

# MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PERCEIVED JOB IMPORTANCE IN RELATION TO LEVEL OF TRAINING REQUIRED

## Authors:

Ingrid L. Potgieter<sup>1</sup>  
Melinde Coetzee<sup>2</sup>

## Affiliations:

<sup>1</sup>Department of Human Resource Management, University of South Africa, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, University of South Africa, South Africa

## Correspondence to:

Ingrid Potgieter

## email:

visseil@unisa.ac.za

## Postal address:

PO Box 72798, Lynwood Ridge, Pretoria 0040, South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

**Orientation:** The increasing changes and demands placed on higher education institutions in the 21st century and resultant impact on the roles and responsibilities of heads of department (HODs) have led to an increasing emphasis on the development of core HOD management competencies.

**Research purpose:** The aim of this article is to determine the relationship between a specific set of HOD managerial competencies identified as being important for the job and the level of training required in terms of these competencies.

**Motivation for the study:** Research has provided evidence that HODs are often ill-prepared for their managerial role, which requires the development of specific management competencies to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.

**Research design, approach and method:** A non-experimental quantitative survey design approach was followed and correlational data analyses were performed. A cross-sectional sample of 41 HODs of 22 departments from various faculties of a higher education institution in Gauteng participated in this study. The Management Competency Inventory (MCI) of Visser (2009) was applied as a measure.

**Main findings:** The Pearson product-moment analysis indicated that there is a significant relationship between the competencies indicated as being important for the job and the level of training required.

**Practical/Managerial implications:** Training needs of HODs should be formally assessed and the depth of training required in terms of the identified management competencies should be considered in the design of training programmes.

**Contributions/Value-add:** The information obtained in this study may potentially serve as a foundation for the development of an HOD training programme in the South African higher education environment.

## INTRODUCTION

### Key focus of the study

In this study the focus is on the managerial competencies required by heads of departments (HODs) to function effectively in a changing higher education environment. The increasing changes and demands placed on higher education institutions in the 21st century have impacted on the roles and responsibilities of academic leaders and in particular the HODs in higher institutions (Du Toit, 2007; Greene, Loughridge & Wilson, 1996; Yang, 2003). Greene, Loughridge and Wilson (1996) posit that higher education institutions are being held more accountable in terms of financial aspects. The South African government is putting more pressure on higher education institutions to transform to business models, as universities create large turnovers, making profits that sometimes run into millions and, solely for this reason, HODs need to function more effectively on a managerial level. The era of post-apartheid has also led to major transformations in the higher education arena, requiring HODs to act as leaders of change and transformation (Simon, 2007; Smith & Hughey, 2006).

The emphasis on the managerial role of the HOD has led to a renewed interest in the managerial competencies and values that HODs need to develop, display and practise at work. However, in spite of the changing role of HODs, very little is done to help prepare them for their roles as managers. According to Hecht (2004), little or no competency training programmes exist within higher education institutions to equip the HODs with the required managerial competencies and, therefore, no indication exists as to which competencies are important for these managers and on which level they need to function to be effective managers. Hecht (2004) found that most HODs emerge from faculty ranks. Individuals who have been in the discipline for long enough are in most circumstances nominated and appointed as the HOD. She expresses her concern, however, that although these individuals know their institutions and departments inside out, the knowledge one needs as an HOD is more complex and invites several additional competencies that are needed to function as a manager, in addition to being a faculty member.

### Background to the study

The role of an HOD has evolved over a long period starting in the 1960s, when Booth (1969) first commented on the changing role of the HOD and it is still changing today. The HOD worldwide is known by a number of titles, including department head, chair, academic leader, department chair, division dean or academic dean (Gillet-Karam, 1999). Sharma (2003) is of the opinion that institutions and organisations are defined by roles and role expectations. Higher education is also designed to

carry out specific functions within specific roles. Ivancevich and Matteson (1990, p. 271) refer to a role as 'the expected behaviour patterns attributed to a particular position in an organisation'. They state that certain activities and tasks are expected from each position in an organisation. These activities constitute the role for that position and may be unique to every particular organisation. Parker and Wilson (2002) note that it is imperative for all HODs to clearly understand what their roles entail to prepare adequately to make the transition from lecturer to academic head.

Several authors have commented on the variety of roles that HODs need to perform. Based on an extensive literature review, Visser (2009) identified four core roles that HODs appear to fulfill in the higher education environment. These roles have been labelled as:

1. academic
2. administration
3. management
4. leadership.

The **academic role** refers to the role of HODs as that of lecturers:

- in teaching classes (Gmelch, 2002; Lyons, 2008; Sharma, 2003)
- dealing with faculty affairs (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Gillet-Karam, 1999; Lyons, 2008)
- acting as departmental official and representative (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Lyons, 2008)
- evaluating and facilitating academic matters (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Lyons, 2008; Smith & Hughey, 2006; Sorcinelli, 2000)
- as faculty and programme developer (Gmelch, 2002; Lyons, 2008; Sharma, 2003)
- as researcher (Gmelch, 2002; Hare & Hare, 2002; Lyons, 2008; Smith & Hughey, 2006).

The **administrator role** refers to administrative duties and responsibilities, such as the administration of examinations, admissions and practicals (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Pettitt, 1999; Williams, 2001; Wolverton *et al.*, 1999) and the channelling of information and policies (Gillet-Karam 1999; Parker & Wilson, 2002; Lyons, 2008).

The **management role** is concerned with some combination of planning, organising, directing and controlling the activities of staff towards the achievement of a set of departmental and institutional objectives (Rollinson, 2005). These activities include the role of the HOD as:

- advocate or politician and change agent (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Gillet-Karam, 1999; Lyons, 2008)
- morale builder and maintainer (Brent, 1992; Lyons, 2008; Sharma, 2003)
- communicator (Hecht, 2004; Lyons, 2008; Raines & Alberg, 2003)
- conflict handler (Parker and Wilson, 2002; Lyons 2008)
- coordinator and delegator (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Lyons, 2008)
- diversity manager (Sorcinelli, 2000; Raines & Alberg, 2003)
- financial manager (Hare & Hare, 2002; Raines & Alberg, 2003; Sharma, 2003; Hecht, 2004; Smith & Hughey, 2006; Lyons, 2008)
- handling disciplinary matters and negotiation (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Parker & Wilson, 2002; Smith & Hughey, 2006)
- officer in charge (Hare & Hare, 2002)
- performance manager (Sorcinelli, 2000; Hare & Hare, 2002; Parker & Wilson, 2002; Lyons, 2008) and planner (Parker & Wilson, 2002; Raines & Alberg, 2003; Lyons, 2008)
- problem-solver (Wolverton *et al.*, 1999; Smith & Hughey, 2006; Lyons, 2008)
- quality controller (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Hare & Hare, 2002; Parker & Wilson, 2002)
- recruitment and selection (Wolverton *et al.*, 1999; Hare & Hare, 2002; Parker & Wilson, 2002; Sharma, 2003)

- strategic planner (Dyer & Miller, 1999; Hare & Hare, 2002; Parker & Wilson, 2002; Smith & Hughey, 2006)
- time manager (Wolverton *et al.*, 1999; Gmelch, 2002; Lyons, 2008).

The **leadership role** is concerned with activities which involve

1. acting as an advisor and counsellor (Lyons, 2008; Smith & Hughey, 2006)
2. mentor and coach (Sorcinelli, 2000; Williams, 2001; Raines & Alberg, 2003)
3. motivator (Hecht, 2004; Smith & Hughey, 2006; Lyons, 2008)
4. risk taker (Smith & Hughey, 2006).

According to Yelder and Codling (2004), leadership and management are closely integrated in the academic context. They are of the opinion that both the academic leadership role and the management role require aspects of leadership, which in this sense cannot be written into a job description as a function. The academic leadership role is therefore regarded as a quality that an individual brings to the position. Yelder and Codling (2004), furthermore, emphasise that HODs are vested in a position and the focus should therefore be on the management role of HODs, which incorporates leadership.

## Trends from the research literature

### Management competencies

Botha and Camphor (2008) regard the development of management skills and competencies in higher education institutions as essential. According to these authors, the focus of management training and development should be on developing the management skills and competence required in support of the university's vision, mission and strategy. Hirokawa, Barge, Becker and Sutherland (1989) and Hecht (2004) advocate a competency-based approach to the training and development of HODs. These authors found that a competency-based approach aims at uncovering the fundamental skills that academic managerial leaders need in order to deal effectively with various task- and relation-orientated administrative problems. Gmelch (2002) also posits that, in order for HODs to perform their roles effectively, certain skills need to be present. Skills can be learnt formally either through seminars, workshops and lectures and these skills can further be practiced through simulations, case studies, role plays and action planning. Acquiring these skills will ultimately result in HODs having the necessary competencies to perform their roles effectively (Hecht, 2004).

In the context of the present study the term 'competency' is viewed as the blend of knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours needed to carry out tasks successfully. Managerial competence depends on both skills and knowledge based on understanding. Competence includes the capacity to transfer knowledge and skills to new tasks and situations (Warn & Tranter, 2001). Visser's (2009) management competency framework for the training and development of HODs is of relevance to the present study. This management competency framework is based on an extensive literature review conducted by Visser in the South African higher education environment and describes the competencies required for effective or excellent performance on the job.

The competencies identified can be clustered into five different dimensions:

1. planning and organising
2. leadership
3. controlling
4. human resource (HR) specific aspects
5. personal attributes.

Table 1 provides a more detailed overview of the various competencies that relate to each of these five dimensions.

Based on the preceding literature review, we hypothesise the following:

TABLE 1

Overview of head of department management competency framework

Management competency cluster	Description
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic planning and formulation</li> <li>Strategy implementation</li> <li>Day-to-day planning in terms of prioritising tasks and activities</li> <li>Environmental scanning and analysis</li> <li>Delegation of tasks to teams and individuals</li> <li>Project management in terms of planning, scope, time, cost and quality management</li> </ul>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership of overall team and individual team members</li> <li>Motivation of overall team and individual team members</li> <li>Managing change and renewal</li> <li>Managing interdepartmental relationships with peers from within the department</li> <li>Managing external relationships with key external stakeholders and suppliers</li> <li>Customer care and customer service management (external)</li> <li>Customer care and customer service management (internal)</li> <li>Risk identification and management</li> <li>Managing diversity and cross-cultural issues in teams within the department</li> </ul>
Controlling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring and dissemination of information</li> <li>Performance management in terms of planning, conducting and follow-up for team and self</li> <li>Rewarding performance of team and team members</li> <li>Effective use of IT especially communication, planning and reporting systems</li> <li>Financial and commercial understanding especially in budgeting, cost control and financial reporting</li> <li>Planning and running meetings and effective follow-up strategies or activities</li> <li>Administration, reporting performance and financials, monitoring, maintaining and developing reporting systems</li> <li>Quality awareness and management according to quality standards and procedures.</li> </ul>
Human resource specific aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handling grievances and disputes</li> <li>Dealing with issues of discipline</li> <li>Attracting talent in terms of recruitment; interviewing and selection of new staff members</li> <li>Effective induction and orientation of new staff members</li> <li>Employment and HR policy awareness and management, according to policies: equity, disability, harassment, et cetera</li> <li>Occupational health and safety awareness and management according to policies</li> </ul>
Personal attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time management</li> <li>Communication skills in terms of questioning and active listening, building trust, empathy and mutual understanding</li> <li>Business writing in terms of letters, reports, plans and project plans</li> <li>Creating and giving effective presentations to groups</li> <li>Creative problem-solving and decision-making</li> <li>Negotiation and conflict resolution</li> <li>Emotional intelligence in terms of self-development, self-control, compassion and humanity, seeking responsibility and personal growth</li> </ul>

Source: Based on Visser, I.L. (2009). Development of a proposed management competency training framework. Unpublished Master's dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

**Hypothesis 1:** Management competencies regarded as being important for the job, will be significantly related to the level of training needed.

### Research objectives

To date, the development of management competencies in higher education institutions has received very little research attention in South Africa. The aim of this article, therefore, was to identify the relationship between a specific set of HOD managerial competencies identified as being important for

the job and the level of training required in terms of these competencies.

### The potential value-add of the study

The information obtained in this study can be of value when determining the training and development needs of HODs and may potentially serve as a foundation for the development of an HOD training programme in the South African higher education environment.

### What will follow

In the next section, the research design will be elaborated on and the research approach and method will be covered. The results will then be presented and the findings will be discussed. The article concludes with a brief synopsis of the most important conclusions, limitations of the research design and recommendations for possible future research initiatives.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### Research approach

A non-experimental, quantitative survey approach was followed to achieve the objectives of the study. The advantages of the survey research approach include savings of time and money, a lack of interviewer bias, accurate results, more privacy for participants and the fact that samples need not be very large in relation to the population (Salkind, 1997). The major disadvantage of this design is that findings can only be generalised to the sampled population at the time of the survey (Dooley, 1995). Primary data were used and correlational statistical procedures were performed to analyse the data.

### Research method

#### Research participants

A stratified sampling technique was used. Babbie and Mouton (2007) describes stratified sampling as a method by which the population is organised into homogeneous subsets (with heterogeneity between subsets) and the appropriate number of elements is selected from each. They furthermore note that stratified sampling is a method for obtaining a greater degree of representativeness and to decrease the probable sampling error. Participants constituted a sample of 41 of a total population of the 52 HODs in a higher education institution from different faculties (79% response rate). The sample was represented by 66% male participants and 34% female participants. This is not surprising as the majority of participants are male seeing as gender studies and other research revealed that there were fewer women in managerial or leadership positions. The sample furthermore consisted of predominantly White males. Most of the HODs in the sample had worked in the academic environment for approximately 12 years, while the average years of service in the sample was almost 20 years in an academic environment. The average age of the participants was approximately 49 years. These HODs were representative of 37% of the departments in the higher education institution.

### Measuring instrument

The Management Competency Inventory (MCI), developed by Visser (2009), was used to measure the variables of concern to this study. The MCI is a self-rated, multi-factorial measure designed to determine HOD training needs based on a set of managerial competencies identified as being a requirement for functioning effectively as a manager within the higher education institution. The MCI contains 40 items. Participants have to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale whether they regard the competency as being important for the job. They also have to indicate on a 4-point Likert-type scale the level or depth of training they require in terms of the specific competency (basic to advanced). An extensive literature review and panel of experts reviewed by Visser (2009) provided evidence of the content validity of the items. In terms of reliability (internal-consistency), the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the

MCI job importance and level of training required scales were 0.97 (high) and 0.98 (high) respectively.

### Research procedure

In terms of ethics, permission to conduct the research was obtained by the management of the institution. A memo was drafted to the Vice Principle of Operations Manager in order to ask permission to gather the data which he signed and returned to the researcher. The total population of HODs was invited to attend a workshop during which the purpose of the research was explained and the questionnaires completed. Participants were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. Each questionnaire included a cover letter explaining the nature and the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage during the research process. The questionnaires were administered by a professionally registered psychometrist under the supervision of an industrial psychologist.

### Statistical analysis

The data analysis procedures chosen for this research were based on their applicability to the exploratory nature of the research design. Pearson product-moment correlations were performed to test the research hypothesis. Although a cut-off point of  $p < 0.05$  was set, a practical effect size of  $r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49$  medium effect (Cohen, 1992) was also considered for the correlational analyses to be able to interpret the practical significance of the findings.

## RESULTS

### Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1 was analysed by performing Pearson product-moment correlations. Hypothesis 1 proposed that management competencies regarded as being important for the job will be significantly related to the level of training needed. Pearson's product-moment correlations allowed the researcher to identify the direction and strength of the relationship between the competencies regarded as being important for the job of an HOD and the level of training required in the various management competencies. As shown in Tables 2–6, a vast number of significantly positive relationships were observed between the variables. The significant correlations range from  $r = 0.33$  ( $r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49$ , medium practical effect size) to  $0.58$  ( $p \leq 0.05$ ;  $r \geq 0.50$ , large practical effect size) (Cohen, 1992).

### Competencies relating to planning and organising

Table 2 shows that the management competency strategy implementation significantly and positively relates to the

level of training required in terms of handling grievances and disputes ( $r = 0.33$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Significant positive associations are also observed between the environmental scanning and analysis competency and the level of training required in the day-to-day management competencies:

- planning ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )
- individual and team leadership ( $r = 0.51$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- motivation of individual or team ( $r = 0.39$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )
- communication skills ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )
- monitoring and disseminating information ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )
- environmental scanning and analysis ( $r = 0.40$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )
- rewarding performance ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ )
- managing external stakeholder and supplier relations ( $r = 0.48$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- planning and running meetings and follow-up ( $r = 0.46$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating and giving effective presentations to groups ( $r = 0.47$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- external customer care and service management ( $r = 0.48$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

**Competencies relating to leadership:** In Table 3 it is evident that the management competency of individual and team leadership relates significantly and positively to the level of training required in terms of individual and team motivation ( $r = 0.39$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Significant positive relations are also found between the management competency of individual and team motivation and the level of training required in individual and team motivation ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). The management competency of managing change and renewal also relates significantly to the level of training required in terms of negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Managing external stakeholder and supplier relations relates positively and significantly to the level of training required in external customer care and service management ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). The management competency of external customer care and service management furthermore relates significantly to the level of:

- training required in strategy implementation ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- team and individual leadership ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- team and individual motivation ( $r = 0.42$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- task delegation ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing external stakeholder and supplier relations ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating and giving group presentations ( $r = 0.43$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- external customer care and service management ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- internal customer care and service management ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

TABLE 2  
Pearson product-moment correlations: Competencies relating to planning and organising

Job importance	Level of training required												
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	11	13	19	20	26	32
Strategy implementation								0.33 *** ‡					
Environmental scanning or analysis	0.34 *** †		0.51 ** ‡	0.39 *** †	0.41 *** †	0.41 *** †	0.40 *** †		0.36 *** †	0.48 ** †	0.46 ** †	0.47 ** †	0.48 ** †
Task delegation		0.37 *** †											
Project management planning		0.33 *** †											

3, Day-to-day planning; 4, Time management; 5, Individual and team leadership; 6, Team/Individual motivation; 7, Communication skills; 8, Monitoring and disseminating information; 9, Environmental scanning and analysis; 11, Handling grievances and disputes; 13, Rewarding performance; 19, Managing external stakeholder and supplier relations; 20, Planning and running meetings or follow-ups; 26, Creating and giving effective presentations; 32, External customer care and service management.  
N = 41; \* $p \leq 0.0001$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.05$ ; †  $r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49$  (medium practical effect size); ‡  $r \geq 0.50$  (large practical effect size).



**TABLE 3**  
Pearson product-moment correlations: Competencies relating to leadership

Job importance	2	4	5	6	8	12	15	19	26	27	28	31	32	33	34	35	36
Individual and team leadership				0.39***													
Individual and team motivation				†													
Managing change and renewal				0.34***													
Managing external stakeholder and supplier relations				†													
External customer care and service management	0.34***	0.36***	0.41***	0.42**				0.36***	0.43**				0.34***	0.34***			
Internal customer care and service management	†	†	†	†	0.33***		0.41***	†	†	0.33***	0.35***	0.37***	†	†	†		
Risk identification		†			†		0.44***	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	0.41**	
Managing diversity and cross-cultural issues		0.35***			0.25***	0.34***					0.43**			0.4***	†	0.54***	

2. Strategic implementation; 4. Time management; 5. Individual and team leadership; 6. Individual and team motivation; 8. Monitoring and dissemination of information; 12. Dealing with issues of discipline; 15. Task delegation; 19. Managing external stakeholder and supplier relations; 26. Creating and giving effective group presentations; 27. Creative problem-solving and decision-making; 28. Negotiation and conflict resolution; 31. Occupational health and safety awareness and management; 32. External customer care and service management; 33. Internal customer care and service management; 34. Emotional intelligence risk identification; 35. Managing diversity and cross-cultural issues. N = 41; \* $p \leq 0.0001$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.005$ ; †  $r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49$  (Medium practical effect size); ‡  $r \geq 0.50$  (Large practical effect size).

The competency of internal customer care and service management relates significantly to the level of:

- training required in time management ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- team and individual motivation ( $r = 0.33$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- task delegation ( $r = 0.44$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing external stakeholder and supplier relations ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating and giving group presentations ( $r = 0.52$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating problem-solving and decision-making ( $r = 0.33$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- occupational health and safety awareness and management ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- external customer care and service management ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- internal customer care and service management ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

More positive significant relations have been observed between the management competency of risk identification and the level of training required in risk identification. The management competency of managing diversity and cross-cultural issues relates significantly to the level of training required in:

- time management ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- monitoring and dissemination of information ( $r = 0.25$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- dealing with issues of discipline ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.43$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing diversity and cross-cultural issues ( $r = 0.54$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

### Competencies relating to controlling

As shown in Table 4, the management competency of performance management relates significantly and positively to the level of:

- training required for individual and team leadership ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- individual and team motivation ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- performance management ( $r = 0.39$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- project management ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- quality awareness and management ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

Further positive significant relations have been observed between the management competency of rewarding own and team performance and the level of:

- training required for individual and team leadership ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- individual and team motivation ( $r = 0.46$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- environmental scanning and analysis ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- rewarding own and team performance ( $r = 0.42$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- project management ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- external customer care and service management ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

The effective use of IT relates significantly and positively to the level of:

- training required in day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.38$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.46$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- task delegation ( $r = 0.40$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- effective use of information technology (IT) ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating and giving effective group presentations ( $r = 0.43$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

The management competency of financial and commercial understanding relates significantly and positively to the level of:

- training required in strategy implementation ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- individual and team leadership ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- handling grievances and disputes ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )

**TABLE 4**  
Pearson product-moment correlations: Competencies relating to controlling  
Level of training required

Job importance	1	2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	26	27	28	29	32
Performance management					0.35	0.37		0.39								0.37				0.34		
Rewarding own and team performance					†	†	0.41	0.46	0.37		0.42					†				†		
Effective use of IT					*	**	*	†			*		0.4	0.41		*		0.43		0.35		0.35
Financial and commercial understanding		0.34	†	†		0.34			0.41	0.51		0.36	†	†				†	†	†	†	
Planning and running meetings and follow-up	0.37	†	0.34	0.35	†				†	†		0.33					0.42			†		
Administration, reporting performance and financials, monitoring, maintaining and developing reporting systems			0.32	0.41		0.34							**	†				0.34	0.46			

† Strategic planning; ‡ Strategy implementation; § Day-to-day planning; ¶ Time management; \* Individual and team leadership; † Individual and team motivation; ‡ Environmental scanning and analysis; § Performance management; ¶ Handling grievance and disputes; ‡ Dealing with issues of discipline; † Rewarding own and team performance; ‡ Managing change and renewal; ‡ Task delegation; ‡ Effective use of information technology; ‡ Financial and commercial understanding; ‡ Planning and running meetings and follow-up; ‡ Creating and giving effective group presentations; ‡ Negotiation and conflict resolution; ‡ Quality awareness and management; ‡ Customer care and service management.  
N = 41; \*p ≤ 0.0001; \*\*p ≤ 0.01; †p ≤ 0.05; ‡ r ≥ 0.30 ≤ 0.49 (Medium practical effect size); ‡ r ≥ 0.50 (Large practical effect size).

- dealing with issues of discipline ( $r = 0.51$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing change and renewal ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- financial and commercial understanding ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.58$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

The management competency of planning and running meetings and follow-up shows a significant positive relationship between:

- strategic planning ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing change and renewal ( $r = 0.33$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- planning and running meetings and follow-up ( $r = 0.42$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

Furthermore, the management competency of administration, reporting performance and financials, monitoring, maintaining and developing reporting systems relates significantly to the level of:

- training required in day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.32$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- individual and team motivation ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- task delegation ( $r = 0.47$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating and giving group presentations ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creative problem-solving and decision-making ( $r = 0.46$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

### Competencies relating to human resource specific aspects

Evident in Table 5 is that the management competency of handling grievances and disputes indicates a positive and significant relationship to the level of training required in negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.47$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Dealing with issues of discipline relates significantly to the level of:

- training required in strategy implementation ( $r = 0.40$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- dealing with issues of discipline ( $r = 0.45$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

Further positive and significant relations have been observed between the competency of attracting talent and the level of:

- training required in strategic planning ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.40$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.39$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- delegation of tasks ( $r = 0.48$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- effective use of IT ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing external stakeholder and supplier relations ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- effective induction and orientation of new staff ( $r = 0.45$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.38$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

Positive significant relations have been found between the management competency of employment and HR policy awareness and management and negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.40$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Lastly, the management competency of occupational health and safety awareness and management relates significantly to the level of:

- training required of day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing interdepartmental peer relationships ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing external stakeholder and supplier relations ( $r = 0.46$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating and giving effective group presentations ( $r = 0.38$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.51$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- employment and HR policy awareness and management ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- occupational health and safety awareness and management ( $r = 0.54$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- internal customer care and service management ( $r = 0.33$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

TABLE 5  
Pearson product-moment correlations: Competencies relating to human resource specific aspects

Job importance	Level of training required														
	1	2	3	4	12	15	16	18	19	24	26	28	30	31	33
Handling grievances and disputes												0.47 ** †			
Dealing with issues of discipline		0.4 * †	0.34 * †		0.45 ** †										
Attracting talent	0.35 * †		0.4 * †	0.39 * †		0.48 ** †	0.41 * †		0.35 * †	0.33 * †	0.45 ** †	0.38 * †			
Employment and HR policy awareness and management												0.4 * †			
Occupational health and safety awareness and management			0.36 * †	0.34 * †				0.35 * †	0.46 ** †		0.38 * †	0.51 *** ‡	0.41 * †	0.54 *** ‡	0.33 * †

1, Strategic planning; 2, Strategy implementation; 3, Day-to-day planning; 4, Time management; 12, Dealing with issues of discipline; 15, Delegation of tasks; 16, Effective use of IT; 18, Managing interdepartmental peer relationships; 19, Managing external stakeholder and supplier relationships; 24, Effective induction and orientation of new staff; 26, Creating and giving effective group presentations; 28, Negotiation and conflict resolution; 30, Employment and human resources policy awareness and management; 31, Occupational health and safety awareness and management; 33, Customer care and service management.

*N* = 41; \* $p \leq 0.0001$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.05$ ; †  $r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49$  (Medium practical effect size); ‡  $r \geq 0.50$  (Large practical effect size).

### Competencies relating to personal attributes

Table 6 shows that the management competency of time management indicates a positive and significant relationship to the level of training required in time management ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Positive and significant relations have also been found between the management competency of business writing and the level of:

- training required in day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.38$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.47$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- team and individual motivation ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- planning and running meetings and effective follow-up ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- business writing ( $r = 0.32$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating and giving effective group presentations ( $r = 0.43$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

Creating and giving effective group presentations relates significantly to the level of:

- training required in day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.46$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.56$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- monitoring and dissemination of information ( $r = 0.41$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- effective use of IT ( $r = 0.38$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing external stakeholder and supplier relations ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- creating and giving effective group presentations ( $r = 0.51$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- occupational health and safety awareness and management ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

Positive and significant relations are found between the management competency of negotiation and conflict resolution and the level of:

- training required in day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.36$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.44$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- team and individual motivation ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- communication skills ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- task delegation ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- managing external stakeholder and supplier relations ( $r = 0.33$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.58$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

Lastly, the management competency of emotional intelligence relates significantly to the level of:

- training required in day-to-day planning ( $r = 0.38$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- time management ( $r = 0.42$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ )
- negotiation and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.49$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

Based on the results, Hypothesis 1 ('Management competencies regarded as being important for the job will be significantly related to the level of training needed') is accepted.

### DISCUSSION

The study explored the relationship between the perceived importance of a managerial competency for the position of an HOD and the level of training required in the various management competencies. Overall, various significant associations of practical significance were observed between the variables. More specifically, certain observations were made.

#### Competencies relating to planning and organising

The results suggest that the participants regarded it as important for HODs to have comprehensive specialist knowledge and skills in the implementation of strategies, conducting environmental scanning and analysis, delegating tasks and project management planning. The significant relationship observed between strategy implementation as an important job competency and the level of training required in handling grievances and disputes suggest that HODs need additional skills to implement grievance and dispute policies outlined in the strategic plan.

The results further suggest that in order for participants to be able to conduct environmental scanning and analysis, they will also require an advanced level of training in daily planning and project management activities, including the prioritisation and organisation of cost- and quality-related tasks and activities, leading and motivating individuals and teams, monitoring and dissemination of information by means of group presentations and communication, managing external relationships with key external stakeholders and suppliers as external customers. Choo (1999) emphasises this link in his article, 'The Art of Scanning the Environment', in which he stated that environmental scanning is the acquisition and use of information and the ability to understand outside factors, such as stakeholders and suppliers. A manager needs to lead his subordinates in the right direction and on the right time resulting from information gathered outside of the organisation. Participants also seem to require an advanced level of training in time management to effectively delegate tasks and manage cost- and quality-related projects. Bluedorn (1992) also states that a manager needs to delegate some tasks so as to gain some time to manage one's organisation effectively.

#### Competencies relating to leadership

The results suggest that the participants regarded it as important for HODs to have comprehensive specialist knowledge and skills in individual and team leadership, motivating individuals and teams, managing change and renewal, managing external stakeholder and supplier relations, both internal and external

TABLE 6  
Pearson product-moment correlations: Competencies relating to personal attributes

Job importance	Level of training required														
	3	4	6	7	8	9	15	16	19	21	22	26	27	28	31
Time management		0.37 *** †													
Business writing	0.38 *** †	0.47 ** †	0.34 *** †							0.34 *** †	0.32 *** †	0.43 *** †			
Creating and giving effective group presentations	0.46 ** †	0.56 *** ‡			0.41 *** †			0.38 *** †	0.35 *** †			0.51 *** ‡			0.34 *** ‡
Creative problem-solving and decision-making		0.43 ** †	0.33 *** †		0.33 *** †	0.35 *** †	0.34 *** †						0.44 ** †	0.4 *** †	
Negotiation and conflict resolution	0.36 *** †	0.44 ** †	0.34 *** †	0.37 *** †			0.34 *** †		0.33 *** †					0.58 *** ‡	
Emotional intelligence	0.38 *** †	0.42 *** †												0.49 ** †	

3, Day-to-day planning; 4, Time management; 6, Team and individual motivation; 7, Communication skills; 8, Monitoring and dissemination of information; 9, Environmental scanning and analysis; 15, Task delegation; 16, Effective use of information technology; 19, Managing external stakeholder and supplier relations; 21, Planning and running meetings and follow-up; 22, Business writing; 26, Creating and giving effective group presentations; 28, Negotiation and conflict resolution; 31, Occupational health and safety awareness.

$N = 41$ ; \* $p \leq 0.0001$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.05$ ; †  $r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.49$  (Medium practical effect size); ‡  $r \geq 0.50$  (Large practical effect size).

customer care and service, risk identification and managing diversity as well as cross-cultural issues.

According to the results, participants require extensive training in motivating their teams and individual members in order to successfully execute their skills as a leader. These results are in agreement with the literature which emphasises that a key trait of leaders is to motivate their staff (Ellemers, De Gilder & Haslam, 2004). The significant relationship observed between managing change and renewal as an important job competency and the level of training required in negotiation and conflict resolution suggest that HODs need additional skills to ease the implementation of change into an organisation. The results further suggest that HODs might need extra skills in excellent service delivery to enhance external relationships. According to Slater and Narver (2000), the management of customer services is a key driver for the cultivation of satisfactory stakeholder relationships. This might be due to the fact that employees (as internal customers of an organisation) are also viewed as stakeholders of the organisation. Studies have also shown that satisfied customers (as key stakeholders) have a positive effect on external stakeholder and supplier relations (Oliver, 1997).

The results also suggest that in order for participants to be able to manage diversity and cross-cultural issues within their teams or departments, they will also require an advanced level of training in managing time to make enough opportunities to handle such sensitive issues. Information, such as the institution's policy regarding discrimination and grievance procedures, needs to be disseminated throughout the organisation. A manager also needs extensive training on emotional intelligence so as to have self-control, display humanity and to take responsibility for dealing with sensitive issues such as managing diversity and cross-cultural issues; feelings have been shown to influence judgements that people make. George (2000) states that managers need to display emotional intelligence to enhance their ability to deal with such challenges and issues in a professional and humane way.

### Competencies relating to controlling

It seems as if participants regard performance management, rewarding performance, the effective use of IT, financial and commercial understanding, planning and running meetings and follow-ups, as well as the administration of above concepts, as important managerial competencies for their role as HOD.

The results suggest that for participants to execute performance management as a managerial competency effectively, they need advanced training in leading and motivating their subordinates

to be able to perform and buy into the performance management system as well as to implement performance management effectively. As far back as 1971, House (1971) concluded that leading and motivating staff to perform effectively is a key trait of performance management. Van Knippenberg (2001) confirmed this link when he stated that managers needed to lead outcomes. Outcomes are specifically measured by means of performance management. Seeing as motivation is a key aspect of leadership, managers therefore need to motivate their staff to achieve their outcomes during the performance management process. Mahoney and McGagan (2007, p.83) also stated that 'leadership and motivation are distinctive skills and both are crucial to the performance of the firm'. Negotiation and conflict resolution also needs to be included in a training programme to enhance an HOD's ability to successfully execute performance management. The participants, furthermore, regard training in project management in terms of planning, scope, time and quality awareness and management, according to quality standards and policies as an important requirement to link the desired performance to the project and expected results.

It seems as if environmental scanning and analysis is an important training requirement for managers to successfully reward themselves and team members. Rewards and standards need to comply with competitors and the labour market. Various companies conduct pay surveys to benchmark and compare their compensations and standards to those of other companies (Mathis & Jackson, 2004). The results further suggest that in order for participants to be able to make effective use of IT, they will require extensive training in day-to-day planning and time management and task delegation so as to prioritise and organise their tasks effectively. The results also indicated that the participants require advanced training in the utilisation of IT to give effective presentations.

It is evident from the results that for HODs to have a financial understanding, especially in budgeting, cost control and financial reporting, they require advanced training in strategy implementation, leadership, handling labour relation issues and change management. This might suggest that HODs need extra training to execute plans set out in the strategic plan and to lead and direct their subordinates to successfully comply with what is set out and changed in the strategic plan. The results further suggest that planning one's daily activities, the organisation's strategy and implementing the changes are regarded as important training requirements to successfully plan and run meetings. The significant relationship observed between administration, reporting performance and financials, monitoring, maintaining and developing reporting systems



and the level of training required in day-to-day planning, time management and task delegation might suggest that managers once again need to distinguish between what they need to plan to do themselves and what administration tasks they should delegate to their subordinates. In this regard, Swierczek (1991) correctly noted that learning how to delegate tasks is an important competency for any leader. Furthermore, leaders need to implement creative problem-solving and decision-making to overcome administrative issues.

### Competencies relating to human resource specific aspects

It is evident from the results that the participants regard handling grievances and disputes, dealing with issues of discipline, attracting talent, employment and HR policy awareness and management and occupational health and safety as important managerial competencies. The significant relationship between the importance of the handling of grievances and disputes and the extensive training required in dealing with issues of discipline might indicate that the participants need additional skills to execute sensitive labour-related issues. The results, furthermore, suggest that in order for them to effectively deal with issues of discipline they need advanced training on how to align their way of dealing with discipline to the strategic plan, as well as planning it and making time for dealing with such issues on a day-to-day basis. Deeds (2010) confirms that time management is of utmost importance when dealing with sensitive issues, such as a disciplinary hearing. Managers need to make time to deal with the issues as effectively and thoroughly as possible and also to make sure that the issues are dealt with as soon as possible.

According to the findings, for participants to effectively attract talent, they appear to require additional skills and knowledge to include talent management in their strategic planning. Talent management needs to be closely aligned with a company's strategic plan (McGarrrity, 2007). This effort needs to be managed on a daily basis. Tasks could be delegated to attract the right talent via the use of IT to advertise and source the correct candidate for the position. Portals such as careerjunction and Pnet can be utilized. When the candidate is selected, to induct and orientate the new staff member effectively. HODs further require training in managing external stakeholder and supplier relations and negotiation and conflict. This might suggest that when HODs make use of head-hunting, they still need to maintain their relationship with external competitors and stakeholders.

### Competencies relating to personal attributes

The participants regarded time management, business writing, creating and giving effective presentations to groups, creative problem-solving and decision-making, negotiation and conflict resolution and emotional intelligence as important competencies for their role as managers. The positive relationship between business writing as a managerial competency and the requirement of additional skills in planning regarding daily activities, meetings and time might suggest that the participants need to participate in advanced time management training so as to plan and make time for executing all the necessary administration and documentation required from a HOD. The results, furthermore, suggest that for the participants to create and give effective presentations, they once again require skills in managing their time and daily activities. They also need training in monitoring what information is released so as to maintain a good external relationship with their stakeholders and suppliers as well as skills in making use of technology effectively to give professional presentations to groups.

For the participants to effectively implement creative problem-solving and decision-making, it seems as if they require extensive training in making time to come up with the best solutions and to motivate their teams to think outside the

box so as to come up with more creative alternative solutions. They, furthermore, seem to require training in monitoring information from conducting environmental analyses. This might suggest that they need guidance on how to scan the environment and competitors to find better solutions to current problems as well as to delegate these tasks and trust their subordinates to make creative decisions. It could also suggest that managers need guidance in disseminating the information concluded from environmental scanning and analysis.

The results suggest that in order for participants to negotiate and resolve conflict as a managerial competency they need advanced knowledge on planning the task, making efficient time for executing this task and implementing the correct communication skills during negotiation and conflict resolution in terms of active listening, questioning, building trust, empathy and mutual understanding. HODs furthermore, require training in motivating their subordinates as well as maintaining external relationships during conflict resolution procedures. In addition, they need to be able to delegate the task of handling these issues to others, should the need arise. The results further suggest that the demonstration of emotional intelligence is important to be able to plan and make time for self-development, personal growth and self-control. It appears from the results that the participants, furthermore, require training in negotiation and conflict resolution on an intrapersonal level to seek responsibility and to show compassion and humanity.

In summary, it seems as if most of the participating HODs require extensive training on day-to-day planning with regard to prioritising tasks and activities, time management, motivating their teams and individual team members, delegation of tasks, creating and giving effective presentations to groups and negotiation and conflict resolution in order to execute most of their managerial tasks successfully. Visser (2009) also found that HODs regard leadership, financial management and project management as the three most important managerial competencies for the role of a HOD.

### Limitations and recommendations

Seeing as the present study was limited to a group of predominantly White HODs in a particular higher education institution, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational, institutional and race contexts. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study cannot yield any statements about causation. Associations between the variables have therefore been interpreted, rather than established. These findings, therefore, need to be replicated with broader samples across various occupational, age and race groups and economic sectors before more extensive conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between the constructs of concern to this study.

### CONCLUSIONS

The results provide evidence of the relationship between important managerial competencies for HODs and the level of training required. The associations found focused attention on the practical importance of utilising management competency frameworks for the identification of training needs of HODs in the higher education environment. Considering the large amount of significant relationships that exist between the perceived importance of the competencies and the level of training required, the findings seem to be in agreement with the assertion of Lyons (2008) that very little and inadequate training exists to sufficiently prepare HODs for their managerial role. It seems imperative to train the HOD on the most important managerial competencies and couple it with the level of training required on the specific competency. The overall results suggest that every higher education institution should consider identifying the competencies they deem necessary for their HOD development and balance it with

the requirement for training for HODs to be effective in the specified managerial competencies. The above findings could be used as a guideline to construct a training framework for HODs to assist them in their managerial role within the higher education institution environment.

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