

A Prioritization of Competency Components of Operational Managers from Management Experts' View *A Case Study, Tehran, Iran*

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Abstract

The aim of present study is to study and to prioritize required competencies for appointing operational managers in Iran governmental organizations based on management professors and senior executives view. By considering data collecting method, this study is a descriptive-survey research and based on classification of purpose-based researches, it's a developmental research and in terms of variables controlling and due to impossibility of variables controlling, this research is a pseudo-experimental research. The main information gathering tool was a researcher made questionnaire including 142 questions concerning competency components which was designed and edited by applying theoretical principles and frameworks. In order to make sure about validity of this questionnaire, an expert's panel composed of management professors was applied. For testing its reliability, 30 questionnaires were completed and 95% Cronbach's alpha was calculated which was an appropriate reliability coefficient for this study. Statistical population of this study was composed of all management professors in Tehran universities and also governor with at least three years of governing history and degree in master of management that by purposive or judgmental and snowball sampling methods, 70 management professors and 60 governors were selected as samples of this study. Data analysis of this study was done by the method of descriptive and inferential statistics and using factor analysis and Friedman's ranking in Excel and SPSS software environments. The finding of this study reveals that competency components don't have equal importance degree from two statistical population views.

Keywords: competency, operational managers, appointment, model

1. Introduction

During three last decades, competency-based management in the field of human resources management has gained much importance. According to Boyatzis (1995, 1982) competency refers to traits and basic characteristics of an individual. These can be motivation, behavior, skills, and person's understanding of social role or a body of knowledge which he applies in performing his duties and activities (Idenbrug, 2005; Ratmawati, 2007; Boyatzis, Stubbs & Taylor, 2002; Crawford, 2005). Spencer, S. M. and Spencer L. M. (1993) have mentioned five characteristics for competency: motivations, traits, Self-concept, knowledge, and skill. To them motivation, traits and self-concept have personal bases and regard them as core competencies and they are hard to develop. Two other competencies namely degree of knowledge and skills are trainable and their development is relatively easy. These two are the sources of individuals' abilities and to invest upon them would be effective (Leo, 2009). In the field of management, competency can be used as a part of criteria for choosing best person for assigning a job. Competency based selection assumes that in order to reach optimum performance, the highest amount of agreement between required competencies for performing a job and the employee's characteristics must be available that would lead to better performance and staff's satisfaction (Sampson & Fytros, 2008). Today, using competencies for improving human resource management, job training, and performance management is a suitable and useful tool. Researches concerning competency are

various and each examines this subject from a special perspective in such a way that offering a comprehensive and sufficient framework for introducing the concept of competency is a difficult task.

2. Literature Review

From the past, enough attention was used by managers to employ the best person for organization. In the ancient Rome, competency was used to select the best soldier. The appointment method based on competency was introduced by McClelland (1973) to the management literature of human resources and following his work, different views were consisted in this background (Draganidis, Chamopoulou & Mentzas, 2008). In order to obtain a competitive advantage through the competency, Mcgrath et al. (1995) have introduced a model in which deftness and comprehension together lead to make competency. They consider comprehension for referring to the outcomes of a process in which people know how to use their skill for making communication with other people and deftness for the ability of a group in order to work together and achieve to a single target (Chasalow, 2009). McGregor and Tweed (2001) have compared women and men point of view relating prioritization of 54 managerial competencies. In their research respondents were asked to rank their priorities for developing among 54 competencies using a spectrum composed 5 criteria ranging from too little to very much. They represented a table of ten top priorities of management competency from men's point of view and their comparison with priorities based on women's point of view. The findings revealed that women's three top priorities were not in the list of men's ten top priorities and also significant differences were observed between men and women's financial competencies. In this study the highest rank went to competencies relating people management (including communications) and strategic issues. Two skills of managing the budget and handling costs had much importance for women while these two had lower priorities in men's ranking (McGregor, Tweed, 2001). In another study Tony Lenahan (2000) has examined management competencies in Ireland tourism industry and listed 67 identified competencies according to their frequencies. He classified competencies in clusters including; personal skills, interpersonal skills, business skills, intellectual and cognitive abilities, and technical and professional abilities (Lenehan, 2000). Belinda Butler (2006) has compared competencies of human resources management with those of operational management. In this study, 51 competencies in 10 dimensions of training and coaching, services, work ethic, leadership, analyzing, organizing and planning, interpersonal, communications, core values and ethics, and commitment were clustered (Butler, 2006).

Studying researches done relating competency in and out of the country reveals that by regarding needs and type of activity and the nature of organization, effective environmental variables, researcher's point of view,... each researcher have considered one aspect if competency in such a way that they can't be classified in a single category. The main aim of present study is to examine and prioritize required competencies for appointing operational managers from experts of management and senior executives' views. The main specific goals of this study are as follows:

1. To identify competency components of operational managers;
2. To prioritize competency components of operational managers;
3. To compare priorities of operational managers' competency from management professors and senior executives.

In addition to study of theoretical concepts, basics, history, and all types of competencies required for managers in general, this study has examined operational managers' competencies in details. In order to carry out this important task, 71 competency components in 11 competency clusters were identified and according to their priorities, a field research was performed.

3. Methods and Materials

By referring to the method of data gathering, this research is a descriptive-survey research and based on target based category of researches, it is a developmental research. Due to impossibility of variables control, present research is a pseudo experimental study and by considering incidence time, it is a post incident research. Based on the level of monitoring and control degree, this study is a field research. The main tool for gathering information was a researcher made questionnaire including 142 questions about 71 competency components which was provided by using basics and theoretical frameworks. For each component, two questions concerning the influence of that component on managers' performance and its observation in managers' behavior were raised. Results of these questions were combined and their average was considered as the criterion. Rating for each question was based on Likert's scale. After making sure of validity and reliability, this scale was applied for data gathering. In order to test reliability of research tool, 30 questionnaires were distributed among management professors and 25 returned and completed questionnaires were examined that achieved Cronbach's alpha was

95% which seemed an appropriate reliability coefficient for this study. Statistical society of this research includes all management professors in Tehran universities and governors with at least three years of governing experience, with at least a degree of master in management. 70 management professors and 60 senior executives participating in this research were selected by purposive or judgmental and snowball samplings. The nature of prioritization of indices and also questionnaire completion in the form of Likert's scale qualitatively led to apply Factor analysis and Friedman's ranking in an appropriate way. Using Excel and SPSS softwares, the process of indices prioritization was implemented and experts' priority of views were ranked. In order to confirming the model Factor-analysis was used. For answering the research questions, after determining competency components by applying Friedman's rank test, all of model components were obtained by the following formula:

$$X^2 = \frac{12}{kn(k+1)} \sum_{j=1}^K R_j^2 - 3n(K+1)$$

Where k is the number of treatments, n is the number of blocks and R_j is total rating of I th column of treatments.

4. Findings and Discussion

After collecting data from participant's view in questionnaires analyzing them by related software, required model competencies for appointing operational managers were determined. The weight of indices concerning components was obtained by dividing findings from expert's opinions as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Prioritization of operational manager's competencies

Cluster	Ecompetency component	Management expert's point of view			Executive's point of view		
		Priority	Ranking	Relative weight	Priority	Ranking	Relative weight
Belief competencies	1. believing in god	57	31.82857	0.012452	15	41.33333	0.016171
	2. adherence and compliance with Islamic values	51	39.58571	0.015487	29	40.75833	0.015946
	3. bound to carry out imperatives and leaving forbidden affairs	66	36.01429	0.01409	46	38.55833	0.015085
Moral competencies	1. Having Good mood	17	40.11429	0.015694	20	46.825	0.01832
	2. trust and confidentiality	37	33.55714	0.013129	27	37.90833	0.014831
	3. honesty	16	34.27857	0.013411	2	34.40833	0.013462
	4. humbling	44	31.19286	0.012204	49	30.16667	0.011802
	5. sacrifice	59	28.7	0.011228	58	35.10833	0.013736
	6. having spirit of justice	55	32.40714	0.012679	30	37.85	0.014808
Personal competencies	1. self-awareness	56	31.93571	0.012494	54	31.34167	0.012262
	2. self-confidence	38	35.80714	0.014009	40	35.7	0.013967
	3. self-esteem	48	33.97143	0.013291	47	34.7	0.013576
	4. time management	4	43.57857	0.01705	39	35.90833	0.014049
	5. having ability and willingness to learning	32	37.77857	0.01478	41	35.64167	0.013944
	6. having tolerance	53	32.98571	0.012905	44	35.33333	0.013824
	7. having motivation	11	41.05	0.01606	9	42.83333	0.016758
	8. receiving useful criticism	27	38.53571	0.015077	13	41.90833	0.016396
Entrepreneurship competencies	1. having interests in creativity and innovation	33	36.7	0.014358	55	30.94167	0.012106
	2. having spirit of Invincibility	50	33.62143	0.013154	57	30.65833	0.011995
	3. having courage to take risk	68	27.30714	0.010684	70	22.15	0.008666
	4. having inner control	58	31.37143	0.012274	67	26.48333	0.010361
	5. being able to develop processes	43	34.44286	0.013475	71	21.25	0.008314
	6. deftness and taking advantage of opportunities	28	38.16429	0.014931	34	36.95	0.014456
	7. being interested in evolution	52	33.04286	0.012928	56	30.85	0.01207
Competencies of strengthening mental health	1. playing a supportive role toward subordinates	10	41.74286	0.016331	48	34.56667	0.013524
	2. training and strengthening life skills	68	26.85714	0.010507	60	29.025	0.011356
	3. trying to develop and improve Counseling centers	70	25.12857	0.009831	64	26.65833	0.01043

	4. making opportunities for sports activities	69	26.82857	0.010496	61	27.56667	0.010785
	5. cooperation based on trust between staff	35	36.20714	0.014166	59	29.625	0.01159
	6. making spaces for fresh work fields	21	38.97143	0.015247	16	41.30833	0.016161
	7. having skills to make mental tranquility in workplace	3	43.60714	0.017061	4	44.15833	0.017276
	8. making a healthy field for growth	8	42.05	0.016451	6	43.76667	0.017123
Professional competencies	1. technical knowledge (about working area and understanding the job)	1	46.27143	0.018103	17	41.26667	0.016145
	2. having knowledge about applying information technology	30	38.12857	0.014917	33	37.2	0.014554
	3. having knowledge about legal issues	60	30.90714	0.012092	10	42.38333	0.016582
	4. having knowledge about handling a meeting	39	35.60714	0.013931	45	35.125	0.013742
	5. being aware of policies and organizational guidelines	42	34.98571	0.013688	38	36.20833	0.014166
Behavioral competencies	1. Transparency (clarity) in behavior	47	34	0.013302	14	41.58333	0.016269
	2. independency in thinking and action	61	30.87857	0.012081	50	34.3	0.013419
	3. hard working	13	40.57857	0.015876	8	43.01667	0.01683
	4. having courage and decisiveness in making decision	40	35.37143	0.013839	7	43.625	0.017068
	5. having flexibility	41	35.37143	0.013839	18	40.83333	0.015975
Political and social competencies	1. organizational citizenship behavior	34	36.4	0.014241	36	36.25833	0.014186
	2. Social accountability and responsibility	46	34.11429	0.013347	52	33.01667	0.012917
	3. being law-oriented	36	36.07857	0.014115	23	39.49167	0.015451
	4. having political insight and analyzing Political environment	71	22.10714	0.008649	69	23.1	0.009038
	5. making positive image of unit performance	64	29.87857	0.01169	68	25.56667	0.010003
	6. managing political flows influencing the unit	63	30.25	0.011835	62	27.35	0.0107
	7. compliance and conformity of norms and regulations	65	28.85714	0.01129	63	27.29167	0.010677
Cultural and Communication competencies	1. having influence upon others	12	40.67143	0.015912	65	26.63333	0.01042
	2. having skill of effective listening, understanding and responding	7	42.07857	0.016463	22	39.56667	0.01548
	3. having skills of negotiation and persuasion	25	38.79286	0.015177	21	40.40833	0.015809
	4. having skills in communication	23	38.92857	0.01523	19	40.775	0.015953
	5. being able to trust-making	18	39.56429	0.015479	24	39.10833	0.015301
	6. having empathy and understanding toward others	9	41.76429	0.01634	11	42.09167	0.016468
	7. understanding and managing cultural differences	49	33.73571	0.013199	35	36.35833	0.014225
Managerial competencies	1. finding problems and solving problems	31	38.02857	0.014878	43	35.45	0.013869
	2. skills of targeting and planning	57	39.12857	0.015309	26	38.76667	0.015167
	3. being able to organize	51	43	0.016823	5	43.83333	0.017149
	4. training and improvement	66	38.72857	0.015152	25	39.05833	0.015281
	5. decision making	17	42.90714	0.016787	12	41.96667	0.016419
	6. mobilization and resource development	37	39.10714	0.0153	51	33.875	0.013253
	7. evaluation and performance management	16	45.97143	0.017986	3	46.51667	0.018199
Leadership competencies	1. supervision and coaching	44	38.92143	0.015227	1	47.775	0.018691
	2. conflict management	59	34.20714	0.013383	42	35.55	0.013908

3. building teams and team leadership	55	40.31429	0.015772	32	37.4	0.014632
4. talent empowerment and development	56	40.14286	0.015705	28	38.15	0.014926
5. change leadership	38	38.15714	0.014928	53	32.2	0.012598
6. stress management	48	32.95714	0.012894	37	36.25833	0.014186
7. effective use of power	4	30.8	0.01205	31	37.76667	0.014776
8. applying contingency theory of leadership	32	38.94286	0.015236	66	26.63333	0.01042

5. Conclusion

During recent years, researches relating required competencies for managers have attracted significant attentions. But these have been done in a scattering way and in different areas. While determining degree of components' and indices' relative importance has attracted less attention, this study with the aim of identifying and comparative prioritizing of management professors' views as management experts and senior executives of administrative systems as persons who have important role in operational managers' recruitment, was carried out in relation with required competencies for appointing operational managers which reveals significance difference between expert's considered priorities and operational managers. The results concerning competency priorities of managers in Table 1 indicates that in many cases, manager's priorities from management expert's point of view are different from executive's point of view and have some similarities in some cases. In order to ease in comparison, Table 2 represents ten top priorities in both of these statistical population.

Table 2. Mutual comparison of ten top priorities of operational manager's competencies from management expert's and executive's point of view

Operational manager's competency priorities from management expert's point of view			Operational manager's competency priorities from executive's point of view		
Rank	Competency component	Managers rating to the same competency	Rank	Competency component	Expert's rating to the same competency
1	Technical knowledge	17	1	Supervision and coaching	24
2	Evaluation and performance management	3	2	honesty	16
3	having skills to make mental tranquility in workplace	4	3	Evaluation and performance management	2
4	Time management	39	4	having skills to make mental tranquility at workplace	3
5	being able to organize	5	5	being able to organize	5
6	Decision making	12	6	making a healthy field for growth	8
7	having skill of effective listening, understanding and responding	22	7	having courage and decisiveness in making decision	40
8	making a healthy field for growth	6	8	Hardworking	13
9	having empathy and understanding toward others	11	9	Being motivated	11
10	Playing a supportive role	48	10	Being aware of legal issues	60

As observed in Table 2, there are four similar priorities among ten top priorities in each statistical society, but drastic differences can be seen in some cases. The results of this research have been supported by some experimental researches. In a similar study carried out by McGregor and Tweed (2001) for prioritizing men and women's views about 54 total competencies required for managers, such a difference in sexual point of view was confirmed. Difference in some competencies was drastic, for example budgeting competency obtained the priority number 4 from women view and number 40 from men view. Other competencies had no differences.

In this study, manager's competency components have been provided in 11 total clusters and 71 components. This model has some similarities and differences with other models of managers' competency. Among models related in Iran, there was no similar model for examining operational managers' competencies in a perfect way. Due to lack of ethical and belief competencies and also competencies related to strengthening of mental health at workplace all of foreign models were different from our model. Strength points of present model rests in this facet that it was tried to gather competency components from various sources and according to the nature of these components; they were categorized in 11 homogenous clusters. Furthermore, competency components related to mental health strengthening at workplace and some components in other clusters have not been

provided in previous studies which are some kind of innovation in designing a model of operational managers' competency appropriate with needs of Iran's governmental organizations. Identification of competencies required for managers and prioritization of indices and related components would lead to appointment and promotion of managers based on meritocracy and a field of justice in manager s appointment would be provided.

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