the employees get to meet with people outside of their domain and thus create networking. They get to be exposed to theories, concepts and philosophies in management which are useful for their fundamental understanding of the business and thus making them innovative.

Regardless of the insignificant relationships between on-the-job experience and five types of managerial styles, it should never be underestimated. Possibly, on-the-job experience might not contribute much in influencing management style, but it is very crucial in providing employees the skills of doing and managing business, which might lead to effective job performance.

Assessment might not be related to management style but it does contribute in giving feedbacks to employees. Performance appraisal by superiors, subordinates and clients are very powerful in providing feedbacks to employees on how well they perform. However, assessment centers which include exercises for employees to learn their weakness, strengths and potential should be conducted. This is because they are going to be future managers and leaders, and therefore they must know what they have to improve, learn and unlearn.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study had several limitations. First, despite the significant relationships found in the Pearson's correlation tests, the r values ranged from .10 and .32 which indicate weak-to-moderate relationships between the management programs and the aspired management styles. Second, the four dimensions of aspired management style (namely innovative, practical, delegating and moral-based) suffered from low cronbach's alpha values (below 0.7 as recommended by Nunnally, 1978) and thus low reliability. Therefore, interpretations which involve the relevant dimensions have to be made with caution. Third, the study only measured the first and second level of training outcomes, which are reaction and learning. It would be better if the outcomes are extended to transfer of training (which are behavior and results) which are more meaningful for evaluation. Therefore, the future research should examine more comprehensive ways of measuring the outcomes of the development programs.

Acknowledgement: The research was fully funded by Research Acculturation Grant Scheme 2013/14 (RAGS) under the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia

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