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## MANAGERIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF FUTURE MANAGERS IN THE UAE

**Moyaid S. Sulieman**

London International Centre  
For Training & Development,  
London, UK

E-mail: [moaalsalim@gmail.com](mailto:moaalsalim@gmail.com)

**ORCID:**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5115-1368>

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**ABSTRACT.** In today's economy, which is marked by workforce diversity, growing global competition, and various organizational architecture models, skills and competencies are crucial to the success of any firm. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is undergoing rapid transformations in many areas of life, including health, education, infrastructure, and travel and tourism. The new global climate highlights the need to have the right skills and traits to manage a changing environment. To assure success and preserve a competitive advantage, under COVID-19, which has become part of our working life, today's firms demand new managerial abilities, competencies, and ways of thinking. This qualitative study looks at the evolution of organizational skills and competencies in developed nations over the last several decades. Its primary purpose is to investigate these skills and encourage UAE managers to pay attention to and implement them in their firms.

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O17, P31

**Keywords:** Managerial Skills, Competencies, Soft skills, Learning Organization, United Arab Emirates

### Introduction

Managers can not succeed and become more effective in today's global business climate unless they have the abilities that are genuinely matched with the demands of that environment. The variety and diversity of firms' workforces have raised the need for managers to reskill and upskill their capabilities. Today's managerial skills are much different from those that dominated three to four decades ago. Then, those abilities were polished and developed in keeping a domestic economy running well. The UAE's rapid expansion has resulted in a talent gap between what firms want and the available skill sets of managers working in diverse organizations. As a result, organizations in the UAE have difficulty finding qualified candidates to fill such roles. According to a recent study performed by Bayt.com and YouGov (2016), just 16 percent of 352 UAE firms are looking for new workers, mainly for entry-level roles, with only 3% looking for director-level applicants. The survey also revealed that finding people with the necessary skills sets remains difficult with such low employment demand. Fifty-seven percent of companies polled indicate it is tough to find qualified people for senior roles, while 43 percent said it's challenging to fill junior positions. This study attempted to identify the most important

skills already employed by managers in certain developed nations, most notably the United States, and urge UAE managers to pay more attention to them and implement these lessons for the long-term prosperity of their organizations.

The global business environment accentuates the importance of the availability of skills and attributes for managing a changing climate. Given the significance of universal business development, the requirement for managers with essential qualities such as flexibility, mindfulness, openness, and readiness in practically every local industry is becoming a prerequisite for organizational prosperity and creating a sustainable competitive edge. The types of levels and skills have changed as the nature and appearance of the jobs have changed. Today's managers' skills will not be the same as those required tomorrow. Although empirical studies on managerial skills have been performed in developed countries such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) (Ali, Camp, 1996; Analoui, Labbaf, and Noorbakhsh, 2000; Smutny, Prochazka, and Vaculik, 2015), there has been little or no research on managerial skills in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). To effectively achieve their missions and be more successful in such a global environment, UAE business organizations need to recruit people with skills and competencies that better match international business requirements and work on developing their top-management skills to be more effective. Without such improvements, organizations' performance and employees' satisfaction will suffer greatly (Klein et al., 2006, p. 81). Therefore, this study aims to analyze these skills and accomplish the following objectives: - To find out what talents and abilities have been described in the literature, - To encourage managers to enhance their administrative skills and maintain their aptitude with a clear end goal in mind; to be able to lead their respective groups effectively. - Make recommendations for changes to business college curricula.

## **1. Literature review**

### ***1.1. Managerial Skills***

On the surface, abilities and competencies appear to have the same meaning and may be used interchangeably. This, however, is not the case. A "skill" is the capacity to use knowledge to produce the intended outcome. It is learned to perform one or more job functions. Skills describe the abilities required for a person to undertake a given activity or career. Technical, human, and conceptual abilities were the only issues researchers studied in traditional management literature reviewed by management and organizational theories. Managerial skill is the ability that is important to achieve a specific kind of corporate goal via individual activity. The activity may be as simple as a single behavior or may involve a system of behaviors implemented interactively over some time. (Bigelow, 1994). In recent decades, managers have been under growing pressure to reinforce their skills and abilities to be more effective in managing their firms and utilizing workforce diversity (Rhinesmith, 1992; Rodacker, 2002; Qin et al., 2009; Alajami, 2015). Managerial skills can be developed over time. Katz (1974) offered three categories of skills: technical, human, and conceptual, with the last being the most critical for top managers, while others proposed different modules of skills that improve managers' information and increase their competencies and performance. (Badawy, 1995; Whetten and Cameron, 1998; Analoui, 1995, 2000). Bailey and Helfat (2003) suggested four types of skills constituting managerial competency: generic skills, transferable across activities and organizations; movement or sector-related skills, organization-specific skills; and industry-related skills. Scullen, Mount, and Judge (2003) also reported four dimensions of managerial competence: technical skill, administrative skill, human skill, and citizenship behavior. Analoui, Labbaf, and Noorbakhsh (2000) explained three sets of skills related to managerial effectiveness, including people-related skills (i.e., motivation, counseling subordinates), task-related skills (i.e., planning,

analysis of the organization), and analytical and self-related skills (i.e., managing change, developing one's potential). It's also worth noting that the importance of these skills has changed over time. Katz (1974) contended that conceptual skills are the most critical for managers, especially those at the top, while Analoui, Labbf, and Noorbakhsh (2000) regard people-related skills as the most important for increased effectiveness of managers, irrespective of their position in the hierarchy. On the other hand, managerial skills emphasize finding the right individuals to fill administrative positions and enhancing managers' abilities since they have a significant impact on business outcomes (Klein et al., 2006; Vaculík, 2010).

## **1.2. Competencies**

It is impossible to overestimate the value of "competencies." Within an organization, the idea of competency may be perceived in various ways. Some academics define competency as the "traits and abilities that persons require to succeed in professional jobs" (Steward and Brown, 2009). Competence is also defined as a collection of knowledge, abilities, and characteristics that contribute to good work performance (Brits & Veldsman, 2014). Competencies may be described as a mix of resources and capabilities from the standpoint of strategic management (Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson, 2014). For example, managerial skills are a subset of managerial competencies. The structure and level of individual capabilities affect actions and, subsequently, the effectiveness of the entire organization and its organizational culture (Cardy and Selvarajan, 2006; Peters and Waterman, 2001). Individual competencies incorporate procedures, skills, abilities, attitudes, beliefs, values, dispositions, personal characteristics, and self-perceptions and motivations that allow people to effectively satisfy various job demands (Rubin et al., 2007). Competencies should consider job descriptions, best practices, recent trends in the external environment, and organizational strategy (Martone, 2003).

## **2. Research Methodology**

The sensitive nature of a topic might sometimes lead researchers to pick a particular strategy for their research. For example, discussing managerial skills and competencies with managers is not always easy. To a significant degree, it is also true that managers' statements or writings regarding their abilities or talents should not always be taken at face value. To circumvent this obstacle and achieve the goals of this study, the present researcher used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research has several advantages, including exploring problems in great depth and complexity, communicating with research participants, avoiding prejudgments, and collecting data based on human experiences.

The present researcher has extensive academic teaching expertise in MBA programs and practical training experience in the Gulf area spanning more than fifteen years. Hundreds of managers were educated, met with, and trained. To achieve the study's objectives, the following four questions were researched in advanced management journals such as Harvard Business Review, Journal of Management Studies, Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, Academy of Management Review, Journal of Arts and Social Science, Academy of Management, Business Horizons, and Journal of Management and Organization:

- What are the critical managerial skills and competencies of future managers?
- What are the most crucial leadership competencies for future managers?
- What skills do managers require to become influential leaders?
- What are the essential features of the organizations in which these managers work?

More than 25 research articles published in high-ranking management journals were examined. We have no intention of investigating or evaluating the findings of other researchers;

instead, we intend to concentrate on the importance given to each evaluated talent. Therefore, the statistical validity of the analysis presented in this research is undeniable in light of the unique classification and reference list.

### 3. Results and Discussion

According to a thorough assessment of the literature and research on managers' skills and abilities, managers in such countries as USA and UK are practicing the following skills and competencies. Although the five categories presented in the Table are not universally agreed upon owing to their overlap, they demonstrate the wide range of abilities that managers in these countries are now interested in acquiring to carry out their role in achieving results through their employees.

Table 1. Current skills and Competencies of Managers working in developed Countries

Types managers Skills and competencies	Description of skills
First: Personal skills Relating to the personal objectives sought by the manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing self-awareness</li> <li>- Managing time and stress (the ability to work under pressure)</li> <li>- Taking initiatives</li> <li>- Solving problem creatively</li> <li>- Critical thinking</li> </ul>
Second, Interpersonal Skills The ability to communicate or build relationships with other people appropriately and effectively. Enabling the manager to work effectively within a group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motivating employees; Inspiring and empowering others</li> <li>- Facilitating the work of others               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leadership skills.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Effective communication; Build relationships               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teamwork skills.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Third: Functional Skills Relating to the essential functions of managers such as production, Human resources, and marketing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic planning skills ;( Setting goals and articulating a vision).</li> <li>- Organizational skills</li> <li>- Controlling skills</li> <li>- Developing strategic perspective</li> </ul>
Fourth: Technical skills These are a manager's abilities that contribute directly to the performance of various operations stages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- System thinking</li> <li>- Technical knowledge</li> <li>- Computer skills</li> <li>- Operational skills</li> <li>- Mathematical skills</li> </ul>
Fifth: International skills These skills empower managers to negotiate effectively with employees from different societies, regardless of whether at home or abroad.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Managing diversity</li> <li>- Negotiation skills</li> <li>- Managing change and conflict</li> </ul>

When these talents are compared to those held by Emirati managers, the latter is more inclined to technical and management abilities while neglecting other skills, especially those known as "soft skills" or interaction skills. Many MBA managers interviewed by the present researcher agree with this result. The term "soft skills" refers to various

abilities, including everything from fundamental communication to successful negotiating, time management, and work ethics. Not to mention relationship building and leadership. Generally speaking, most Arab managers still perceive themselves as administrators with specific powers and responsibilities and are expected to meet goals mainly set without their employees' active participation. When a particular problem occurs at work, he reprimands the workers for being the direct cause. This type of manager, ironically, is widespread in Arab organizations. Indeed, this is rejected in the organizations from which we derived the skills mentioned in the table. Recent international events and the destruction wrought by the coronavirus have forced most businesses to reconsider the reality of the competencies that managers and employees must possess. As a result, many major corporations have restructured their operations and laid off much staff. According to studies performed in the previous two years, interaction skills are the most crucial qualities a manager must acquire.

To effectively manage their employees, Emirati managers must inspire, motivate, and encourage them. It's no longer just about you and what you have to offer; you must also encourage employees to bring all they can to the table. These competencies are valued and emerge over time as you watch, interact, and collaborate with your team members to assist them in becoming more productive (Graduate Management Admissions Council, 2005; Beenen et al., 2018; Rios et al., 2020). When you look at the list of abilities above, you see that not all can be demonstrated and quantified. In the UAE's culture framework, we advise Emirati managers to adopt and execute the competencies above. This does not necessitate that a manager is skilled in all these talents; nonetheless, acquaintance with them will benefit. In truth, today's global corporate executives do not seek to tackle all their companies' challenges. Our research reveals that at the time, the native managers encouraged others to participate in their organizational decisions. However, they seldom told them precisely what to do. Recent research results indicate that UAE managers are well educated and erudite in "technical skills." They are, however, still grappling with how to become more people-oriented. People-oriented or interpersonal skills are still considered the most missing skills of native managers (The Bayt.com and YouGov survey; 2016). Interpersonal Skills include the ability to inspire subordinates, empowering and encouraging them to be more participative in improving organizational performance. Managers will need to nurture more personal connections with their team members. Our practical experience, in addition to dozens of academic research and studies, confirms that most of the managers' skills listed in the preceding Table are seldom found in traditional organizations. On the contrary, they thrive in Learning Organizations.

A "learning organization" is an organization that encourages and facilitates learning to continue transforming itself so that it can survive and excel in a rapidly changing business environment (Senge, 1990). It is skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge and modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. There is a shared vision in such organizations, and top management guarantees that this vision is sustained. Ideas are created and applied at all company levels in learning organizations. Everyone oversees his work and understands how it relates to the work of others. Collaboration and the integration of different points of view are used to settle conflicts. Managers assist in the creation of a shared vision that encourages employee commitment. Members in these groups do things they want to, not because they are instructed to create a learning environment, replacing aggressive attitudes with an open culture that promotes inquiry and trust (McHugh, Groves, and Alker, 1998). The learning company needs systems for finding and surveying hierarchical hypotheses of action (Argyris, 1999). Unwanted qualities should be eliminated through a process known as

"unlearning" (Easterby, Crossan, and Nicolini, 2000). Finally, learning organizations have structures that create team capacity to learn using features such as boundary crossing and openness. Managerial skills and competencies are universal. In the UAE's culture framework, we advise Emirati managers to adopt and execute the earlier competencies. This does not necessitate that a manager is skilled in all these talents; nonetheless, acquaintance with them will benefit. In truth, today's global corporate executives do not seek to tackle all their companies' challenges. We also believe that business institutions in the UAE could significantly increase this area by concentrating more on curriculum development and devoting management courses to addressing tacit skills and their implications on organizational performance, employee happiness, and turnover rates. Finally, it is pretty understandable that hundreds of employees in the gulf rejoin, according to various studies, do not quit their jobs, but rather leave bad managers who misbehaved with them.

## Conclusions

The study's main goal was to examine the management abilities and competencies employed by today's successful managers in the United States and the United Kingdom and to highlight their success to UAE managers so that they might develop managerial effectiveness. The vast developments that have taken place in information technology and social media and the changes that have taken place due to the coronavirus pandemic have made many international companies reconsider their structure and policies regarding human resources and the new skills they should have. On the other hand, the UAE's rapid expansion over the past four decades has touched almost every aspect of life and resulted in skill gaps between what companies need and the skill set of managers working in the UAE. In addition, thousands of local and multinational businesses have now made it mandatory for employees to work from home. Because of this disease, which has become a part of our everyday lives, many have been estranged from their loved ones, friends, and coworkers. All of this emphasizes the need of the manager to focus on developing communication and interpersonal skills, altering their ruling behavior, and obtaining the abilities required to lead work teams.

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