

Re-conceptualising management development

Management and its development

Dr Kirsteen Grant and I became the new editorial team of this Journal in September 2019. We are both scholars with a strong practitioner interest and, therefore, are most interested in how we “develop” managers.

The purpose of this (first) editorial is to re-set the journal’s parameters. We do recognise some “drift” in this regard – many manuscripts have been published hitherto which we do not consider to be appropriate for the intellectual subject matter of the *Journal of Management Development*. In this respect, and in the last few months, our priority has been to re-focus the journal, ensuring that all manuscripts are strategically aligned with the aims and scope of the journal.

The title of this journal is the *Journal of Management Development*. We consider it important to re-state this – our singular focus, as the new editorial team, is to publish rigorous research that tests, extends or develops theory that contributes to the academic field of management development and its associated practice. Of note, and at the general level, it is difficult to find a clear definition of the term “management development”.

Therefore, and at this juncture, we consider it timely to re-visit what is meant by the words “management” and “development” and their subsequent pairing.

Some guidance may come from published texts. For example, in their book, *Management*, Schermerhorn *et al.* (2019) offer some help in this respect. For instance, they dedicate focused chapters to themes such as: the contemporary workplace; the historical foundations of management; environment and diversity; international dimensions of management; ethical behaviour and social responsibility; sustainability; information and decision making; planning; strategic management; organising and controlling; HRM; communication and interpersonal skills; motivation and rewards; individuals, job design and stress; teams and teamwork; leading and managing change; entrepreneurship and new ventures; and operations and service management. As such, the scope of the field of management is broad. As Editors, we may describe these chapters as management challenges to be “overcome”. What is important for publication in the *Journal of Management Development* is that manuscripts not only consider such management challenges, but also extend our existing knowledge of the associated scope and implications for the development of managers in order to overcome these challenges.

In addition, while the title of the journal refers to “management”, we must also consider the relationship between management and leadership and its subsequent implications for development. It is perhaps easy to see why management and leadership are terms which are often used inter-changeably. Yet, scholars have long since argued that the difference between them is more than semantic, albeit that the roles performed by managers and those performed by leaders are complementary. Emanating from Taylor’s (1911) principles of scientific management – and aligning with Schermerhorn *et al.*’s (2019) interpretation – the traditional role of a manager focuses on short-term and tangible activities such as planning, organising, directing and controlling (cf. Fayol, 1949). In contrast, the role of leaders is often viewed as being less tangible and more long-term and visionary, even emotional (Northouse, 2019). Accordingly, leaders enable or facilitate organisational change through establishing direction, aligning people with a shared vision, inspiring, motivating and empowering people to overcome obstacles to achieve the vision (Uhl-Bien and Arena, 2018).

While both management and leadership roles need to co-exist, we know that not all managers are natural leaders and not all leaders are good managers (Bratton, 2020).



We suggest, therefore, that managers – who have a responsibility for providing leadership (i.e. they are in leadership positions) – need to be developed with the aim of improving their effectiveness, bringing us to the term “development”.

From a cursory glance at the literature, the word development is ubiquitous and has a multitude of meanings. It is a complex, contested and ambiguous term encapsulating broad-ranging approaches to learning and training (Garavan *et al.*, 2015). Yet, development moves beyond the provision of training towards a deeper, or higher order, level of learning (Argyris, 1977), which implies that development is about personal and professional change. Indeed, the *Cambridge Dictionary* offers some help here in that it defines development as “the process in which someone grows or changes and becomes more advanced”. In this regard, another important point is that development is a process rather than an outcome; it is dynamic in that it involves change from one state or condition to another. Ideally, such change is a positive one – an improvement of some sort.

It may be obvious, then, to suggest that pairing of both terms implies that management development comprises any attempt to improve the effectiveness of managers through planned learning. Bratton and Gold (2017, p. 221), for example, define the process of developing people as “organised learning experiences [...] within a specified period of time, to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and/or personal growth”. Therefore, the journal’s guiding research questions are:

RQ1. How can managers be developed to overcome the many current and future organisational challenges that they must contend with

RQ2. How can they develop effectively as leaders?

This is the singular focus of this journal; namely, how we – as scholars – contribute to this development of management who have a responsibility in providing leadership.

Scope of the journal and editorial criteria

This is first and foremost an academic journal. Specifically, we make no apology for re-stating that the journal seeks to publish rigorous research that tests, extends or develops theory, extends prior studies, reviews, and/or synthesises existing research that helps to answer important questions concerning the development of managers and leaders and, thus, contributes to the academic field of management development and its associated practice.

We consider the scope of management development as encapsulating, but not limited to, concepts such as: capacity and capability building; skills and talent identification and development; and training and leadership development. We are particularly interested in the changing nature of work and its subsequent implications for management and leadership, and approaches to the development of managers and leaders of the future. In other words, the scope of the journal spans those aspects directly related to developing managers to become more effective in their roles and the above-stated challenges. We welcome articles that cover all empirical methods including – but again not limited to – qualitative, quantitative, field, laboratory, meta-analytic and mixed-methods approaches. In addition to making strong empirical and theoretical contributions, submitted manuscripts must highlight the relevance of those contributions to management development. In this respect, we are keen to learn of all practical applications of research.

In summary, the prime requirement for acceptance of a manuscript will be that it:

- Is directly relevant to management development.
- Makes a significant original contribution to the field.
- Contains elements which have general application. Looking Ahead

To advance our understanding of how managers are developed, we aim to publish a Special Issue (SI) in 2021 that advances this very important area. Although outside the scope of this Editorial, key areas in this SI may include: re-conceptualising the antecedents and prospects for management development; gender bias in management development; bridging the gap between management and leadership and their development; managers as talented leaders and talented followers; contemporary challenges for management development; and/or developing managers for the future workplace.

We are interested to hear of suggestions for SIs – it is our intention to publish at least one SI per year.

We do look forward to working with you.

Brian Howieson, Kirsteen Grant

References

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Further reading

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