

Dissertation Evaluation for DBA Candidate, Daiki Tanaka

DBA Thesis Title

Moderators that Accelerate

Competency Development from Challenging Work Experiences

May 15, 2018

ICS DBA Candidate, Daiki Tanaka has successfully completed his dissertation defense on April 18, 2018. The Dissertation Committee concludes that Daiki Tanaka's dissertation has fulfilled the requirements for the DBA degree and recommends to grant him Hitotsubashi University's doctoral degree in business administration. Below is a summary of this dissertation research, followed by the Committee's evaluation and conclusion.

1. Overview of the Dissertation

Motivated by the author's own work experiences and a thorough literature review, this dissertation examines the relationship between challenging work experiences and competency (underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation)ⁱ development that is used to measure leader development. Acknowledging that not all individuals learn and grow equally and uniformly from the same experiences, the author identified the factors that accelerate (or attenuated) competency development from challenging work experiences and designed a study using data from a total of 494 Japanese participants who were randomly recruited from an online panel after properly screened as a manager.

The results of a series of analyses showed that challenging work experiences and competency development were significantly correlated. Then, with a Japanese sample, it replicated previous research that used non-Japanese samples and confirmed that individual factors—self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, and work engagement—moderated the relationship between challenging work experiences and competency development. The results suggest that when individuals have higher (vs. lower) levels of these individual traits, they develop competency from challenging work experiences more effectively.

Moreover, while no previous empirical research has examined the moderation effects of situational factors on the relationship between challenging work experiences and competency development, this research examined psychological safety (a team climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves)ⁱⁱ and trusting relationships with supervisors as situational factors that moderate this relationship. The result showed that competency development was positively and significantly increased for individuals with high psychological safety whereas this relationship was nonsignificant for those with low psychological safety. It suggests that psychological safety moderates the relationship in that it accelerates competency development when individuals perform challenging jobs and learn from the associated experiences. In other words, challenging work experiences promote competency development only if psychological safety is present. An incremental effect of trusting relationships with supervisors on psychological safety and its moderation effect on the relationship between challenging work experiences and competency development were also examined and found to be significant. The author argues that having trusting relationships with supervisors promotes psychological safety and encourage individuals to confront challenging jobs and learn effectively from their supervisor's feedback and role modelling of leadership behaviors.

2. The Dissertation Committee's Evaluation

This dissertation has successfully fulfilled DBA research requirements: the research is grounded both in practice and in academia, investigates and addresses an important managerial issue with solid academic research methods, and makes a couple of contributions to the human resource management and industrial psychology research.

Contributions This dissertation advances the literature and contributes to the practice in the following ways: First, this dissertation contributes to the literature by deepening our understanding of the roles of psychological safety and trusting relationships with supervisors in the way individuals develop competencies from challenging experiences in their work. It first demonstrated empirically their moderating mechanisms.

Second, it contribute to the literature by extending important findings in the previous studies to the Japanese managerial context. With a large Japanese sample data, it first empirically examined and demonstrated that self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, and work engagement moderate the relationship between challenging work experiences and competency development.

Last but not least as a DBA dissertation, it contributes to the management practitioner community by providing rich managerial implications. It convincingly argues that the relationship between challenging work experiences and competency development varies depending on both individual and situation factors. The individual factors include self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, and work engagement, and situational factors include psychological safety and trusting relationships with supervisors. It indicates that, in order to accelerate and optimize competency development from challenging work experiences, organizations and supervisors need not only identify those with suitable individual characteristics, but also provide psychologically safe environments and build trusting relationships with their subordinates.

Limitations and Further Development As any piece of research, this dissertation has limitations. Some of these are areas that can be further developed and improved as the dissertation is revised for publication. Others offer starting points for new research. Since a detailed discussion of its limitations and an extensive list of future directions are provided in the dissertation, we selectively mention only major limitations and further development/future directions here. The limitations are mainly due to the nature of the data. First, it used an online panel with a self-administered survey, and thus, left room for common-method biases. Collecting data from multiple sources would overcome this issue.

Second, the analyses was based on a cross-sectional survey and thus, causal relationships could not be identified. Also, the questionnaire explored only a snapshot of learning from experiences, asking individuals to recall and rate their current jobs and their perceived competency development. Designing and conducting a longitudinal study is a viable solution to overcome these limitations in the future. As the author suggests, tracking learning and capability development over a longer period, with a longitudinal study, would enable causal inferences and shed light on the more dynamic and contextual influences of the learning process and competency development from challenging work experiences.

Third, the research limited to the generalized, overall relationship between challenging work experiences and competency development was examined, and thus, missed more detailed studies of relationships between specific types of job experiences and competencies. Detailed studies would benefit both supervisors and individuals as they would elucidate which competencies can be developed from particular types of challenging work experiences and better help practitioners design and assign jobs tailored to optimize employees learning and development.

Conclusion The Dissertation Committee concludes that Daiki Tanaka's dissertation has fulfilled the requirements for the DBA degree and by successfully conducting this research he has demonstrated his qualifications as an academic scholar. The Committee therefore recommends to grant Daiki Tanaka Hitotsubashi University's DBA degree.

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ⁱ Spencer and Spencer, 1993, p. 9

ⁱⁱ Edmondson, 1999, p. 354