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**MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE AND INCOMPETENCE: THEORY, TRAINING, AND PRACTICE DEVELOPING CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH SOFT-SKILLS COMPETENCY TRAINING IN NURTURING THE OPPOSABLE MINDS**

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## **MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE AND INCOMPETENCE: THEORY, TRAINING, AND PRACTICE DEVELOPING CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH SOFT-SKILLS COMPETENCY TRAINING IN NURTURING THE OPPOSABLE MINDS**

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This study examines pedagogical methods and their effectiveness (or lack thereof) in improving sense-making and decision-making competencies in graduate managers in MBA programmes.

**METHOD**

A quasi-experimental method, anchored in a series of laboratory experiments is used to compare the relative merits of alternative pedagogies on participants' decision-making and managerial competencies. The proposed study includes a series of four in-basket simulations and two role-plays simulating decision-making scenarios, which examine alternative management training methodologies and tools: designed either to increase executives' competency or incompetency in decision-making and other soft or sense-making competencies. Four decision categories are tested in four in-basket exercises and two role-play or simulated interactions (SI). All six simulations (in-baskets and SI) are pre-tested with two groups, involving 12 senior faculty in marketing and management disciplines and 8 senior business executives in private enterprise. The actual experiment involves 100 MBA and post-graduate management students, each completing the one-and-a-half hour simulation. Each of the participants was debriefed in a 10-minute interview and in addition, each participant completes a post-test questionnaire to collect demographic and attitudinal data.

**KEY FINDINGS**

The anticipated results could possibly suggest that learners exposed to detailed and directive feedback by a decision coach, make significantly better decisions than learners using unsupported self-directed decision approaches. Similarly, learners exposed to role-play simulations improve their decision-making competencies, irrespective of the presence or absence of feedback. In contrast, participants who receive no-feedback consistently made more incompetent decisions, whatever simulation method they were exposed to.

These three findings indicate that decision-making competencies improves significantly when supported by directive feedback by a coach and (ii) when decision-makers place themselves mentally within the context either experiential learning, through role-play or envisaging the context of the enactment of the decision.

**IMPLICATIONS**

The anticipated findings should extend the theories relating to management competency development and education in sense and decision-making. An expectation outcome for this study are guidelines regarding new or improved ways to prevent graduate managers from making incompetent choices or decisions and the inability to drop their tools and previously acquired knowledge, should the circumstances demand it. This will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding organizational knowledge, organizational learning, management development and experiential learning. A further contribution, of particular use to management practitioners and HR

specialists, should be the tested in-basket cases for use in assessment and selection centers. In addition, faculty responsible for re-engineering the MBA curricula (or other management education and development interventions) will receive empirically supported knowledge regarding two validated teaching methodologies. Implications for pedagogical application of decision in-basket simulations in the class room will be thoroughly analyzed and detailed checklist should assist educators to design, implement and improve

**Keywords:** decision-making, sense making, competencies, managerial decisions, university education, feedback, simulations, role-play in-basket exercises, MBA, management