The Qualities of a Good Manager … What Does It Mean? Lessons Learned from the Undergraduate Business Students' Perception in Kingdom of Morocco

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Abstract

Qualities required to provide managers of what make them effective in their actions and behavior within the organizational structure generate, perpetually, the interest of researchers and professionals. Notwithstanding the prevailing conceptions, with reference to the subject of our research, make no consensus between the different stakeholders involved, among others, the college business students. This article is seeking clarification of the business students' perception about the qualities required to be a good manager. Methodologically, our research was based on a quantitative questionnaire distributed to 500 college business students in Kingdom of Morocco to highlight their appreciation of the qualities needed to be a good manager. Factor analysis was used to analyze the data. Categorization, in the light of the business students' perception, was made to aggregate, in blocks, the qualities required to be acknowledged as a good manager. As results, five factors underlying the business students' perception were found. However these factors, when confronted to the literature, explicit certain divergences that could be explained by the students cognitive process problems.

Keywords: manager qualities, good manager, business students' perception, cognitive process, factor analysis

1. Introduction

The cognitive process and interpretation of organizational and managerial reality is complex and differs from one stakeholder to another. During their academic studies (economics faculties, business schools and institutes, professional training centers, etc.), business students develop specific skills to achieve their possible integration in the company later. Subsequently, they forge a vision and have conceptions concerning certain aspects of the company management (Cole & Smith, 1996; Bodkin & Stevenson, 2007; Bageac, Furrer, & Reynaud, 2011), among others, the qualities required to be a good manager. This vision developed by business students is explained by the fact that they are trained to become future managers in different types of organizations (government, enterprises, etc.) or at least they could make part of managers' teams. In this context, the qualities for a good manager are different and based on the personal and professional skills (King, Fowler, & Zeithaml, 2001; Gentry & Sparks 2012; Brill, Bishop, & Walker, 2006) that a manager needs to act properly in the various complex and uncertain situations in a turbulent environment.

The theoretical lack, recorded with reference to the business students' perception in terms of the qualities required to be a good manager, legitimates and encourages research in this direction. Indeed, this research clarifies some gray areas regarding aspects (nature, trend and factors behind this perception) to be taken into account in any attempts to conceptualize the perception of this category of stakeholders (business students) on the topic of a specific managerial and organizational phenomenon (qualities of a good manager). In other words,

the originality of this research path remains in the relationship that could be made between two distinctive research areas such as organization management and business education.

This paper aims to explore what are the underlying qualities or skills that undergraduate business students think a good manager should posses. In fact, our research aims to clarify the perception that a future stakeholder (business students) of the company management allocates to a prominent aspect or phenomenon (qualities and skills of a good manager) of the managerial and organizational reality.

2. Literature Review

Conceptually, qualities needed to be qualified as a manager characterize strongly the management literature. In other words, each of these qualities has been the subject of many conceptualization attempts to build theoretically the profile of a good and efficient manager. Although, this conceptualization is making no consensus between the academic (researchers, speakers, etc.) and professional (managers, engineers, etc.) communities.

2.1 Business Students' Perception

Business students, about their perception expressed or formalized by researchers, clarify the interest and importance attributed to certain aspects or characteristics relating to the company management. This is to shed light on the convergence and divergence elements between the business students' perception and the perception of researchers or other stakeholders in the professional field.

Many studies and researches scrutinize and analyze the business students' perception concerning the managerial or organizational reality. Each of these studies focus on specific aspect (Elias, 2004; Ahmed, Chung, & Eichenseher, 2003; Jaffe & Tsimerman, 2005; Bodkin et al., 2007; Ibrahim, Howard, & Angelidis, 2008; Stevenson & Bodkin, 1998; Brambilla, 2015; Sánchez-Escobedo, Díaz-Casero, Hernández-Mogollón, & Postigo-Jiménez, 2011; Bageac et al., 2011; Veciana & Aponte, 2005; Wurthmann, 2014). Clarifying, moderately, the reasons justifying the choice of the company management aspects which are the business students' perception. Characteristically, selected aspects, to serve as a criterion or investigation lever of the trend of business students' perception are socially important (Elias, 2004; Ahmed et al., 2003), theoretically fundamental (Bodkin et al., 2007; Brambilla, 2015; Sánchez-Escobedo et al., 2011), crucial features in the professional circumstances (Elias, 2004; Grünbaum, 1997; Bodkin et al., 2007; Stevenson et al., 1998), the cornerstone of certain policies or actions (Jaffe et al., 2005), etc.

In addition, other researches lay emphasis on, firstly, the determinants and factors explaining the formation of the business students' perception in relation to different company management aspects (e.g. Cagle, 2005; Elias, 2004; Casero, Ferreira, Mogollón, & Raposo, 2012; Helmig & Bürgisser, 2010). Secondly, they inquire about analysis of convergence or divergence of this business students' perception compared to those of other stakeholders (Ibrahim et al., 2008; Cole et al., 1996) or segmentation of the actual conception based on well-defined criteria (Ahmed et al., 2003; Lämsä, Vehkaperä, Puttonen, & Pesonen, 2008; Gift & Zheng, 2013; Johnson & DeMoranville, 2014).

2.2 Business Students' Perception of Manager Qualities

Revealing the business students' perception of good manager qualities as well as the factors explaining the trend is not an easy task. Besides, the management literature that deals with aspects of the company management does not emphasize the nature and trend of business students' perception on the subject of managers and their qualities.

2.2.1 Manager Qualities

The qualities of the stakeholders, regarding the company management, are required to behave appropriately in different situations experienced in the organizational structure or in the environment. These situations involve problems to solve, risk to manage, improvements to make, opportunities to value, etc. In this sense, the manager needs personal and professional skills to succeed his duties. Theoretically, it could be noted that some of the important researches attend to the skills required to be a successful manager in specific functional areas (e.g. Brill et al., 2006; King et al., 2001; Van Rooij, 2011; Melaia, Abratt, & Bick, 2008; Nugent & Broedling, 2002; Weber, Finley, Crawford & Rivera, 2009; Zoogah & Peng, 2011; Patanakul & Aronson, 2012). Furthermore, it could be underlined that the different conceptions developed or identified empirically deal with certain crucial qualities for a manager (e.g. Gentry et al., 2012; Jain & Sharma, 2012; Bhatta, 2001; Zhong & Shi, 2007; Koh, Avvari & Tan, 2015).

Additionally, supplementary researches are more accurate and deal with studies and investigations about a

specific quality. The choice of that quality could be explained by the fact that it is prominent in a functional area or in situations that any manager is brought to confront continually. At this stage, it could be cited skills or qualities like leadership (Gentry et al., 2012; Kwon & Feiock, 2010; Raudenbush & Marquardt, 2008; Bin Sayeed & Shanker, 2009), communication (Rainey, Turner, & Dayton, 2005; Johlke & Duhan, 2001), conflict management (Song, Xie, & Dyer, 2000), motivation (Paglis & Green, 2002), stability and emotional intelligence (Morand, 2001), planning and organization (Lyles & Lenz, 1982), etc.

2.2.2 Nature and Trend of Business Students' Perception

The explicit nature and trend of business students' perception on the skills required to be presented as a good manager do not strongly characterize the management literature. Indeed, the combination of the skills of a successful manager with the business students' perception isn't theoretically well formalized. Also, it could be mentioned that research in this area doesn't converge to the conceptualization of the business students' perception in terms of skills requested to be a good manager.

Some studies tackle personal and behavioral skills of an efficient and effective manager in light of business students' appraisals and conceptions (e.g. Bodkin et al., 2007; Ibrahim et al., 2008; Brambilla, 2015; Sánchez-Escobedo et al., 2011; Bageac et al., 2011; Veciana et al., 2005; Wurthmann, 2014; Gift et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). Moreover, other studies explicitly examine the qualities needed to succeed assignments in a broader context (e.g. Cole et al., 1996; Lämsä et al., 2008). In other words, it does not assign these skills to a manager in a specific functional area.

The study of business students' perception on the subject of the skills needed to be a successful manager seems like an intellectual exercise that involves, on the one hand, the identification of different theoretical conceptions about the manager's qualities. On the other hand, the establishment a consistent analysis of data collected empirically among business students.

3. Method

In this research we adopted the quantitative approach and the type of data we collected were primary data which means that information was not gathered before but collected ad hoc for a specific research purpose. The questionnaire was chosen as the survey instrument because it is practical and it consisted of a self administered questionnaire, with 17 items and finally data were analyzed using SPSS version 17.0. The collection of data was during fall 2015 and our population of interest covers all undergraduate business students in the first year that constituted the research subjects. We ran a random sampling procedure and the questionnaire was distributed to 500 students of 2 public business faculties located in two different cities in Morocco. The rationale behind choosing the first year business students is that they have little knowledge about management and managers which is suitable for the research consistency. The questionnaire was written in frensh, because the business education system in Morocco is in frensh, and then results were translated to English. Even there are many channels to receive responses (e-mails, online questionnaires, etc.) the questionnaire was filled during the course session time to make sure that the rate of response is higher as possible because if students were let to fill questionnaire online when they are at home they would forget or procrastinate. Before they started filling the questionnaire a little time was devoted to introduce and explain to students the utility and purpose of this research, this step is very important because it motivates them to fill the questionnaire with more commitment and responsibility which will have a positive impact on the reliability of the study. Because students are still in their first year and don't understand many of management terms a special effort was made to explain to them all technical words in the questionnaire that might be misunderstood. In order to keep the questionnaire as short as possible there was only one section in the questionnaire which concerns the main questions of the study and one demographic question which is of gender, we wanted to avoid long questionnaires that contains many questions about demographic questions which makes the respondent feel boring. Students were given a list of items about team leader qualities (Bachiochi, Rogelberg, O'Connor, & Elder, 2000), and asked to rate the importance of each one. There were 17 qualities consisted of 17 variables that were measured using the 5 points Likert scale (1= very low: not important 5= very high: very important).

After screening questionnaires we had received we found that out of the 475 questionnaire filled, 390 were usable completed questionnaires resulting in an 82, 10% rate which is a significant proportion of the overall participants.

The study applied Factor analysis. FA is used when the researcher is interested in identifying a smaller number of factors underlying a large number of observed variables (S. Gaur & S. Gaur, 2009). FA analysis allows finding variables sharing the same characteristics. Factor analysis operates on the notion that measurable and observable variables can be reduced to fewer latent variables that share a common variance and are unobservable, which is

known as reducing dimensionality (Yong & Pearce, 2013). In order to conduct a factor analysis certain conditions should be met, among these conditions is the sample size. It is obvious that the more the better. "A rough guide is that a minimum of 100 participants should really be used. However, there should always be more participants than there are variables (with a minimum ratio of 2:1 participants to variables). Therefore, if we have a scale consisting of 60 items that we wish to analyze using factor analysis; we would need a minimum of 120 participants)" (R. Hinton, Brownlow, McMurray & Cozens, 2005). In our research, this specification is met because we have 17 items and 500 participants.

4. Results and Data Analysis

The results which are extracted from factorial analysis conducted with the collected empirical data are presented in tables. Each table highlights a key aspect in our analysis. The main goal from the generation of these tables via SPSS is to achieve the identification of the business students' perception on the subject of the qualities of an ideal manager. In this perspective, we follow a line of investigation to provide some categorization of these qualities in terms of very specific factors.

In the first table *communalities* we are interested in the third column labeled Extraction. It provides for each variable the total amount of variance that all factors explain. It is obvious from the table that the extracted factors explain 65,3% of the variance in the variable *Responsibility* and it is the highest value. When this value is low it means that the variance of the variable is not much explained by the extracted factors and therefore it might be excluded from the analysis.

Table 1. Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Expertise	1,000	,601
Conflict Managent	1,000	,363
Persuasion and Inflence	1,000	,347
Coaching and Mentoring	1,000	,651
Listening Effectively	1,000	,595
Communicating Information	1,000	,496
Providing Feedback	1,000	,567
Communicating a Vision	1,000	,587
Responsability	1,000	,653
Networking	1,000	,558
Planing and Organizing	1,000	,452
Delegating / Sharing Power	1,000	,490
Facilitating the Process	1,000	,465
Motivating	1,000	,547
Self Confidence and Emotional Stability	1,000	,491
Flexibility	1,000	,419
Understanding and Suppoting People	1,000	,596

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2. Total variance explained

Compo nent	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3,832	22,542	22,542	3,832	22,542	22,542	2,475	14,558	14,558
2	1,539	9,051	31,593	1,539	9,051	31,593	1,901	11,183	25,741
3	1,280	7,527	39,120	1,280	7,527	39,120	1,850	10,881	36,622
4	1,151	6,770	45,890	1,151	6,770	45,890	1,461	8,592	45,214
5	1,078	6,341	52,230	1,078	6,341	52,230	1,193	7,016	52,230
6	,998	5,872	58,103						
7	,912	5,366	63,468						
8	,842	4,953	68,422						
9	,803	4,722	73,143						
10	,664	3,906	77,050						
11	,644	3,787	80,837						
12	,616	3,621	84,458						
13	,606	3,565	88,023						
14	,558	3,284	91,306						
15	,541	3,182	94,489						
16	,494	2,907	97,396						
17	,443	2,604	100,000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The next table titled Total Variance Explained gives a summary of the total variance that is explained by the factor analysis solution and indicates how many factors are useful. This table contains three principal parts and under each part there are three columns; total, % of variance and cumulative %. The first principal part is Initial Eigen values which gives the Eigen value for each potential factor that are listed from the highest to the lowest. The second column % of Variance shows how much variance can be explained by each single factor. The second principal part, titled Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings provides information about factors having Eigen values higher than 1. The next column Cumulative % contains values for the extracted factors added together explaining 52,230 % of the variance. The last principal part is Rotated Sums of Squared Loadings which shows the extracted factors after rotation. After the execution of rotation, there is a change of Eigen values, however the cumulative percentage value does not change. Five factors were found with Eigen values over 1. In some cases we can find that after rotation some factors with Eigen values falling down from 1.

Table 3. Component matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Motivating	,617	,080	-,272	-,259	,137
Planing and Organizing	,607	-,021	,053	-,009	,282
Self Confidence and Emotional Stability	,540	,187	-,398	-,079	-,003
Communicating Information	,528	,024	,437	,158	-,026
Flexibility	,500	,033	-,276	-,218	,210
Facilitating the Process	,500	-,231	-,302	-,156	-,214
Delegating / SharingPower	,491	-,268	-,054	-,416	-,035
Providing Feedback	,485	-,454	,246	,136	-,217
Responsability	,483	-,063	-,107	,477	,421
Conflict Managent	,431	,393	,109	,096	,041
Persuasion and Influence	,430	,267	-,115	,107	-,258
Coaching and Mentoring	,311	,524	,420	-,319	,040
Networking	,298	-,478	,119	-,067	,472
Communicating a Vision	,407	-,477	,120	,342	-,250
Listening Effectively	,482	,161	,569	-,110	-,014
Expertise	,272	,419	-,206	,552	,067
Understanding and Suppoting People	,522	,054	-,121	,029	-,552

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 5 components extracted.

In the third table *Component Matrix* details are given about the factor loadings of each extracted factor before the execution of rotation. Here we are given the original picture of unrotated factors, as we can see the variable there are several variables have high loadings on more than one factor which makes it difficult to interpret. In order to overcome this, *Rotation* is indispensable because it helps solving this kind of problems.

Table 4 presents the table titled *Rotated Factor Matrix* which has rotated factor loadings. In order to obtain a good factor solution, a variable should have higher loading on one factor and lower loadings on the rest of factors. It is common for researchers to consider 0.40 as a criterion for high loadings. Our research output shows that the variables which have high loadings on factor 1 have low loadings on factors 2, 3, 4, 5 and vice versa.   If a variable was found loading high on more than one factor, in this case we can exclude it from the factor analysis and revise factor specification relying on previous theoretical research. After we had obtained the particular variables for the corresponding factors, we gave them names. As we can see factor 1 encompasses six variables—*Motivating, Flexibility, Self confidence and emotional stability, Delegating and Sharing Power, Facilitating the Process, Planning and Organizing*. Factor 2 contains three variables — *Communicating a Vision, Providing feedback*. Factor 3 includes three variables —Coaching and *Mentoring, Listening Effectively, Conflict Management*. Factor 4 has two variables — *Expertise, Responsibility*. Factor 5 contains one variable *Networking*. Two variables (*Communicating information* and *Understanding/ Supporting People*) were dropped from the analysis because they are loading high on more than one factor. These five factors include the variables (qualities of the good manager) that are statistically significant. It should be noted at this point that three variables are excluded from the formation of these factors because they are not statistically significant. The composition of these factors, according to the business students, is carrying of important lessons and indicatives of significant managerial implications.

Table 4. Rotated component matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Motivating	,707	,020	,176	,124	-,020
Flexibility	,619	-,019	,095	,127	-,103
Self Confidence and Emotional Stability	,619	,002	,054	,264	,187
Delegating and Sharing Power	,567	,259	,139	-,269	-,100
Facilitating the Process	,566	,339	-,083	-,050	,141
Planing and Organizing	,428	,196	,322	,253	-,250
Communicating a Vision	,047	,755	-,032	,115	-,013
Providing Feedback	,131	,722	,149	-,032	-,070
Coaching and Mentoring	,123	-,221	,757	-,048	,107
Listening Effectively	,070	,232	,731	-,014	-,038
Communicating Information	,053	,409	,537	,188	-,046
Conflict Managent	,187	-,011	,440	,340	,140
Expertise	,038	-,031	,059	,738	,225
Responsability	,220	,240	,039	,663	-,326
Networking	,241	,271	,042	-,007	-,652
Understanding and Suppoting People	,352	,409	,134	,055	,533
Persuasion and Influence	,273	,138	,196	,258	,386

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 11 iterations.

5. Discussion

The aim of our research is to achieve, through factor analysis, to identify relatively the trend of business students' perception with reference to qualities required to be recognized as a good manager. Our findings involve the clarification of some points raised by observing the results derived from the analysis. The first point is that the five factors found in the analysis are in number less than those in the study on which was based the construction of our questionnaire (Bachiochi et al., 2000). This is due, in part, to reasons related to the number of variables analyzed and the nature of the sample. Secondly, there was certain heterogeneity in terms of the qualities that make up the cited five factors. Each factor has qualities that could be categorized in several theoretical categories (Bachiochi et al., 2000). In fact, Factor 1 is composed of qualities that match those deployed by managers for the successful execution of their tasks or activities and those related to personal and behavioral characteristics. Four of these qualities —*Motivating, Delegating and Sharing Power, Facilitating the Process, Planning and Organizing*—match moderately with the theoretical category such as "Task oriented skills". However, this factor contains two qualities—*Self confidence and emotional stability & Flexibility*—that don't match with the theoretical category cited above, but with other named "Personal characteristics/Traits". Factor 2 is made up of qualities acknowledged as manager's communicational and interaction qualities—*Communicating a Vision & Providing feedback*. This homogeneous factor goes, in part, with the theoretical category named

"Communication skills". The factor 3 deals with heterogeneous qualities. Two of these qualities— *Coaching* and *Mentoring & Conflict Management* —are related to theoretical category such as "Interpersonal skills", but the third quality—*Listening effectively*—converge toward other theoretical category namely "Communication skills". The factor 4 contains two heterogeneous qualities. One of these qualities—*Expertise*—is related to "Background and expertise" category, the other quality is linked toward "Liaison skills" category. The factor 5 deal with one quality—*networking*—which is related to "Liaison skills" category. Consequently, it seems difficult to attempt the conceptualization of these factors, because they lack homogeneity in terms of the qualities that make up each factor.

The divergence, found between our findings and the literature, could be explained by specific reasons. Indeed, the heterogeneity observed in five factors cited above brightens the trend of business students' perception concerning the qualities of a good manager. The trend of this students' perception remains dependent possibly to problems or disorders in their cognitive process. At this stage, the emphasis is put on the difficulties, specifically perceptual, encountered by students in their studies and therefore the meaning provided toward a concept or a phenomenon spotted in a defined area.

These difficulties reflect the instability in memory, linguistic, phonological and perceptual capabilities (S. Gaur et al., 2009; Yong et al., 2013; R. Hinton et al., 2005; J. Morris & Mather, 2008; S. Johnson, Humphrey, F. Mellard, Woods, & Swanson, 2010; Stothers & Klein, 2010) and the explanatory factors of the environment framing the cognitive processes among students (Trainin & Swanson, 2005; Heiman, 2006; Chen, Pedersen, & Murphy, 2012; O'Donnell, Dansereau & Hall, 2002; Ohlsson, 2013). Furthermore, it could be argued that the nature of this students' tendency which is probably different from other stakeholders' conceptions (researchers, executives, workers, etc.) could be related to the nature of the phenomenon (ontological aspect) and strategy (methodological aspect) adopted to identify and analyze it (Liu & Bera, 2005; Lennox, 2013; Geisler, 1999). The conceptualization of qualities required to be a good manager, as the objective of several researches, attracts progressively different stakeholders' involvements. Specially, it is a theoretical construction process that includes divergences and convergences between the researches in this field and hence increases knowledge and meaningful conceptions.

Finally, it could be argued that the business students' perception about the qualities of a good manager confronted with other stakeholders' perceptions is indicative of an important insight. At this point, it might question the static or dynamic aspect, from a temporal point of view, characterizing the process of business students' perception.

6. Conclusion

This paper had as objective the contribution to improving knowledge on the topic of the qualities required to be a good manager in the light of the undergraduate business students' perception in Kingdom of Morocco. At this stage, we endeavored to combine the qualities analyzed in well defined factors consecutively to facilitate understanding of the trend with reference to the perception of this future stakeholder in the company management in this case the undergraduate business students.

This research has some limits that open new future research questions. These limits can be summarized in four points that are Data collection, participants. First, results obtained from this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of undergraduate business students because data concerned only students enrolled in two universities located two regions in Kingdom of Morocco and that was consistent with the aim and the nature of the research which is exploratory. Accordingly, future researchers can conduct studies about students not only in all universities in Kingdom of Morocco but also in different countries all over the world. Second, in this research we adopted the quantitative approach which has its advantages but lacks the deep understanding of students' perception. In order to overcome this limit future researchers should conduct qualitative studies and then see whether results are the same or not. Third, in the method section we said that students were in the first year in faculty and don't have a clear understanding of management concepts, but it could be that there were some students who had taken some courses about management in high school. Future studies should assure that all the participants have never seen any course about management. Fourth, we said earlier that we tried as much as possible to avoid long questionnaires, that is why we had only 17 manager qualities but there are many qualities of the manager that can be investigated.

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