LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES PROFILES AND MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS IN GREECE

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Abstract

This paper investigates the association of leadership roles’ competencies as well as managerial effectiveness profiles with gender and job outcomes (job satisfaction and performance). In addition, the influence of leadership competencies on individual effectiveness of managers is explored, providing a course for action toward managerial excellence. Drawing upon a sample of 132 male and female managers in Greek firms, a structured questionnaire was developed adopting the Competing Values Framework (CVF) in order to measure both leadership roles’ competencies and managerial effectiveness.

Results revealed that managers characterized by high levels of job performance excel in practicing all leadership competencies, while gender does not exert significant impact. A similar pattern emerged for managerial effectiveness profiles. Moreover, leadership competencies associated with the innovator, director and mentor roles found to contribute most to managerial effectiveness, thus specific directions for managerial action has been derived.

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1. Introduction

Changes in world economy caused by globalization, the requirements for sustainable development, the emergence of information as a critical resource and the more recent fiscal crisis combined with the complexity of business internal environment have modified significantly the role that professionals are called to play. In this context, managers have to face many new challenges including developments in communications and information technology, increasing competition due to globalization, the importance of the strategic management perspective, demands for transparency, the emergence of sustainability and the ever increasing importance of human resources management.

In order to enable managers to cope with the contemporary multidimensional and complex requirements, changes in multiple levels have to be made and they must be equipped with the necessary skills and new competences in line with contemporary developments.

Building on the contingency and the competency school, this study aims to shed light on the compelling notion that leadership competency profile of managers influences their job outcomes and their individual effectiveness. Recently, the identification of the relationships between managerial success and individual attributes, as well as the investigation of the linkages between managerial performance and specific competencies has attracted research interest (Young & Dulewicz, 2009; Robertson et al., 1999).

Almost 2300 years ago, Aristotle had realized the fundamental role of both ‘strategos’ (leader of the army) and a political leader in their domains, and described leadership based on three elements: relationships (pathos), values (ethos), process (logos) (Collinson, 1998). Yet, HRM literature has historically shifted its attention away from the Manager’s role, and his or her competencies relevant to their effectiveness. Moreover, most researchers have been focused more on efficient leadership styles or roles rather than the associated competencies. In alignment with these suggestions, our study aims to investigate managers’ profiles (leadership competency & managerial effectiveness) in the Greek context in relation with job outcomes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Competency school of leadership and management

Several schools of leadership have been formulated in the last century, most of which have supported the notion that different leadership styles are appropriate in different circumstances (Muller & Turner, 2007) leading to superior performance. Most recently the competency school of leadership emerged, building on a synthesis of all preceding schools, since it deals with traits, behaviours and emotional intelligence as competencies. The associated stream of research suggests that certain competency profiles are appropriate in different situations and it assigns competency profiles for effective managers and leaders.

Initially, researchers often used indiscriminately the term ‘competency’ as a synonym to ‘competence’ and vice versa. However, recent debates amongst scholars revealed their conceptual and practical distinctions in their interpretation (Cheng et al., 2003). Eventually, HRM literature has reached to some compelling consensus, that the term competency should be defined as a person related concept referring to the dimensions of behavioural action supporting competent performance, while competence relates to an individual’s ability to meet a range of externally agreed standards (Ahadzie et al., 2008; Cheng et al., 2003; Tett et al., 2000; Trivellas & Drimoussis, 2013). In particular, we favor Young’s (2005) view that these two discrete concepts may also be complimentary.

Dulewicz and Higgs (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003;2005) developed a taxonomy of three groups of competencies, namely intellectual (IQ), managerial (MQ) and emotional (EQ) competencies, as a result of an extensive review of the leadership literature. In a similar vein, a number of studies based on the competency school have
explored the competency profiles of effective leaders or managers (Muller & Turner, 2010; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008). These studies converge that different leadership competency profiles are in fact related to leadership success in different contents. Thus, we developed the following research question:

*Which leadership competency profiles are associated with increased managerial effectiveness and job outcomes?*

### 2.2. Competency types

Competencies acquired in education are the necessary prerequisite not only for boosting individual effectiveness on initial entry to the labour market but also for long-lasting employability. Given that employees’ needs and job requirements should be met, Allen and his colleagues (2005) proposed the following types of competencies:

Specific competencies refer to clusters of cognitive prerequisites that an individual should acquire in order to be able to perform adequately in a given substantive domain (Weinert, 2001). However, rapid obsolescence of technological achievements and shifts in labour demand often result to the devaluation of specific competencies over time.

A number of researchers stress the importance of the 'specific' competence referring to the profession or field specific knowledge and skills that are relevant to the tasks realized at the work environment. On the other hand, their opponents argue that 'generic' competencies or skills like the ability to learn (conceptual competency) as well as communication and teamwork skills should be developed (Thompson et al., 1997).

General competencies include a diversity of concepts, such as intelligence, information-processing models, meta-competencies, and key competencies, which they may be exercised in a range of contexts and contents. A major advantage of this group is that they facilitate the transfer of existing specific competencies and the acquisition of new competences which can be used in new work situations.

Several researchers have proposed more integrated frameworks incorporating both specific and general competencies, in order to address all cognitive, motivational and social requirements (Bloom, 1956; Boyatzis, 1982; Levy-Leboyer, 1996).

Abraham and his colleagues (2001) advocated that all organizational functions require a set of essential managerial, generic and technical or functional competencies in order to be performed effectively. They considered that managerial competencies are essential for managers with supervisory responsibility in any service, while generic ones are crucial for all staff, regardless of their function or level. Specific competencies are necessary in order to perform any job in the organization within a defined technical or functional work area.

Similarly, Allen *et al* (2005) introduced a conceptual model for the measurement of general competences distinguished in nine broad action categories (directing productive tasks, directing the work of others, planning, coordination, control, innovation, information management, maintaining relations with personnel, and maintaining relations with clients) relevant to work situations.

### 2.3. Leadership roles’ competencies

The Competing Values Model (CVM) evolved from the work of Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) as they attempted to circumscribe a generally agreed upon theoretical framework of the concept of organizational effectiveness. This framework was chosen for this study, because it was experimentally derived and found to have a high degree of face and empirical validity in comparison with other instruments commonly used in organizational sciences (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). The CVF has also been utilized as a device for mapping organizations’ culture and leadership profiles and conducting comparative analysis (Hooijberg & Choi, 2000;
Trivellas & Dargenidou, 2009a,b). It is constituted from two dimensions (flexibility versus control, and internal focus versus external focus), defining four quadrants, namely: Open Systems, Rational Goal, Internal Processes and Human Relations. These four quadrants also define four leadership styles (adaptive, task, stability and people leadership) referring to eight managerial leadership roles and their key competencies which were initially proposed by Quinn (1988).

Open Systems model stresses innovativeness, entrepreneurship, adaptation and resource acquisition. The broker, who obtains resources for the unit and the innovator who identifies and facilitates adaptation to changes are the two roles assigned to this leadership orientation. Rational model stresses the criteria of productivity, accomplishment, direction and goal clarity. Two leadership roles are assigned to this quadrant; those are the producer who motivates people to take actions and the director who clarifies expectations and establishes objectives. Internal processes model stresses stability, control, documentation and information management. It highlights monitoring and coordinating the work effort. Regarding the two corresponding roles, the monitor ensures compliance, tracks progress, and analyses results; the coordinator maintains order, structure, and flow of the system. Human relations model builds on flexibility and internal focus. Mentoring subordinates and facilitating teamwork are the core activities attached to the two corresponding roles. In particular, the mentor engages in the development of people with care and empathy, while the facilitator fosters collective effort to build trust, cohesion and teamwork.

Table 1. The CVF approach for leadership, the associated key competencies and managerial effectiveness dimensions

| Leadership Roles | Key competencies                                      | Managerial Effectiveness                   |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Rational model   |                                                        |                                            |
| Producer         | 1. Working productively                               | 1. Managing Competitiveness                |
|                  | 2. Fostering a productive work environment           | 2. Managing Employees                      |
|                  | 3. Managing time and stress                          | 3. Managing Customer Service               |
| Director         | 1. Visioning, Planning, goal-setting                 |                                            |
|                  | 2. Designing and organising                          |                                            |
|                  | 3. Delegating effectively                            |                                            |
| Internal Processes|                                                      |                                            |
| Coordinator      | 1. Managing projects                                 | 4. Managing Acculturation                  |
|                  | 2. Designing work                                    | 5. Managing the Control System             |
|                  | 3. Managing across functions                         | 6. Managing Coordination                   |
|                  | 1. Monitoring personal performance                   |                                            |
| Monitor          | 2. Managing collective performance                   |                                            |
|                  | 3. Managing organizational performance               |                                            |
| Human Relations  |                                                        |                                            |
| Facilitator      | 1. Building teams                                    | 7. Managing Teams                          |
|                  | 2. Using participative decision making                | 8. Managing Interpersonal Relationships     |
|                  | 3. Managing conflict                                 |                                            |
|                  | 1. Understanding self and others                     | 9. Managing the Development of Others      |
| Mentor           | 2. Communicating effectively                         |                                            |
|                  | 3. Developing subordinates                           |                                            |
| Open Systems     |                                                        |                                            |
| Innovator        | 1. Living with change                                | 10. Managing Innovation                    |
|                  | 2. Thinking creatively                               | 11. Managing the Future                    |
|                  | 3. Creating change                                   |                                            |
| Broker           | 1. Building and maintaining a power base             | 12. Managing Continuous Improvement        |
|                  | 2. Negotiating agreement and commitment               |                                            |
|                  | 3. Presenting ideas                                  |                                            |

Quinn et al (2003) further developed and integrated this leadership model into a competency framework. They identified the core competencies associated with these eight roles, organized the learning process to cultivate
these competencies and they suggested a course of action to grow new competencies in order to enhance managerial effectiveness. It should be stressed out that the diagonal quadrants produce conflicting or competing values.

Cameron and Quinn (1999) developed an instrument to assess managerial effectiveness based on the four CVF models and consolidated a list of successful leadership skills into a set of 12 managerial competency categories. In particular, Open Systems Model involves managing the future, promoting continuous improvement, and fostering innovation, Rational Goal Model is comprised of managing competitiveness, energizing employees and focusing on customer service, Internal Processes Model is consisted of managing acculturation, controlling the system and coordination, and Human Relations Model considers the management of interpersonal relationships, teamwork and personal development. The eight leadership roles, their key competencies and the dimensions of managerial effectiveness as prescribed by CVF are shown in table 1.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Sample and Questionnaire Design

The field research was focused on male and female managers in Greek firms. The resulting sample comprised 132 valid questionnaires (response rate about 74%). The research instrument was a structured questionnaire based on a seven-point Likert–type scale, which was developed to measure leadership roles’ competencies, managerial effectiveness and job outcomes (job satisfaction and performance). Tapping on the advantages of CVM, the leadership roles’ competencies scale and the managerial effectiveness construct was articulated by items suggested by Quinn (1988) and Quinn et al. (2003). Regarding job outcomes measures, job satisfaction construct was built upon Cammann’s et al. (1983) recommendations. Job performance measure was constructed by using 2-items from Yousef (1998), 5-items from Suliman (2001) and 1-item by Farth et al (1991) in order to assess quality, quantity, productivity, individual goal achievement, working time available, decision-making, suggestions for improvement and overall ability to execute a job. The Self-report measures employed in this study are used in cases where there aren’t any valid objective measures of performance (or they are not available to the researcher). The literature supports the use of such self-report measures (see Babin & Boles, (1996)), which allow researchers to access sensitive areas not traditionally measured by existing measures while maintaining employee confidence (Kennedy et al., 2001).

All respondents possess a managerial position (15% are CEOs, 48% are head of departments), 55% of them are female, 70% are more than 30 years old and the majority of them (62%) have more than 5 years of working experience.

Inter-item analysis is used to verify leadership roles’ competencies, managerial effectiveness, job satisfaction, and job performance scales for internal consistency or reliability. Specifically, Cronbach’s coefficient alpha is calculated for each scale, as recommended by Flynn et al. (1990), ranging approximately from 0.74 through 0.95. Thus, all sub-scales exhibited well over the minimum acceptable reliability level of 0.7.

3.2. Leadership roles’ competency profiles

T-test analysis was used to assess the statistical significance of the differences between managers’ competency profiles in relation to job satisfaction, job performance and gender. Results summarized in table 2, indicate each group’s mean value and level of significance of each paired comparison. Regarding leadership roles’ competencies, managers characterized by high level of job performance excel in practicing all
leadership competencies. In a similar vein, high level of leadership competencies are associated with enhanced managerial satisfaction. On the contrary, gender has not been proved to be a decisive factor differentiating managers with high and low levels of leadership competencies, since male managers seem to be superior to their female counterparts only in networking, negotiating, and exerting influence to upper hierarchical levels (broker role).

The CVM based instrument, applied as a diagnostic tool, reveals that managers are deficient in innovativeness, creativity, risk taking and growth potential as described by the innovator and broker roles. Managers are more inclined to formalized structures, rules and regulations, decision making centralization, managing conflict and communicating effectively. A graphic visualization of the findings across the emerging leadership competencies is illustrated in figures 1a,b & 2a.

Table 2. Results of independent samples t-test analysis regarding leadership roles’ competencies

| Leadership roles | Cronbach’s alpha | Job satisfaction | Job performance | Gender |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Innovator        | 0.837            | 4.95             | 4.46            | 0.49*  | 5.20 | 4.10 | 1.10*** | 4.90 | 4.62 | 0.28 |
| Broker           | 0.947            | 4.34             | 3.51            | 0.84** | 4.44 | 3.34 | 1.10*** | 4.46 | 3.62 | 0.85**|
| Producer         | 0.855            | 5.37             | 4.80            | 0.57*  | 5.69 | 4.32 | 1.37*** | 5.31 | 4.99 | 0.33 |
| Director         | 0.910            | 5.74             | 5.10            | 0.65** | 5.95 | 4.79 | 1.16*** | 5.52 | 5.44 | 0.08 |
| Coordinator      | 0.818            | 5.86             | 5.31            | 0.55***| 5.99 | 5.12 | 0.87*** | 5.69 | 5.60 | 0.09 |
| Monitor          | 0.807            | 5.57             | 4.80            | 0.78***| 5.70 | 4.60 | 1.10*** | 5.41 | 5.13 | 0.28 |
| Facilitator      | 0.831            | 5.80             | 4.92            | 0.88***| 5.92 | 4.73 | 1.19*** | 5.55 | 5.34 | 0.21 |
| Mentor           | 0.784            | 6.07             | 5.54            | 0.53** | 6.17 | 5.40 | 0.77*** | 5.81 | 5.89 | -0.09|

* significant at the 0.05 level, ** significant at the 0.01 level, *** significant at the 0.001 level, N=132.

Fig. 1. Leadership competencies profiles of managers with high and low level of job satisfaction (a) & performance (b)

3.3. Managerial effectiveness profiles

T-test analysis was also used to assess the statistical significance of the differences between managers’ effectiveness profiles in relation to job satisfaction, job performance and gender. Results summarized in table 3, indicate each group’s mean value and level of significance of each paired comparison.
Managers characterized by high level of job performance excel in realizing all managerial effectiveness dimensions apart from building interpersonal relationships. In a similar vein, the most satisfied managers are characterized by competitiveness, energizing employees, coordination and acculturation. On the contrary, gender has not been proved to be a decisive factor differentiating the more effective managers, since male managers seem to be superior to their female counterparts only in dealing with competitiveness.

The CVM based instrument, applied as a diagnostic tool, reveals that managers are deficient in facilitating teamwork, and managing the future. Managers are more inclined to customer service and energizing employees. A graphic visualization of the findings across the emerging managerial effectiveness criteria is illustrated in figures 2b, & 3a,b.
3.4. **Multiple Regression Analysis**

Multiple regression analysis was conducted for managerial effectiveness as dependent variable to test its relationship with leadership roles’ competencies, controlling for gender, age, hierarchical level, working experience and income. Results show that the predictor variables have captured a significant proportion of change in the dependent variables, explaining 66.4% of variance in managers’ effectiveness. No serious problems of multi-collinearity exist between the independent variables as Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) is far below the 3 points limit suggested in Social Sciences literature. The results of regression analyses (standardized betas, adjusted R square, significance levels) are exhibited in table 4. The data were examined for outliers, skewness, kurtosis, and multivariate normality.

Table 4. Regression results pertaining to the relationship between leadership roles’ competencies and managerial effectiveness

| Independent variables                  | Std. beta |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|
| Gender                                 | -0.036    |
| Hierarchical level                     | -0.024    |
| Age                                    | 0.117     |
| Working experience                     | -0.175*   |
| Income                                 | -0.067    |
| Innovator                              | 0.146*    |
| Broker                                 | 0.088     |
| Producer                               | 0.079     |
| Director                               | 0.288**   |
| Coordinator                            | -0.019    |
| Monitor                                | 0.106     |
| Facilitator                            | 0.122     |
| Mentor                                 | 0.249**   |
| **Adjusted R square**                  | **0.664***|

* significant at the 0.05 level, ** significant at the 0.01 level, *** significant at the 0.001 level, (N=132).

Findings reveal that core competencies associated with the innovator (stand. b= 0.146, p<0.05), director (stand. b= 0.288, p<0.01), and mentor (stand. b= 0.249, p<0.01) roles are significantly and positively related to managerial effectiveness. On the contrary, working experience exerts a negative relationship (stand. b= -0.175, p<0.05), interpreted as less experienced managers are related to higher levels of effectiveness.
4. Conclusions

This study aims to investigate firstly, the leadership roles’ competency and individual effectiveness profiles of managers in Greek firms, and secondly the leadership competencies impact on managerial effectiveness. The CVM was adopted as the instrument to operationalize both leadership roles’ competencies and managerial effectiveness.

Findings indicate that managers equipped with high levels of leadership competencies were found to produce enhanced levels of job outcomes, namely job performance and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction with aspects of the organization may reflect employees’ evaluation of the job condition regarding among others their salaries, fringe benefits, achievement, autonomy, recognition, communication, working conditions, job importance, co workers, degree of professionalism, internal climate, interpersonal relationships, supervisory support, positive affectivity, job security, workplace flexibility and teamwork (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006). On the other hand, less satisfied employees are prone to quit their jobs easier (Gangadhraian et al., 1990; Martin, 1990). Moreover, low level of job satisfaction has frequently been associated with “unskilled or inappropriately trained staff, laborious tasks such as documentation, repetition of duties, tensions within role expectations, role ambiguity, role conflict, feeling overloaded” (Navaie-Waliser etal., 2004; Koustelios et al., 2003; DeLoach, 2003; Illies & Judg, 2003; Gigantesco et al., 2003; Blegen, 1993; Chu et al., 2003; McNeese-Smith, 1999; Thyer, 2003). On the contrary, several researchers argue that training guiding the development of skills and abilities such as human relation skills reinforce employee satisfaction (Harel & Tzafrir, 1999; Lee et al., 1999). Extending this argument, Hayes (1979) defined ‘competence’ as a combination of ability and willingness to do a task, elevating the importance of internal motivation. Thus, a motivated employee who possesses the relevant competences should be able to apply his/her skills and abilities to his/her job. Supporting this rationale, Alder (1991) concluded that “systems in which employees reported higher perceptions of skill variety, task significance, autonomy, and feedback reported higher levels of satisfaction and internal work motivation”.

In a similar vein, higher job performance is believed to occur when the talent or the capability of an employee is consistent with the needs of the job demands and his/her organizational environment. The talent of a person reflects his/her values, vision, knowledge, competences, interest and style while job demands are shaped by role responsibilities and allocated tasks. The possession of these competences which are related to job efficiency precedes and leads to effective performance on the job (Boyatzis, 1982; 2008). However, our results failed to confirm a strong relationship between gender and either leadership competencies or managerial effectiveness. This finding is in alignment with few empirical studies verifying that no significant differences exist between men and women in their leadership competencies (Connerley et al., 2008) and characteristics (Galanaki et al., 2009; Thompson, 2000; Vilkinas, 2000; Wyse & Vilkinas, 2004), which stands in contrast to the majority of the extant research-supported evidence.

The CVM based instrument, applied as a diagnostic tool, reveals that managers are deficient in innovativeness, creativity, risk taking and growth potential as described by the innovator and broker roles’ competencies. This weakness has been a major drawback for managers, since innovator role associated competencies have been crucial in the improvement of managerial effectiveness. On the contrary, managers mainly possess competencies supporting formal structures, rules and regulations, decision making centralization, conflict management and effective communication. Supporting this strength at managers’ profile, core competencies associated with the director, and mentor roles are significantly and positively related to managerial effectiveness. However, innovativeness is sacrificed in favor of centralization, documentation and monitoring, revealing a crucial weakness of managers’ profile. Thus, HRM methods and practices should be focused more on the development of skills, competencies and values fostering innovation, risk taking and creativity.

Future studies could build on and validate the current results by assessing the role of organizational or national culture (Trivellas, & Dargenidou, 2009a,b; Trivellas et al., 2012) in the different profiles as well as
internal environment variables such as motivation, emotional intelligence and innovativeness (Trivellas, 2011; Trivellas P., 2012; Trivellas & Drimoussis, 2013; Trivellas et al., 2013; Trivellas & Santouridis, 2009).

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