

Importance Placed on Managerial Leadership Competencies Across Countries: What Managers Need to Know

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This study examines the importance placed on managerial competencies across countries. A partial replication of work done 5 years ago, this research demonstrated that various countries' managers have changed the emphasis placed on some managerial competencies. Overall, results showed that many managerial competencies have similar amounts of importance placed upon them regardless of managerial location. However, other competencies have shown significant differences between countries. Implications of the findings for HRD are discussed.

Keywords: Leadership, International Human Resource Development, Learning

Research has demonstrated that, "What is expected of leaders, what leaders may and may not do, and the status and influence bestowed upon leaders vary considerably as a result of the cultural forces in the countries or regions in which the leaders function" (House, Wright, & Aditya, 1999, p. 178). Because the practice of Human Resource Development (HRD) involves the education of the workforce in order to equip the individual for participation in the marketplace, HRD as a field has a stake in the question of managerial development and culture in the context of the global economy. Thus, this study seeks to answer the question; does the importance placed on managerial competencies differ across cultures?

Past research has explored differences in the value placed on certain managerial skills in specific countries. In a study using multi-rater feedback data, Hazucha, Hezlett, Bontems-Wackens, and Ronnkvist (1999) attempted to discover which competencies managers and their bosses view as the most critically important for their positions. Hazucha et al. (1999) hypothesized that: (1) given that managerial work tends to be similar across countries, management competencies are likely to be more similar than cultural values across countries; (2) there would be a greater difference between observed behavior (skill ratings) than in ideal behavior (importance ratings) across countries. Results of their study supported these hypotheses.

Multi-rater feedback instruments, such as the one used by Hazucha et al. (1999), have fast become one of the standard ways to provide managers with a broad spectrum of feedback about their performance as perceived by others on the job (Rowson, 1998). As industries and organizations become more global, multi-rater instruments are increasingly used cross-culturally. Organizational leaders implement multi-rater feedback instruments in multi-national organizations for the purpose of providing employees with structured, constructive, targeted feedback about their performance. However, besides a host of logistical challenges that plague implementation of a multi-country measurement effort, several issues surround the use of multi-rater feedback instruments across cultures. First, it is safe to assume that cultural differences can be expected to play key role in how this instrument, as a portion of a leadership development program is viewed and accepted. For instance, "most U.S. leadership development programs and products rest on a set of cultural assumptions about what leadership entails and how development is best achieved" (Hoppe, 1998, p. 337). Some of these assumptions are that leadership development is the development of individuals, leadership can be learned, personal advancement is desirable, being open to change is good, data and empirical measurement are good, taking action is essential, and objective feedback is good (Hoppe, 1998). These assumptions shape the very definition of leadership development within a culture, and may vary to a great extent between cultures.

Second, even as most countries engage in leadership development of some sort, how development strengths and needs are operationalized can vastly differ across cultures. Hoppe (1998) specifically states that, "Cultural values and beliefs affect the practice of leadership development because they relate directly to the assumptions on which this practice is built" (p. 339). For example, when U.S. Americans are faced with a problem "they like to get to the source. This means facing the facts, meeting the problem head on, putting the cards on the table, and getting the information 'straight from the horse's mouth'" (Stewart & Bennett, 1991, p. 96). The close proximity of authority in the U.S. culture is indicative of a lower 'power distance' country, a cultural dimension coined by Hofstede (1984).

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In contrast, countries with high power distance, such as Mexico, have a more hierarchical reporting structure and autocratic leadership style. In such countries, feedback from the boss can have greater relevance, and thus, place primary if not sole emphasis on the competencies perceived as important by the boss.

How individuals communicate within a culture also affects the operationalization of managerial competencies. Generally, in low context cultures such as the U.S (Hall & Hall, 1990), communication is direct and explicit. In the context of using multi-rater instruments, people want to know the truth and find out perceptions of others to make development happen. However, in high context cultures (e.g., Japan and China), communication is more subtle and indirect (Hall & Hall); to be direct is considered disrespectful and rude. In such cultures, direct managerial performance feedback deriving from a multi-rater instrument could be considered as private and non-confrontational. Therefore, employees of high context cultures may need more time to reflect and explore development activities than employees of low context cultures (Rowson, 1998).

The cultural dimension of individualism versus collectivism can also impact performance and importance ratings (Trompenaars, 1993; Hofstede, 1984; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). In individualistic countries such as the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia, competencies that focus on task achievement are seen as primary drivers of performance improvement. In collectivistic cultures such as China, Singapore, and Japan, greater emphasis is placed upon competencies that create harmony among people, such as building relationships, fostering teamwork, and listening to others, which act as a way for the group to work together and perform at a higher level (Milliman, Taylor, & Czaplewski, 2002).

In sum, both the construct of leadership development and the ways managerial competencies are operationalized and practiced are substantially affected by cultural context. Although research has explored cultural differences and managerial practices within cultures (Robie, Johnson, Nilsen, & Hazucha, 2001; Hazucha et al. 1999; Rowson, 1998; Hofstede, 1984), no recent literature has examined the differences between countries' workforce perspectives on the importance of certain managerial competencies over others. In other words, research has yet to look at the ideal managerial skills and knowledge composite by country. The present study investigates differences in culturally derived definitions of 'management' through ratings of managerial competency importance across industries and organizations.

Research Question

Given the literature on the cultural issues exist that when using and interpreting multi-rater feedback instrument in a cross-cultural context, the following exploratory research question is posed: Are different managerial competencies important in different countries?

Method

To investigate the cross-country differences and similarities in the values held for managerial competencies, secondary data analysis was conducted on a data collected through Personnel Decisions International's (PDI) PROFILOR[®] multi-rater development tool. The following section will briefly discuss the sample, instrumentation, and analysis procedures.

Sample

Data collected worldwide over the past three years was extracted from the PDI database. In the sample, 248 companies were represented. Work countries were considered in analysis if there were more than 100 individuals residing in that country at time of instrument administrations. Twelve countries or regions are represented: Australia (n = 433), Canada (n = 753), China (n = 445), France (n = 145), Germany (n = 251), Italy (n = 100), Japan (n = 113), Mexico (n = 165), the Netherlands (n = 106), Singapore (n = 209), the U.K. (n = 588), and the U.S. (n = 300). Total sample size for this study was 3608. The original sample for the U.S. exceeded 15,000 individuals. Therefore, to decrease regression-to-the-mean effects, the average number of individuals from each of the other countries (M=300) was randomly selected from the original U.S. population.

As the PROFILOR[®] is a multi-rater instrument, it asks the boss of the respondent for ratings of managerial competence importance. As such, it is the boss of the individual participating in the PROFILOR[®] rating process that provided data analyzed in this study. As many demographics questions were only asked of the participant, sample demographics for this study reflect the participant, not the actual provider of data. In sum, we are reporting on what competencies bosses' felt were important for the group described below.

The PROFILOR[®] participant sample is made up of 70.3% males and 29.7% females. It is a highly educated group, with 40.2% that have received baccalaureate degrees and 28.3% holding a Master's degree. In this sample, 11.3% said they were expatriates. The majority of this sample (42.5%) works in companies with over 10,000

employees. Of the 93% of the sample said they had management responsibilities, 4.8% said they supervise hourly or clerical employees, 39.8% identified themselves as first-line management, 37.9% said they were middle management, 16.7% said they were executive management, and 0.9% categorized themselves in the top management categories. On the instrument, each of the managerial level categories were qualified and explained to ensure consistent responses. Because the participant is asked to register their immediate boss in the PROFILOR[®] process, we can assume from these responses that the actual providers of data for this study would identify themselves in the managerial level one step above the category that the PROFILOR[®] participant identified himself or herself.

Instrumentation

As stated above, employees participated in an administration of the PROFILOR[®], a widely used multi-rater managerial performance feedback instrument developed by Personnel Decisions International (PDI). A multi-rater instrument is a development tool or performance measure that collects perspectives from the participant, their boss, direct reports, peers, and others that may be involved in their work life. Specifically, the PROFILOR[®] assesses importance placed on managerial competencies as well as managerial strengths and weaknesses (Robie et al., 2001; Rowson, 1998; Hezlett, Ronnkvist, Holt, & Hazucha, 1997). For the purpose of measuring perspectives of performance, the PROFILOR[®] assesses 130 managerial behaviors, which represent 24 competency areas with the specific intent of facilitating individual development as opposed to equipping the organization with information for the purpose of making personnel decisions. For this study, however, only ratings of importance were analyzed. Bosses rate the importance of the 24 competency areas for a single employee's job on a 1 to 7 Likert scale, where 1 or 2 equaled important, 3, 4, or 5 equaled very important, and 6 or 7 equaled critically important (see Table 1 for competencies and definitions). The bosses are instructed to rate no more than eight skills as "very important" or "critically important" which ensures some amount of variance in within-subject scores. The competency areas are highly consistent with current research suggesting core job performance elements for most jobs across job families and industries (e.g., Campbell, Gasser, & Oswald, 1996; Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993).

Table 1

PROFILOR[®] Competency Areas and Definitions

Competency	Definition
Drive for Results	Drives for results and successes; conveys a sense of urgency and drives issues to closure; persists despite obstacles and opposition.
Act with Integrity	Demonstrates principled leadership and sound business ethics; shows consistency among principles, values, and behaviors; builds trust with others through own authenticity and follow-through on commitments.
Use Sound Judgment	Makes timely and sound decisions; makes decisions under conditions of uncertainty
Manage Execution	Assigns responsibilities; delegates to and empowers others; removes obstacles; allows for and contributes needed resources; coordinates work efforts; monitors progress.
Analyze Issues	Gathers relevant information systematically; considers a broad range of issues or factors; grasps complexities and perceives relationships among problems or issues; seeks input from others; uses accurately logic in analyses.
Foster Teamwork	Builds effective teams committed to organizational goals; fosters collaboration among team members and among teams; uses teams to address relevant issues.
Establish Plans	Develops short- and long-range plans that are appropriately comprehensive, realistic, and effective in meeting goals; integrates planning across work units.
Provide Direction	Fosters the development of a common vision; provides clear direction and priorities; clarifies roles and responsibilities.
Motivate Others	Encourages and empowers others to achieve; establishes challenging performance standards; creates enthusiasm, a feeling of investment, and a desire to excel.
Show Work Commitment	Sets high standards of performance; pursues aggressive goals and works hard to achieve them.
Coach and Develop	Accurately assess strengths and development needs of employees; gives timely, specific feedback, and helpful coaching; provides challenging assignments and opportunities for development.

Demonstrate Adaptability	Handles day-to-day work challenges confidently; is willing and able to adjust to multiple demands; shifting priorities, ambiguity, and rapid change; shows resilience in the face of constraints, frustrations, or adversity; demonstrates flexibility.
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Table 1 (continued)

PROFILOR® Competency Areas and Definitions

Competency	Definition
Influence Others	Asserts own ideas and persuades others; gains support and commitment from others; mobilizes people to take action.
Build Relationships	Relates to people in an open, friendly, accepting manner; shows sincere interest in others and their concerns; initiates and develops relationships with others as a key priority.
Lead Courageously	Steps forward to address difficult issues; puts self on line to deal with important problems; stands firm when necessary.
Foster Open Communication	Creates an atmosphere in which timely and high quality information flows smoothly between self and others; encourages the open expression of ideas and opinions.
Listen to Others	Demonstrates attention to and conveys understanding of the comments and questions of others; listens well in a group.
Champion Change	Challenges the status quo and champions new initiatives; acts as a catalyst of change and stimulates others to change; paves the way for needed changes; manages implementation effectively.
Know the Business	Show understanding of issues relevant to the broad organization and business; keeps that knowledge up-to-date; has and uses cross-functional knowledge.
Display Org. Savvy	Develops effective give-and-take relationships with others; understands the agendas and perspectives of others; recognizes and effectively balances the interests and needs of one's own group with those of the broader organization.
Use Technical/Functional Expertise	Posses up-to-date knowledge in the profession and industry; is regarded as an expert in the technical/functional areas; accesses and uses other expert resources when appropriate.
Speak Effectively	Speaks clearly and expresses self well in groups and one-to-one conversations.
Manage Disagreements	Brings substantive conflicts and disagreements into the open and attempts to resolve them collaboratively; builds consensus.
Develop Oneself	Learns from experience; actively pursues learning and self-development; seeks feedback and welcomes unsolicited feedback; modifies behavior in light of feedback.

Analysis

As this is an exploratory study of the perspectives of managerial competency importance, descriptive statistics were computed. By Competency means were ranked in order by country to facilitate an examination of similarities and differences. An ANOVA was conducted in order to test for differences by country among importance rating means.

Results

Means for each country on competency importance ratings measured on the PROFILOR® are reported in Table 2. Countries are sorted in approximate geographical order, starting with the U.S.; competencies are sorted according to the rank order found in the U.S. data. Means in bold fall in the top five rated competencies for that country, italics denote competencies rated in the bottom five. On the scale of 1 to 7, 1 being important and 7 being critically important, the maximum and the minimum average rating found is 5.98 (Act with Integrity, Mexico) and 2.92 (Develop Oneself, Japan), respectively. Composite means and standard deviations for each competency across countries are also noted in Table 2.

After correcting for multiple comparisons through a Bonferroni adjustment, results of an ANOVA revealed that 10 competencies demonstrated significant differences: Use Sound Judgment, Provide Direction, Lead Courageously, Coach and Develop, Champion Change, Build Relationships, Manage Disagreements, Act with Integrity, Demonstrate Adaptability, and Know the Business.

Table 2.
Mean Mid-level Managerial Competency Importance Ratings by Country of Work

Competency	Country of Work													
	M	S.D.	US N=300	Canada N=736	Mexico N=164	UK N=588	France N=145	Netherlands N=104	Italy N=100	Germany N=251	China N=445	Singapore N=209	Japan N=113	Australia N=434
Drive for Results	5.53	1.59	5.63	5.312	5.69	5.50	5.93	5.70	5.395	5.85	5.53	5.57	5.42	5.55
Act with Integrity**	5.17	1.77	5.57	5.39	5.98	4.98	4.64	4.94	4.75*	4.55	5.30	5.09	4.95	5.09
Sound Judgment**	5.13	1.53	5.36	5.314	5.51	5.11	4.75	5.12	4.75*	5.11	4.917	4.85	5.41	5.05
Manage Execution	5.13	1.72	5.31	5.05	5.41	5.00	5.09	5.41	4.97	5.23	5.15	5.15	4.90	5.14
Analyze Issues	5.16	1.69	5.16	5.10	5.30	5.09	5.15	5.21	5.395	5.22	5.17	5.12	5.25	5.17
Foster Teamwork	4.87	1.61	4.88	4.41	4.94	4.75	5.10	4.82	4.79	4.84	4.919	4.75	4.53	4.92
Establish Plans	4.72	1.74	4.83	4.70	5.086	4.41	4.46	4.80	4.43	4.88	4.82	4.77	5.23	4.74
Provide Direction**	4.50	1.81	4.75	4.49	5.080	4.23	4.80	4.65	3.99	4.26	4.487	4.44	5.05	4.50
Motivate Others	4.53	1.70	4.73	4.48	4.55	4.57	4.62	4.78	4.52	4.93	4.483	4.22	4.29	4.35
Show Work Com.	4.61	1.66	4.60	4.44	4.67	4.79	4.56	4.66	4.63	4.65	4.59	4.87	4.49	4.57
Coach and Develop**	4.08	1.82	4.45	4.15	4.40	3.942	3.56	4.37	4.23	4.17	4.16	3.91	4.26	3.71
Demonstrate Adapt.**	4.28	1.76	4.42	4.51	4.34	4.70	3.85	4.11	4.02	3.77	3.96	4.18	3.86	4.20
Influence Others	4.29	1.71	4.41	4.22	4.26	4.40	4.11	3.97	3.95	4.43	4.34	4.51	4.71	4.11
Build Relationships**	4.16	1.78	4.31	4.27	3.56	4.27	3.63	4.03	4.34	3.76	4.25	4.29	3.94	4.24
Lead Courageously**	4.23	1.76	4.27	4.25	4.37	3.940	4.50	4.44	4.27	4.77	4.22	4.13	4.55	4.06
Foster Open Comm.	4.20	1.61	4.19	4.41	4.28	4.18	4.01	4.25	4.15	4.39	4.26	3.80	4.23	3.97
Listen to Others	3.87	1.60	4.08	3.92	3.70	3.84	3.89	3.86	3.96	3.66	4.03	3.66	3.65	3.83
Champion Change**	4.14	1.87	4.02	4.149	4.50	3.93	4.74	4.43	3.78	4.59	4.00	4.23	4.82	3.89
Know the Business**	4.15	1.82	3.94	4.147	4.15	3.92	3.99	3.70	4.45	3.85	4.49	4.53	4.21	4.32
<i>Display Org. Savvy</i>	<i>3.60</i>	1.74	<i>3.69</i>	<i>3.83</i>	<i>3.39</i>	<i>3.59</i>	<i>3.35</i>	<i>3.47</i>	<i>3.36</i>	<i>3.48</i>	<i>3.46</i>	<i>3.75</i>	<i>3.47</i>	<i>3.57</i>
Use Tech/Func Expert.	3.70	1.90	3.67	3.539	4.00	3.75	4.08	3.46	4.13	3.450	3.65	3.85	3.72	3.78
Speak Effectively	3.65	1.66	<i>3.54</i>	<i>3.66</i>	<i>3.45</i>	<i>3.64</i>	3.94	<i>3.27</i>	<i>3.62</i>	<i>3.459</i>	<i>3.94</i>	3.89	3.77	<i>3.46</i>
Manage Disagrmnt**	3.52	1.63	<i>3.34</i>	<i>3.530</i>	3.99	<i>3.28</i>	<i>3.63</i>	<i>3.34</i>	<i>3.50</i>	<i>3.66</i>	<i>3.81</i>	<i>3.68</i>	<i>3.27</i>	<i>3.39</i>
<i>Develop Oneself</i>	<i>3.28</i>	1.58	<i>3.21</i>	<i>3.20</i>	<i>3.46</i>	<i>3.29</i>	<i>3.14</i>	<i>3.41</i>	<i>3.61</i>	<i>3.58</i>	<i>3.47</i>	<i>3.22</i>	<i>2.92</i>	<i>3.05</i>

Top 5 = Bold, Bottom 5 = Italics; Competencies in italics/bold mark consistency in rank of ratings in top 5/bottom 5 across countries

* = Tie, ** = significantly different (p=.05 with Bonferroni adjustment)

Discussion

Results of this study suggest that, indeed, there are differences in managerial competency importance ratings across countries, although some countries have very similar ideas about what skills and knowledge are most and least important on the job. Similarities and differences between countries' importance ratings are discussed below.

Similarities

Several competencies' ratings were not significantly different, indicating that across countries, business people place importance on these competencies in a similar way. Analyze Issues, Establish Plans, Manage Execution, Influence Others, Foster Teamwork, Motivate Others, Display Organizational Savvy, Speak Effectively, Foster Open Communication, Listen to Others, Drive for Results, Show Work Commitment, Develop Oneself, and Use Technical/Functional Expertise as the competencies which across-country differences were *not* significantly different from zero, represent what might be described as generic managerial duties. All management positions focus on producing group or organizational level results of some kind in order to contribute to the overall fiscal health of the organization. This assertion links well with Campbell et al.'s (1993) argument that there were three key determinants to performance: declarative knowledge--knowledge of facts; procedural knowledge and skill--knowing how and being able to perform task; and motivation--the choice to exert effort, how much to exert, and for what length of time. In addition, individual differences research shows us that cognitive ability is one of the strongest predictors of work performance (Robie et al., 2001; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). The ability to solve complex problems and learn quickly is imperative to effective job performance in all countries, particularly critical in management positions. The grand majority of managers manage other people, a fact that is reflected in the homogeneity of scores for Foster Teamwork, Display Organizational Savvy, Foster Open Communication, and Listen to Others. Save Display Organizational Savvy, the greater part of these competencies' means fell in the "very important" or "important" answer categories (see Table 2).

Interestingly, the fact Foster Teamwork ratings showed no significant difference departs from previous studies done on the same instrument 10 years ago. With data collected in 1995, Hazucha et al. (1999) demonstrated that the Foster Teamwork competency was clearly differentiated by ratings in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures. In this study, however, this finding was not replicated. Individuals in individualistic and collectivistic cultures rated Foster Teamwork as "very important". This could indicate a shift on the part of individualistic cultures towards valuing collaboration.

Across countries, bosses rated Develop Oneself as one of the five least importance competencies. Given that the PROFILOR[®] is a developmental tool used for raising awareness of strengths and weaknesses within an employee, this finding is somewhat counterintuitive. In other words, despite the fact that the company has invested in this tool, few of the bosses feel that the participants' development is as important as other managerial competencies. This finding could have several possible explanations, two of which are: 1) the sample used in this study are already interested in development, and therefore developing themselves is less important for them; and 2) getting the work done, or the direct outcomes of successful management, is the most important competency, and therefore the indirect inputs, such as learning and development, automatically fall to the wayside given their more distal nature to valued managerial outcomes. The first of these explanations may be substantiated through a more randomized sampling methodology. The second, if true, has implications for the practice of HRD. If emphasis is placed heavily on only the direct inputs to valued managerial outputs, then the growth, development, and career movement of the manager may be at risk. Managerial bench strength could be substantially affected as organizational leaders pay closer attention to immediate needs and less attention to future roles, industry fluctuations, or competitive pressures that demand a developmentally focused managerial workforce.

When comparing the rank order of importance ratings, North American countries were by far most similar. Additional countries shared what could be dubbed as the "North American" perspective: the U.K., the Netherlands, Italy, Australia, and China. Prior research has shown that differences in importance ratings can be explained by differences in cultural values, as measured by Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimension framework (Hazucha et al., 1999). Study results have shown that Canada and the U.S. have similar scores on the cultural dimensions power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity indices (Hofstede, 1984), perhaps explaining the strong similarities in importance ratings in the present study. Other countries' similar profile may not be surprising considering the strong influence of the U.K. and the U.S. in the current westernized global marketplace because of British colonization. Culturally-speaking, Australia and China's largest business center, Hong Kong, are both heavily influenced by Great Britain. Similarities found between this group, Mexico, the Netherlands and Italy is somewhat more perplexing. Another hypothesis is that the companies contributing to the dataset used in the present study's analysis consists primarily of companies headquartered in the U.S. Research has noted that, although

organizations are located in a certain country, the culture of the organization itself may heavily influence work values and practices (Rowson, 1998). This could explain the similarities between countries organizations, despite cultural differences. Further analysis would help to answer this question.

All countries' organizational leaders rated Drive for Results and Analyze Issues in their top five important managerial competencies. North American and some European countries also consistently rated Act with Integrity, Use Sound Judgment, and Manage Execution in their top five important managerial competencies, while competencies that reflected people skills, such as Manage Disagreements and Display Organizational Savvy, were consistently rated in least important. Studies have that 'soft skills' are concerned less relevant to ultimate managerial performance, and will be consistently rated as less important than simply getting the job done (Rowson, 1998).

Differences

Although comparisons are not directly tested due to space constraints, some initial results can be derived from the present study. When comparing countries to others within the same region, Asian Pacific countries showed more differences in ranking while, as stated above, North American scores were more homogenous. European countries also showed greater diversity than North American countries, with some reflecting a more North American perspective and others demonstrating a more unique perspective. Past research has shown that European countries demonstrate vastly different cultural dimension scores (Hofstede, 1984). When compared with the overall agreement in North America on the top five competencies, German leaders included Motivates Others in its top five in place of Act with Integrity. Similarly, French leaders replaced Acts with Integrity with Provides Direction, and in addition, replaced Sound Judgment with Foster Teamwork in their top five importance ratings. Interestingly, in Robie et al.'s (2001) study, Acts with Integrity was identified as most critical to leadership effectiveness only in the U.S. The authors of this study hypothesized that perhaps these countries' work values were less affected by recent economic scandals in the U.S., such as Enron, and therefore the Acts with Integrity competency was not prioritized, although future research is needed to substantiate this claim.

Singaporean leaders place Show Work Commitment in their top five rather than Use Sound Judgment. Japan had the most unique profile when compared with North American importance ratings, with Provides Direction and Establishes Plans taking the place of Managing Execution and Act with Integrity, respectively. Cultures with roots in Confucianism, such as Japan and Singapore, may place a higher value on demonstrating loyalty, maintaining power hierarchies, and fulfilling obligations (Howard, Sudo, & Umeshima, 1983). These countries with stronger uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1984) will tend to attach more importance to rules, planning, expert knowledge and direction, perhaps explaining their higher importance ratings on Provides Direction and Show Work Commitment.

There are limitations to this study. Primarily, the PROFILOR[®] instrument used was created with an orientation towards the U.S. culture. Although more culturally specific PROFILOR[®] forms exist, they were not used in this study because the form equality is difficult to assess and demographic data was not constant across instrument administrations. Therefore, cultural differences may have affected the importance ratings in unknown ways that may compromise the validity of this measurement approach. In addition, convenience sampling methodology and limited country sample limit the generalizability of this study.

In sum, about half of the countries in this analysis demonstrated similar perspectives about what competencies are important for a manager to know, indicating a consensus on the value of certain managerial skills across countries. On the other hand, other countries have different ideas about what is important, which may influence perceptions managerial success and performance in multinational companies, and for organizations that have overseas clients.

Implications for HRD

There are several implications of this research for HRD. First, HRD is a field focused on the education of adults in the workforce. In order to educate a cross-cultural, managerial group, HRD professionals need to know what skills and knowledge are most valued by industries and populations. The present study has offered insight into what competencies are most valued for managers on a global level. Second, the future of HRD is entrenched in the globalization of the marketplace (Marquart & Berger, 2003). Therefore, understanding cultural differences facilitates the educative mission of the HRD field: By educating managers within a cultural context, managers are more likely to be successful as they work within a country or work with others of different cultures. Third, infusing cultural knowledge as part of a manager's education results in a more skilled manager. Research has shown that targeted learning can positively influence job performance (Collins & Holton, 2004). Only through understanding which managerial competencies are important in any given culture can HRD professionals assess where development gaps may reside. Given that the marketplace is continuing to globalize, improving at-work learning according to results

found in this study will better prepare managers for their current jobs, as well as building managerial bench strength. Fourth, research presented here gives rise to several opportunities for future HRD research, two of which we delineate here. Currently, the authors have proposed hypothesized relationships between competency importance values and cultural values. This data can be further explored by empirically testing these relationships through post hoc multiple comparison tests, which space did not allow for in the present study. Also, this data only represents a small sample of countries. The HRD field would be well served to investigate the managerial development practices of other countries. By developing managers and understanding of cultural differences, HRD academicians and practitioners are able to engage in the global marketplace.

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