Critical Approaches to Management Development: A Study

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ABSTRACT

Management development is concerned with improving managers' performance in their present roles and preparing them for greater responsibilities in the future. It has been described by Mumford and Gold (2004) as 'an attempt to improve managerial effectiveness through a learning process'. In this paper, the following aspects of management development are considered:

- *its aims, needs and priorities;*
- *its requirements, nature as a business-led process and the elements involved in a management development processes;*
- *the main management development activities of analysis, assessment and strategy formulation;*
- *approaches to management development with an emphasis on integration, expe¬riential and self-managed learning and personal development planning, and the use of competency-frameworks and development centres;*
- *the concept of emotional intelligence and its use in the development of leadership skills;*
- *the responsibility for management development.*

INTRODUCTION

Management development contributes to business success by helping the organization to grow the managers it requires to meet its present and future needs. It improves managers' performance, gives them development opportunities, and provides for management succession. Development processes may be anticipatory (so that managers can contribute to long-term objectives), reactive (intended to resolve or preempt performance difficulties) or motivational (geared to individual career aspirations). The particular aims are to:

- ensure that managers understand what is expected of them; agreeing with them objectives against which their performance will be measured and the level of competence required in their roles;
- improve the performance of managers in their present roles as a means of preparing them for greater responsibilities;
- identify managers with potential, encouraging them to prepare and implement personal development plans and ensuring that they receive the required development, training and experience to equip them for more demanding responsibilities within their own locations and elsewhere in the organization;
- provide for management succession, creating a system to keep this under review.

A systematic approach to management development is necessary because the increasingly onerous demands made on line managers mean that they require a wider range of developed skills than ever before. Tamkin et al (2003) suggest that managers need the ability to:

- empower and develop people - understand and practise the process of delivering through the capability of others;
- manage people and performance - managers increasingly need to maintain morale whilst also maximizing performance;
- work across boundaries, engaging with others, working as a member of a team, thinking differently about problems and their solutions;
- develop relationships and a focus on the customer, building partnerships with both internal and external customers;
- balance technical and generic skills - the technical aspects of management and the management of human relationships.

Hirsh et al (2000) suggest a number of priorities for management development. These are:

- combining a strong corporate architecture for management development with a capability for 'just in time' and local delivery to meet specific business needs;

- providing better information and advice for individual managers on how to think about their future direction in career terms and their learning needs;

- mainstreaming the skills required to manage self-development and to support the development of others; these skills include those of 'manager as coach' but also go wider and include informal career mentoring;

- finding ways of delivering more stretching and stimulating management development to the whole population of managers, not just those in very senior posts or identified as 'high potential'.

ANALYSIS

The CIPD (2002) sets out three key and mutually reinforcing requirements for connecting business challenges and management development:

1. Making the case for developing managers: convincing key stakeholders of the significance of management to business practice.
2. Making the connection between business strategies, organization and management development: clarifying the business purpose and outcomes for investing in management.
3. Managing the learning - getting the implementation right: designing, specifying, implementing and evaluating management development strategies that are 'fit for purpose'.

The most important thing to remember about the process of management development is that it must be business led even though it will be concerned with the development of individual performance and potential. The business has to decide what sort of managers it needs to achieve its strategic goals and the business must decide how it can best obtain and develop these managers. Even when the emphasis is on self-development, as it should be, the business must still indicate the directions in which self-development should go, possibly in the broadest of terms.

It has been suggested by Mumford (1993) that three elements have to be combined to produce an effective management development system:

- self-development - a recognition that individuals can learn but are unlikely to be taught, and that the initiative for development often rests with the individual;

- organization-derived development - the development of the systems of formal development beloved of personnel and management development specialists;

- boss-derived development - those actions undertaken by a senior manager with others, most frequently around real problems at work.

Mumford also makes the point that managers think in terms of activities, not learning opportunities, and therefore: 'Our main concern must be to facilitate learning through our understanding of real work in the manager's world, rather than attempting to impose separate management development processes.' He suggests that formal management development processes do not always function as effectively as we would like because: 'We have put too much emphasis on planning ahead, and not enough on enabling managers to use, understand and then build on their past experiences.'

The three essential management development activities are the:

- analysis of present and future management needs;

- assessment of existing and potential skills and effectiveness of managers against those needs;

- production of strategies and plans to meet those needs.

In today's changeable, if not chaotic, conditions it may not be feasible to make precise forecasts of the number of managers required. But what can and should be done is to assess the skills and competences managers will need to meet future demands and challenges arising from competitive pressures, new product-market strategies and the introduction of new technology.

The assessment of skills and competences against these needs can be carried out by performance management processes as described in Part VII. It will be important, however, to include in these processes a means of identifying specific development needs and the agreement of development plans to meet not only current needs but anticipated future requirements.

The management development strategy will be concerned overall with what the organization intends to do about providing for its future

management needs in the light of its business plans. The strategy will be concerned with the roles of the parties involved and with the approaches the organization proposes to use to develop its managers.

The prime aim of these benchmark statements is to identify the key facets that make up management development activities. They provide personnel and line managers with a means of conducting their own evaluation and analysis of the state of management development within their organization. Each facet or 'dimension' in the statements brings together such aspects as the links between the management development plan, the assessment of skills and identification of skill gaps, and the delivery of appropriate and effective training and development.

The facets are broken down into four aspects of performance:

- commitment to management development;
- reviewing the current position of management development;
- making progress in management development;
- excellence in management development.

The underpinning assumption in the framework is the importance of bringing together the elements of a management development strategy into a more integrated whole. The various components do not have separate existences of their own.

Management development should be regarded as a range of related activities rather than an all-embracing programme. The use of the word 'programme' to describe the process smacks too much of a mechanistic approach. It is important to start from an understanding of how managers learn, as considered below.

This does not imply that some systemization is not necessary; first, because many managers have to operate in more or less routine situations and have to be developed accordingly, and secondly, because organizations will not continue to thrive if they simply react to events. There must be an understanding of the approaches that can be used both to develop managers and also to assess existing managerial resources and how they meet the needs of the enterprise. And plans must be made for the development of those resources by selecting the best of the methods available. But this should not be seen as a 'programme' consisting of a comprehensive, highly integrated and rigidly

applied range of management training and development techniques.

The management development activities required depend on the organization: its technology, its environment and its philosophy. A traditional bureaucratic/mechanistic type of organization may be inclined to adopt the programmed routine approach, complete with a wide range of courses, inventories, replacement charts, career plans and results-orientated review systems. An innovative and organic type of organization may rightly dispense with all these mechanisms. Its approach would be to provide its mangers with the opportunities, challenges and guidance they require, seizing the chance to give people extra responsibilities, and ensuring that they receive the coaching and encouragement they need. There may be no replacement charts, inventories or formal appraisal schemes, but people know how they stand, where they can go and how to get there.

As discussed later in this paper, the role of formal training is much more limited than in the earlier approaches to management development, where it tended to predominate. As Hirsh and Carter (2002) emphasize:

Management training still needs to provide a coherent view of what managers need to learn, but delivery needs to be more flexible and fit into the busy working lives of managers... The development of interpersonal and leadership skills is a high priority and not easily achieved through conventional formal training.

It has often been said that managers learn to manage by managing - in other words, 'experience is the best teacher'. This is largely true, but some people learn much better than others. After all, a manager with 10 years' experience may have had no more than one year's experience repeated 10 times.

Differences in the ability to learn arise because some managers are naturally more capable or more highly motivated than others, while some will have had the benefit of the guidance and help of an effective boss who is fully aware of his or her responsibilities for developing managers. The saying quoted above could be expanded to read: 'Managers learn to manage by managing under the guidance of a good manager.' The operative word in this statement is 'good'. Some managers are better at developing people than others, and one of the aims of management development is to get all managers to recognize that developing their

staff is an important part of their job. And for senior managers to say that people do not learn because they are not that way inclined, and to leave it at that, is to neglect one of their key responsibilities - to improve the performance of the organization by doing whatever is practical to improve the effectiveness and potentials of the managers.

To argue that managers learn best 'on the job' should not lead to the conclusion that managers are best left entirely to their own devices or that management development should be a haphazard process. The organization should try to evolve a philosophy of management development which ensures that consistent and deliberate interventions are made to improve managerial learning. Revans (1989) wants to take management development back into the reality of management and out of the classroom, but even he believes that deliberate attempts to foster the learning process through 'action learning'.

The three basic approaches to management development are:

1. learning through work;
2. formal training; and
3. feedback, facilitation and support.

These can be achieved through both formal and informal means, as described below.

The formal approaches to management development include:

- development on the job through coaching, counselling, monitoring and feedback by managers on a continuous basis associated with the use of performance management processes to identify and satisfy development needs, and with mentoring;

- development through work experience, which includes job rotation, job enlargement, taking part in project teams or task groups, 'action learning', and second-ment outside the organization;

- formal training by means of internal or external courses - although management training programmes are more likely to be delivered in a series of modules over a number of months rather than a single, long, residential course;

- structured self-development by following self-managed learning programmes agreed as a personal development plan or learning contract with the manager or a management development adviser - these may include guidance reading or the deliberate extension of knowledge or acquisition of new skills on the job;

- e-learning as part of a blended learning programme.

The formal approaches to management development are based on the identification of development needs through performance management or a development centre. The approach may be structured around a list of generic or core competences which have been defined as being appropriate for managers in the organization.

Informal approaches to management development make use of the learning experiences that managers meet during the course of their everyday work. Managers are learning every time they are confronted with an unusual problem, an unfamiliar task or a move to a different job. They then have to evolve new ways of dealing with the situation. They will learn if they analyse what they did to determine how and why it contributed to its success or failure. This retrospective or reflective learning will be effective if managers can apply it successfully in the future.

This is potentially the most powerful form of learning. The question is: can anything be done to help managers make the best use of their experience? This type of 'experiential' learning comes naturally to some managers. They seem to absorb, unconsciously and by some process of osmosis, the lessons from their experience, although in fact they they have probably developed a capacity for almost instantaneous analysis, which they store in their mental databank and which they can retrieve whenever necessary.

Ordinary mortals, however, either find it difficult to do this sort of analysis or do not recognize the need. This is where semi-formal approaches can be used to encourage and help managers to learn more effectively. These approaches include:

- emphasizing self-assessment and the identification of development needs by getting managers to assess their own performance against agreed objectives and analyse the factors that contributed to effective or less effective performance – this can be provided through performance management;

- getting managers to produce their own personal development plans or self-managed learning programmes;

- encouraging managers to discuss their own problems and opportunities with their bosses, colleagues or mentors in order to establish for themselves what they need to learn or be able to do.

An integrated approach to management development will make judicious use of both the formal and informal methods as described above. There are five governing principles:

- The reality of management - the approach to management development should avoid making simplistic assumptions on what managers need to know or do, based on the classical analysis of management as the processes of planning, organizing, directing and controlling. In reality managerial work is relatively disorganized and fragmented, and this is why many practising managers reject the facile solutions suggested by some formal management training programmes. As Kanter (1989) has said: 'Managerial work is undergoing such enormous and rapid change that many managers are reinventing their profession as they go.'

- Relevance - it is too easy to assume that all managers need to know about such nostrums as strategic planning, economic value added, balance sheet analysis, etc. These can be useful but they may not be what managers really need. Management development processes must be related to the needs of particular managers in specific jobs and these processes may or may not include techniques such as those listed above. Those needs should include not only what managers should know now but also what they should know and be able to do in the future, if they have the potential. Thus, management development may include 'broadening programmes' aimed at giving managers an understanding of the wider, strategic issues which will be relevant at higher levels in the organization.

- Self-development - managers need to be encouraged to develop themselves and helped to do so. Performance management will aim to provide this guidance.

- Experiential learning - if learning can be described as a modification of behavior through experience then the principal method by which managers can be equipped is by providing them with the right variety of experience, in good time in the course of their careers, and by helping them to learn from that experience - coaching and action learning are methods of achieving this.

- Formal training - courses can supplement but can never replace experience and they must be carefully timed and selected or designed to meet particular needs. A 'sheep dip' approach which exposes all managers to the same training course may be desirable in some circumstances, but the focus should generally be on identifying and meeting individual learning needs.

Competency-based management development uses competency frameworks as a means of identifying and expressing development needs and pointing the way to self-managed learning programmes or the provision of learning opportunities by the organization.

Competency-based management development may concentrate on a limited number of core or generic competences which the organization has decided will be an essential part of the equipment of their managers if they are going to take the organization forward in line with its strategic plans. For example:

- strategic capability to understand the changing business environment, opportunities for product-market development, competitive challenges and the strengths and weaknesses of their own organization in order to identify optimum strategic responses;

- change management capability to identify change needs, plan change programmes and persuade others to participate willingly in the implementation of change;

- team management capability to get diverse groups of people from different disciplines to work well together.

- relationship management to network effectively with others to share information and pool resources to achieve common objectives;

- international management to be capable of managing across international frontiers, working well with people of other nationalities.

The aim of development centres is to help participants build up an awareness of the competences their job requires and to construct their own personal development plans to

improve their performance in the present job and to enhance their careers.

Like assessment centres (see Paper 27), development centres are built around definitions of competency requirements. Unlike assessment centres, however, development centres look ahead at the competencies needed in the future. The other significant difference between a development centre and an assessment centre is that in the latter case the organization 'owns' the results for selection or promotion purposes, while in the former case the results are owned by the individual as the basis for self-managed learning.

Development centres are not an event, nor a physical location. The activities of the centre offer participants the opportunity to examine and understand the competences they require now and in the future. Because 'behaviour predicts behaviour' the activities of the centre need to offer opportunities for competences to be observed in practice. Simulations of various kinds are therefore important features - these are a combination of case studies and role playing designed to obtain the maximum amount of realism. Participants are put into the position of practising behaviour in conditions very similar to those they will meet in the course of their everyday work.

An important part of the centre's activities will be feedback reviews, counselling and coaching sessions conducted by the directing staff, which will consist of full-time tutors and line managers who have been given special training in the techniques required.

The stages of a typical development centre as described by Hall and Norris (1992) are:

Prior to the centre delegates assess themselves against defined competencies.

Day 1

- Delegates test their pre-centre work with other delegates
- Individual task
- Structured self-insight
- Business simulation

Day 2

- Team roles questionnaire
- Personal profiles questionnaire
- Further counselling sessions and self-assessment procedures

Day 3

- Numerical reasoning tests
- Feedback on questionnaire
- Counselling on personal development plans
- Review of key points and findings

Management development should be concerned with enhancing leadership as well as extending and improving more general management skills. According to Goleman (1995), this process should take account of the concept of emotional intelligence as discussed in Paper 10. Emotional intelligence has been defined by Goleman (1995) as being about:

- knowing what you are feeling and being able to handle those feelings without having them swamp you;
- being able to motivate yourself to get jobs done, be creative and perform at your peak;
- sensing what others are feeling and handling relationships effectively.

The possession of high levels of emotional intelligence is a necessary attribute for success as a leader.

Goleman has defined four components of emotional intelligence:

- Self-management - the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods and regulate your own behaviour coupled with a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. The six competencies associated with this component are self-control, trustworthiness and integrity, initiative and adaptability, comfort with ambiguity, openness to change and a strong desire to achieve.
- Self-awareness - the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions and drives as well as their effect on others. This is linked to three competencies: self-confidence, realistic self-assessment and emotional self-awareness.
- Social awareness - the ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people, and skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. This is linked to six competencies: empathy, expertise in building and retaining talent, organizational awareness, cross-cultural sensitivity, valuing diversity, and service to clients and customers.
- Social skills - proficiency in managing relationships and building networks to get the

desired result from others and reach personal goals, and the ability to find common ground and build rapport. The five competencies associated with this component are leadership, effectiveness in leading change, conflict management, influence/communication, and expertise in building and leading teams.

The steps required to develop emotional intelligence suggested by Goleman (1999) are:

- assess the requirements of jobs in terms of emotional skills;

- assess individuals to identify their level of emotional intelligence - 360-degree feedback can be a powerful source of data;

- gauge readiness - ensure that people are prepared to improve their level of emotional intelligence;

- motivate people to believe that the learning experience will benefit them;

- make change self-directed - encourage people to prepare a learning plan which fits their interests, resources and goals;

- focus on clear manageable goals - the focus must be on immediate, manageable steps, bearing in mind that cultivating a new skill is gradual, with stops and starts; the old ways will reassert themselves from time to time;

- prevent relapse - show people how they can learn lessons from the inevitable relapses;

- give performance feedback;

- encourage practice, remembering that emotional competence cannot be improved overnight;

- provide models of desired behaviours;

- encourage and reinforce - create a climate that rewards self-improvement;

- evaluate - establish sound outcome measures and then assess performance against them.

Management development is not a separate activity to be handed over to a specialist and forgotten or ignored. The success of a management development programme depends upon the degree to which all levels of management are committed to it. The development of subordinates must be recognized as a natural

and essential part of any manager's job. But the lead must come from the top.

The traditional view is that the organization need not concern itself with management development. The natural process of selection and the pressure of competition will ensure the survival of the fittest. Managers, in fact, are born not made. Cream rises to the top (but then so does scum).

The reaction to this was summed up in Humble's (1963) phrase, 'programmitis and crown prince'. Management development was seen in its infancy as a mechanical process using management inventories, multi coloured replacement charts, 'Cook's tours' for newly recruited graduates, detailed job rotation programmes, elaborate points schemes to appraise personal characteristics, and endless series of formal courses.

CONCLUSION

The true role of the organization in management development lies somewhere between these two extremes. On the one hand, it is not enough, in conditions of rapid growth (when they exist) and change, to leave everything to chance - to trial and error. On the other hand, elaborate management development programmes cannot successfully be imposed on the organization. As Peter Drucker wisely said many years ago (1955): 'Development is always self-development. Nothing could be more absurd than for the enterprise to assume responsibility for the development of a man. [sic]. The responsibility rests with the individual, his abilities, his efforts'.

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