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LEADERSHIP META-COMPETENCIES FOR THE FUTURE WORLD OF WORK

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to define the nature and work of leaders within the context of the future world of work. A leadership meta-competence model, based on levels of work theory, was developed. This model was validated by senior managers in the retail industry. Subsequently a questionnaire assessing the perceived importance of these competencies, currently and in the future, was designed and completed by just more than 100 managers from various retail industries. The questionnaire results indicated that there is a significant difference between the perceived current and future definitions of the nature and work of leaders.

Key words: Leadership, retail, competence model, future world of work

Ackoff (1994), Carpa (2003), Starbuck (2005) and Wheatley (1999) proposed the rethinking of the manner in which organisations plan and execute work in the emerging future. At the coal face managers and leaders often ask why they should prepare for the future when it is impossible to know what to prepare for (Rethinking corporate strategy, 2003, p. 65). Weingand (1995) argued that today's speculations on the future have moved from the realm of fantasy or literary illusion into the pragmatic world of organisational need. Tomorrow needs to be explored in order to more fully understand the demands of today and the critical decisions that must be made for the future. It is no longer enough to wonder what the future might bring. It is a necessity to critically assess potential future scenarios and incorporate well-considered forecasts into today's planning. Even though the future is uncertain, organisations that study potential futures, share knowledge and encourage collective learning are more likely to survive the test of time. Peters (1992) supported this argument by suggesting that organisations do not only need to become "learning organisations", but be able to innovate on a continuous basis.

Organisations find themselves midstride between an old and new era, and have not yet found their way (Nicol in Parker, 1998, p. 1). It is also evident that the changes surrounding organisations are not mere trends but the workings of large, unruly forces: globalisation and increased international competition (Kiggundu, 2002; Moon & Bonny, 2001), cross national strategic alliances and mergers, privatisation, outsourcing, information technology innovations, the increasing frequency of short term work contracts (Cooper, 2005; Stewart, 1993), and changing work ethic and culture (Ulrich, Zenger, & Smallwood, 2003). These influences are leading to an increasingly chaotic and complex world of work (Cairnes, 2004; Hite, 1999; Kraut & Kormann, 1999).

It is difficult to envisage leadership and management in their current form surviving the emerging future world of work as discussed above. Starkey and Tempest (2005, pp. 140-141) provide the following reasons for this position:

- The legitimacy of management (and leadership) is under fire as never before. Fundamental questions are raised about why managers/ leaders act and feel empowered to act in the ways they do;
- There is accumulating evidence that the future world will be transformed for the worse, unless there is a rethink in the way businesses are managed; and
- Increasing amounts of dissatisfaction from employees for the stress they suffer and the long hours of operating in the slimmed-down workplace.

It is clear from the above that both the substance and speed of change are fundamentally different from what has occurred in past centuries. This implies that the thinking about the nature and work of leaders needs to be revisited at a very fundamental level (Veldsman, 2003; Verwey, 2003). What is required, are better *and* different leaders for a redefined and redefining world of work (Veldsman, 2003).

The background sketched above the raises a number of questions, such as:

- What are the paradigm and supporting philosophies of the future organisation and the world of work from a systems thinking perspective?
- How can the nature and work of the Future Business Leader be defined?
- What qualities (or meta-competencies) of leadership will lead to success in this emerging business environment?

Stated differently, organisations are faced with a period of extraordinary change, where both the essence and swiftness of change are different from what has been experienced before. As organisations within which leaders have to operate change, so the nature of leadership and the work of the leader must change as well.

The future world of work

Roux and Du Toit (2003) put forward a provocative argument that the best way to manage the growing complexities of the Twenty First Century society is through developing a "systems thinking" capability. A similar argument was put forward by Senge (1990, p. 55) who stated "*from an early age we're taught to break apart problems in order to make complex tasks and subjects easier to deal with. But it creates a bigger problem... we lose the ability to see the consequences of our actions, and we lose a sense of connection to a larger whole.*" A system is a "whole" that cannot be divided into independent parts, because the behaviour of the parts and their effect on the whole depends on the behaviour of all the parts interacting with one another (Gharajedaghi & Ackoff, 1985). *"Systems thinking"* is the conscious use of the particular concept of wholeness captured in the word "system" to order thinking and thoughts (Checkland: 1981, pp. 3-4).

Organisations can also be viewed as systems, and even as system within systems. Haines (1998, 2000) is of the opinion that by viewing organisations as levels of system within, and colliding with other systems, *"...we align ourselves with the principles of openness, interrelation and interdependence..."*. Both Scott (1981, p. 22) as well as Verwey and Verwey (2003, p. 77) view organisations as open social systems that are constantly in

interaction with a broader society, while simultaneously shaping and being shaped by broader social forces. Systems thinking offers an alternative viable paradigm upon which the changing world of work, as well as the nature and work of business leaders can be built.

A futuristic model was developed on the principles of systems and complexity theory implying that organisations have a purpose (Ackoff 1994) and they operate in a zone between stability and predictability on the one hand, and chaos and unpredictability on the other (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003; Lewis, 1994). The complexity of an organisation depends on the complexity of the elementary components, the richness of their connectivity and their functional differentiation (Boulding, 1956; Espejo, 2004; Miller, 1978). Organisations innovate by producing spontaneous, systemic bouts of novelty from which new patterns of behaviour emerge that enhance the ability to adapt successfully to the environment or to evolve to higher effectiveness (*Letiche, 2000; Lewin, 1993;* Elroy, 2000).

Some of the possible key future implications of the research for business organisations from a complex, adaptive systems perspective are the following:

- The future world of work will focus on meaning and the offering of solutions. The world of work will be a community of meaning by listening; produce what is desired and being a long term partner to their customer(s) (Fairholm, 1996; Hey & Moore, 1998). Handy (1997, p. 179) suggested that organisations must come to terms with their employees expecting the same collection of freedoms, rights and responsibilities that they have in the wider society. What is also emerging are work activities often described as "New Age" explorations that includes interest in Eastern and pagan culture, religion and spirituality (Casey, 2002).
- Future organisations will not only have a portfolio of products and services, but also of core competencies which will include marketing excellence, organising the value chain, and innovation (Guptara 2005; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004).
- The organisational design will be virtual, flexible and dynamic with an increase in complexity, interdependency of systems and widening seamlessness between people, systems, information and structures (Cascio, 2002). Contingent employment (or contingent) work contracts have become a label for employment relations which fit the lexicon of the future workology (Matusik & Hill, 1998; Treu 1992). Lee, Hourquet and Macdermid (2002) concluded that what is likely to be found more frequently in the future workplace are more customised work arrangements, and work arrangements that are constantly in flux and changing according to individual and business needs.
- Financial measurements will no longer serve as the only form of reporting business success/ performance. Success measurements will be an integration of financial, environmental and social reporting with a focus on intellectual assets and knowledge management (Ehrbar 1998; Handy 1994; Kaplan & Norton, 1992, 1996).
- In future customers/ consumers will discriminate against organisations failing to meet the criteria of acceptable ethical business practices. Organisations would be viewed as systems of integrity, working towards good corporate citizenship - focusing on wealth creation and sustainability (Naidoo, 2002; Sifonis & Goldberg; 1996; Simms, 2003).
- Technology will automate existing processes, abolishing whole classes of occupation, cancel traditional divisions, create entirely new ways of organising companies and eliminate the boundaries between industries. It is highly unlikely that technology and the Internet will replace brick and mortar, what it may bring to retail is a more effective way to integrate distribution and marketing and optimising of the value chain (Ander & Stern, 2004; Guptara 2005; Reynolds, 2004; Underhill 2000).
- Organisations and their leadership also have take account of changing consumer demographics coupled with an increasingly demand by customers to be involved in business decisions. Consumers are demanding, fickle, disloyal, individualistic and easily bored. They are better informed and more sophisticated, looking for fast and convenient shopping and demand a huge variety in products and services (Field, 1998; Popcorn & Marigold, 1996; Wesely-Clough, 2004).

The literature reviewed also led to the conclusion that most of the emerging trends and patterns of the future world of work also hold true for the future world of retail. The next section focuses on the changing work and nature of future business leaders within this changing world of work.

Nature and work of future business leaders

It is difficult to envisage leadership and management in their current form surviving the emerging world of work as discussed above. It was argued above that emerging future organisations are characterised by the need for urgency, speed, growing complexity and learning with the aim of continuous innovation. Various authors view the work of leaders within this emerging future organisation from different perspectives. It is argued that leaders need to recognise the need for revitalisation, create a vision, align people towards the direction or vision and institutionalise change (Kotter, 1999; Tichy & Devanna, 1990). Fairholm and Fairholm (2000) suggested that leadership is the task of building collaborative teams, of teaching a common vision and organisation principles and instilling and encouraging trust.

For the well-being of business and society, leadership should also focus the ability to forge new meaning and purpose for an organisation and its employees (Podolny, Khurana & Hill-Popper, 2005). Crom and Bertels (1999) suggested that the work of leadership is about developing leadership talent at all levels of the organisation; accelerating organisational learning, including cross-cultural /functional/ business learning; and encouraging a results orientation, including providing a vehicle for results replication.

A case has been made that the future organisation can be viewed as a complex, adaptive social system. Taking this, as well as the above-mentioned views into account, it can be concluded that the work of the future business leader is to:

- Design and develop the purpose (or function, role) that the organisation as a complex, adaptive social system and/or subsystem fulfils, as measured by the implementation of its vision, mission and related strategy.
- Perceive and understand the system (i.e., the organisation) as a whole that is "producing" a particular state within which the organisation and its subsystems function, and realising that a change in one area of the system will have an immediate effect on the rest of the system. Making sense of what is currently happening by thinking in terms of process which refers to making sense of how results (order, chaos, complexity and paradoxes) are "produced" within the system and its sub-systems.
- Think in terms of the governance: how the integrity of a particular system is maintained in order to ensure the survival of the system.

Given this perspective on the changing work of leadership, the changing nature of leadership will now be explored. The traditional leadership approach stated that to be effective, management should be founded upon a well-defined hierarchy of authority (Naranyanan & Nath, 1993). This is in sharp contrast to Veldsman (2002) who argued that leadership is in essence the act of creating shared possible futures and realising a shared, specific chosen future with, through and for people. The nature of leadership in itself is "everyone's business", implying that it is not reserved for a selective few (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Veldsman, 2002). The future forms the context from which

leadership derives justification and meaning for why and how to act. The nature of leadership forms a paradox itself: from the one perspective it is to focus on the future (bringing change), whilst maintaining the current from another perspective (Coetzee, 2004; Prescott, 1993; Koestenbaum, 2002);

Verwey and Verwey (2003, p. 88) stated that the nature of leadership can be viewed as an inside-out approach. They argue that leadership is based in the first instance on personal, holistic "wellness". In turn this wellness needs to be complemented by "caring". Caring is at the heart of leadership. Followers want to be treated with dignity, respect and compassion. Followers are seeking honesty and acknowledgement for not only their contributions to the workplace, but also for their own uniqueness (Coetzee, 2004; Bracey, Rosenblum, Sanford & Trueblood, 1990).

The nature of leadership is therefore about the modelling of worthiness, credibility and substance. In a sense it can be argued that it is required from leadership to "prove their worthiness" to be followed (Coetzee, 2004; Koestenbaum, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Lastly, the nature of leadership is also to create sustainability (Koestenbaum, 2002). Sustainability implies a "time" component. It can therefore be argued that the nature of leadership may change for different time concepts – short, medium and long term.

This brings the question to mind *"What are the competencies of leaders being able to fulfil the work requirements?"* Veldsman (2000) suggested that leadership needs to suit the necessary levels of difficulty (or complexity). Research points to the possibility of different leadership requirements by level. The embodiment of such work was the model developed by Katz & Kahn (1966, 1980). Jaques (1976, 1989) built on many of the ideas set forth in Katz and Kahn (ibid) and developed the stratified-systems theory (SST).

Essentially, SST suggests a general model of organisational functioning such that there are increasingly complex critical tasks or requirements at each successive organisational level, and that effective leaders address these tasks. The increasing task complexity is a function of the uncertainties created by the necessity to deal with a more encompassing and turbulent environment as a leader moves up the hierarchy (Jaques 1976, 1989). Jaques (1989) asserted that higher-level leaders themselves must possess higher levels of cognitive complexity to deal with the increasingly more demanding critical tasks as they move up the organisational hierarchy. Stamp (1991) extended the SST and identified seven levels of work complexity, called the Matrix of Work. The Matrix of Work is translated into levels of capability. Stamp (1991) explained that as capability extends to engage with wider contexts, earlier levels are not left behind, but built in as part of the next level.

The implications of the views are that leadership competencies as well as the typical behavioural evidence of the presence or absence of competence can be articulated across the different levels of complexity. Nkomo and Kriek (2004) were of the opinion that sustainable leadership requires more than selecting and developing a critical mass of individuals with a set set of competencies. Therefore the next section will now systematically explore the concept of competence as well as defining a meta-competence model for the future world of work.

Meta-competence model

Boak and Coolican (2001) noted that leadership competencies are based on behavioural indicators, but can also be expressed in terms of skills or characteristics. Of importance for this study is that recent leadership competence models (Boak & Coolican, 2001) focus on "meta-competencies" which refer to abilities that underpin or allow for the development of competencies, as well as characteristics that individuals will need in addition to competencies such as motivation and key cognitive abilities. Veldsman (2002, p. 80) links competence to a point in time and defines competence as: "*the ability and willingness to perform at the appropriate level as demanded by the context at a certain point in time, but also across time*".

It can be concluded that competences are based on behavioural indicators, best described as a set of skills, characteristics and/or attributes that can be either functional or inter-functional in nature, as demanded by the context at a certain point in time, but also across time.

By integrating Stratified Systems Theory, the Levels of Work Theory (level 1-5) with the work and nature of leadership, a conceptual framework within which the future leadership competence can be discussed, was developed. Based on this framework, leadership competencies across competence categories and complexity levels, were articulated. A key aspect of this framework is that although a competency spans all the levels of complexity, the definition of such competencies at each of the levels of complexity may indeed be very different. Stated differently, the behavioural evidence of a particular competency may be different at each of the complexity levels.

Having identified the competencies, the next phase involved the detailed definition of the competencies in terms of levels of complexity as well as the typical behavioural evidence of the presence or absence of competence. The competencies identified were further described in terms of the skills, behaviour and attributes associated with Levels III and IV of work complexity. This was further subjected to a process that involved retail business leaders currently operating at Levels III and IV to verify the logic, flow and consistency of the descriptors and this process gave rise to the following research model, which is a listing of the competencies with their definitions (or description) within each of the levels of complexity. Table 1 depicts the proposed meta-competence model.

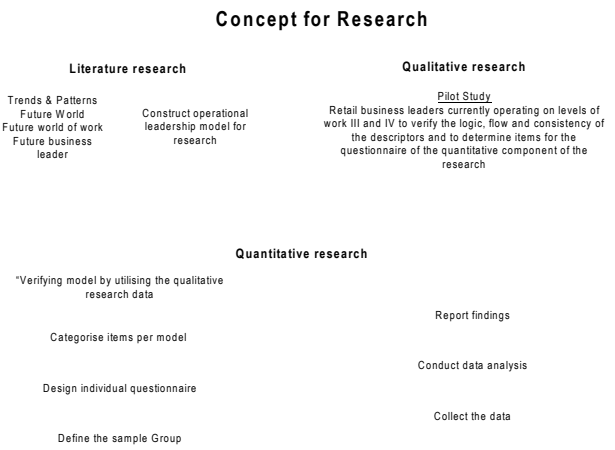

Figure 1: Conceptual approach for research procedure

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Given the literature reviewed above, the research was guided by the following problem statement: to determine whether there is a difference between the current definition of the nature and work of business leaders and the future business leader meta-competences within the South African retail industry. The specific objectives of this study thus were to:

- Develop a leadership meta-competence model for the future business leader; and
- Determine the validity of the meta-competence leadership model within the South African Retail environment.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The three main approaches were considered for this: (1) a quantitative approach; (2) a qualitative approach; and (3) a mixed approach. A mixed approach was adopted, resulting in the research consisting of a two-phase, sequential exploratory project which was characterised as an initial phase of qualitative data collection and analysis which was followed by a phase of quantitative data collection and analysis.

Research approach

The design used for this research is therefore exploratory in nature, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The integration of both methodologies is called triangulation (Leedy, 1993). This integration uses several frames of reference in the analysis of the same data which allows the researcher to test a theory in more than one way so that the theory has a more complete scientific validation.

Research methodology

Pilot study

Phase I of the research was treated as a qualitative pilot study with the specific objective of exploring the thoughts of South African retail business leaders on the competencies needed for the future world of work. This process led to the operational research model. Five retail business leaders from the Furniture and Appliances sector, currently operating on both Level III and IV, were identified through determining their current level of work via their different role descriptors. Level III work is associated with work that mainly encompasses the constructing, connecting and fine-tuning systems to optimal utilisation of resources. Level IV work is concerned with integrating new futures, new services and products including positioning the organisation within the market context.

The pilot group was characterised by the following: the group formed part of the senior management echelon in their different companies; were all male; the average age of the group was 47 years; and with an average of 22 years of experience inside retail.

The following procedure was employed with the pilot group:

- Participants were provided with the proposed meta-competence model based on themes taken from the literature that consisted out of 15 competencies;
- Through a focus group discussion the participants were asked to verify the flow, logic and consistency of the descriptors;
- Responses were immediately captured; and
- The different responses were incorporated into the model and participants were asked to verify the content of the adapted model.

The value of the pilot study was in the identification of another competency namely "strategic thinking", and the clarification of the meaning and applicability of the identified competencies in the current and future world of retail. The pilot study also indicated that the five participants were convinced that the increase in complexity in the world of retail will require different leadership competencies in the future.

Respondents

A convenience sampling approach was followed, as it can be a good source of data in exploratory research. It is a method to test ideas or to gain ideas about a subject of the study. Results of a convenience sample might produce evidence that is so compelling that a more sophisticated sampling procedure is unnecessary. However, the limitation of this non-probability method is that it doesn't indicate how representative the information collected is to the population as a whole and has no controls to ensure precision (Cooper & Schindler, 2002). Respondents were located by the snowball technique. This sampling approach has become popular in recent years in studies where respondents are difficult to identify and are located through referral networks. Individuals are selected who identify others who in turn identify others. The "snowball" gathers individuals as it rolls along (Cooper & Schindler, 2002).

Based on referrals 172 senior managers in the retail industry were targeted as it was argued that the current levels of work complexity will be based on the current hierarchical level of the employee. Questionnaires were distributed in an electronic format and electronically submitted to a central point to protect the identity of the respondent. From the responses given, it was evident that the majority of the 101 respondents: aged between 40 and 49 years; male;have been employed in their current company between 6 and 10 years; have a tertiary qualification; speak English as a home language; indicated a Level III or IV in terms of work complexity; and were working in the Furniture, Appliances and Audio-visual Industry.

Measuring instrument/ methods of data gathering

The pilot study also informed the structure and possible items for the research questionnaire. The pilot group was also used to verify the items/ questions of the actual questionnaire before it was utilised in the quantitative study. The questionnaire consisted out of 41 questions with 3 statements per question. The statements were allocated as follow: one statement referring to Level II work – Quality; one statement referring to Level III work – Good Practice; and one statement referring to Level IV work – Strategic Development.

The questionnaire required of the sample group to firstly rate the 3 statements per question in terms of how important (Important; More Important; Critical) they view them for retail business leaders (working at their current organisational level) in rank order for the current world of work. Secondly, they were required to rate the importance of the same items for retail business leaders for the future world of work in the same manner. Stated differently, respondents were required to rank each competency in terms of their perceived current versus their perceived future importance.

RESULTS

The construction of the questionnaire, where every item in effect is ranked on three aspects (the Levels of Work), means that the assumption for typical reliability analysis (such as that each item score is linearly related to total score for the scale) does not hold true. For this reason, the questionnaire was viewed as essentially two questionnaires, one being the items with a current focus; and the second the items with a future focus respectively.

In order to test the investigate the problem statement that "*There is a difference between the current definition of the nature and work of business leaders and the future business leader meta-competences within the South African retail industry",* the z-test was performed that also give the direction and strength of the significance. Table 1 gives the statistical comparisons of current vs future leadership meta-competencies. The results as reported in Table 1 indicated that retail leaders perceived competencies such as Influencing Others, Learning and Knowledge Networks, Information Processing, Talent Management, Developing High Performing Teams and Self Insight at Level IV to be more critical for the future.

Based on Table 2 the conclusion is that there is a difference in the perceived competencies required for the current and the future world of retail. It was also evident from Table 2 that in most cases competencies associated with Level IV are perceived to become more critical in the future world of retail, with Level II and III playing a less important role.

TABLE 1
META-COMPETENCE MODEL

Work of Leader	Competence Category	Competency	Level of Complexity	
			Level III- Good Practice (1-2 years)	**Level IV - Strategic Development (2-5 years)**
Design and develop the purpose the organisation fulfils as measured by the implementation of its vision, mission and related strategy.	Achieving sustainable business results	Thinking Strategically	Convey the organisational vision. Convey the organisational strategy through constructing, connecting and fine-tuning systems	Is able to integrate different futures in order to design a clear vision for the organisation to ensure its future success. Design and develop the organisational strategy
		Acting Strategically	Through the enablement of people execute the intended organisational strategy. Prepare for external trends and alternative scenarios potentially impacting the business in the medium term	Consistently review, restate and reinforce the intended organisational direction. Prepare for external trends and alternative scenarios potentially impacting the business in the long term.
		Organisational Resilience	Is able to convey a clear understanding of the need to and steps of change and assists employees and colleagues in dealing with change. Manage the paradox of stability and change.	Is able to respond positively to environmental and organisational change(s) and/or business setbacks in directing the organisation through times of uncertainty. Have a paradoxical combination of making harsh, unpopular decisions for the sake of the future sustainability of the business, and assisting employees and colleagues in dealing with change.
		Technical Competence	Able to utilise the knowledge, expertise and skills associated with a technical domain like the retail industry with the purpose of constructing, connecting and fine-tuning systems to optimal utilisation of resources.	Able to utilise the knowledge, expertise and skills associated with a technical domain like the retail industry with the purpose of developing new services and products including the positioning of the organisation within the market context.
		Customer Orientation	Direct energy towards the creation of meaningful solutions for identified customer base. Know the detail of customer needs and how it affects service requirements.	Is sensitive to changing customer requirements and the organisation's capacity to meet such, by actively involving the customer. Can initiate organisational response to customer demands.
		Business Acumen	Clear understanding of the operational business drivers. Develop and implement plans that anticipate business demands. Identify root causes of problems. Design and develop innovative solutions regarding systems and resource utilisation.	Create and exploit business opportunities by positioning the organisation and its products and services in such a way that sustainability of the organisation is ensured. Clear understanding of external factors that could influence the operational business drivers. Identify root causes of problems. Design and develop innovative solutions.
Perceive and understand the organisation as a whole which. Making sense of what is currently happening; by thinking in terms of process which refers to making sense of how results are "produced" within the organisation.	Sense-making and Influence	Learning and Knowledge Networking	Participate in continuous "knowledge networks" that aren't limited to technical and professional topics. Able to share the learning and knowledge with others.	Institute and participate in continuous "knowledge networks" that aren't limited to technical and professional topics. Able to inspire others and share the knowledge and learning with others by teaching stories.
		Taking Action	Put processes and resources in place to make the initiative happen. Consistently deliver what has been agreed to and demonstrates commitment by walking the talk.	Have the determination and commitment to integrate new futures, new services and products including positioning the organisation within the market context. Consistently deliver what has been agreed to and demonstrates commitment by walking the talk.
		Influencing others	Is able to identify the paradigms and needs of various individuals and groups and can adapt own leadership style to these. Able to sell ideas and concepts to people and get them to willingly follow the set direction, without compromising the contributions and growth of the follower.	Create synergistic relationships between individuals, organisations, and the environment. Seek out information which increases understanding of key individuals, their needs and perspectives. Create an environment of openness, trust and understanding.
		Information Processing	Relevant information is gathered, selected and processed in a practical, step-wise manner to identify potential answers which are then evaluated.	Inter-related information is gathered pro-actively from a wide variety of sources/perspectives and processed/applied creatively to compare several "what if" scenarios (both from a holistic and detailed perspective).
		Contextual Competence	Able to handle the complexity of a setting at the level of constructing, connecting and fine-tuning systems to optimal utilisation of resources.	Able to handle the complexity of a setting at the level of the future and future scenarios.
		Talent Management	Attract and retain talent that fits the business requirements. Develop talent by assisting the people in continuous appropriate learning and development. Optimise systems and processes that foster the free expression of ideas, and empowering others to contribute to the organisation.	Attract and retain talent to ensure a future competitive advantage. Align human and other resources, to create an organisational culture that fosters the free expression of ideas, empowering others to contribute to the organisation, and provides meaning and purpose to the job.
		Developing High Performing Teams	Optimise the crested environment in which people are involved, included and have a sense of ownership. Encourage and support team work within own team.	Create an environment in which people are involved, included and have a sense of ownership. Work across organisational boundaries to encourage teamwork.
Think in terms of the governance to secure the integrity of the organisation to ensure the survival of the organisation.	Transcendental	Self-Insight	Understands own strengths and weaknesses in terms of the demands of being a representative of the organisation. Ensure that own capability profile is aligned with the appropriate level and nature of job outputs.	Understand own limitations and potential in terms of a career. Take total responsibility to alignment with a job that leverages own competitive edge with regard to personal capability profile. Transcend self-interest for the good of the group.
		Wisdom	Is able to make decisions in a changing environment by identifying alternatives, imagining the outcomes of these alternatives and deciding on the correct one.	Weigh conflicting information, associating information interactions and identify ranges of possible appropriate alternatives before making a decision. Evaluate risks in the context of the business and develop contingency plans accordingly.
		Integrity	Demonstrate behaviour that is credible, respected by others and reflect the appropriate organisational values. Admit to own mistakes and are prepared to shoulder blame.	Influential in creating the appropriate organisational values. Demonstrate behaviour that is credible, respected by others and reflects the appropriate organisational values.

Table 2
Statistical comparison of current vs future leadership meta-competencies

Note: LI – Least Important; MI – More Important, C- Critical

Competency	Level	Item	Key Word: Item measured	Significance =* (p≤0.05)	Item	Key Word: Item measured	Significance =* (p≤0.05)	Item	Key Word: Item measured	Significance =* (p≤0.05)
Thinking Strategically	Level II - LI	Item 1	Future vision of the organisation	*	Item 2	Communication message	*			
	Level II - MI			*						
	Level II - C						*			
	Level III - LI						*			
	Level III - MI									
	Level III - C						*			
	Level IV - LI			*			*			
	Level IV - MI									
	Level IV - C						*			
Acting Strategically	Level II - LI	Item 3	Main strategy focus area	*	Item 4	Work results				
	Level II - MI			*						
	Level II - C			*						
	Level III - LI									
	Level III - MI						*			
	Level III - C									
	Level IV - LI			*						
	Level IV - MI									
	Level IV - C			*						
Organisational Resilience	Level II - LI	Item 5	Responses to change	*	Item 6	Change process	*	Item 7	Change behaviour	
	Level II - MI			*			*			
	Level II - C			*			*			
	Level III - LI									
	Level III - MI									
	Level III - C						*			
	Level IV - LI			*						
	Level IV - MI			*			*			
	Level- IV						*			
Technical Competence	Level II - LI	Item 8	Competence utilisation		Item 9	Time spent	*	Item 10	Responsibilities	*
	Level II - MI									
	Level II - C						*			
	Level III - LI									*
	Level III - MI									*
	Level III - C			*			*			*
	Level IV - LI						*			*
	Level IV - MI						*			
	Level IV - C			*			*			
Customer Orientation	Level II - LI	Item 11	Customer service	*	Item 12	Customer information		Item 13	Customer orientation	*
	Level II - MI									
	Level II - C			*						*
	Level III - LI									*
	Level III - MI									
	Level III - C									*
	Level IV - LI			*						
	Level IV - MI									
	Level IV - C			*			*			

Business Acumen	Level II - LI	Item 14	Business challenges	*	Item 15	Timeframe until work results is known		Item 16	Area of challenges	*
	Level II - MI									
	Level II - C			*						*
	Level III - LI									
	Level III - MI									
	Level III - C			*						*
	Level IV - LI			*						*
	Level IV - MI									
	Level IV - C			*						*
Learning and Knowledge Networking	Level II - LI	Item 17	Method of learning and development	*	Item 18	Content of learning	*			
	Level II - MI									
	Level II - C			*			*			
	Level III - LI						*			
	Level III - MI									
	Level III - C			*			*			
	Level IV - LI			*			*			
	Level IV - MI			*						
	Level IV - C			*			*			
Taking Action	Level II - LI	Item 19	Problem solving	*	Item 20	Decision making	*	Item 21	Leadership style	*
	Level II - MI			*			*			
	Level II - C			*						*
	Level III - LI									*
	Level III - MI			*			*			
	Level III - C						*			*
	Level IV - LI			*			*			
	Level IV - MI									
	Level IV - C			*			*			
Influencing Others	Level II - LI	Item 22	Method of influence		Item 23	Approach	*	Item 24	Areas of importance	
	Level II - MI									*
	Level II - C						*			
	Level III - LI			*			*			
	Level III - MI						*			
	Level III - C			*			*			*
	Level IV - LI			*			*			
	Level IV - MI			*			*			
	Level IV - C			*			*			

DISCUSSION

The results showed that in most instances even though not always significant there is a perceived difference between the current and future definitions of the nature and work of business leaders, where Level II work behaviour will become less important in the future and Level III and IV work behaviour show increasing importance for the future retail leader. Ultimately, however, the nature and work of the future business leadership requires leadership at all work levels, placing emphasis on the leader as the integrator of corporate systems.

As was shown in the review of literature organisations find themselves between an old and new era of defining the concept work as well as the nature and work of leaders. It is also clear that there is a lot of speculation and uncertainty of what the future may hold. It is important to explore the future in order to make sense of out of the demands of today and the vital decisions made in the present that will shape the future. Despite the perceived difference between the current and future definitions of the nature and work of business leaders, current competence requirements will still be relevant for the future. It can therefore be concluded that there is not a distinct set of competence requirements for the current world of work and another set of competence requirements for the future. What the results clearly indicates is that the level of complexity in the world of business, and specifically the world of retail, is increasing and therefore the future would require of more business leaders to be able to perform work associated with Level III and IV.

The most important finding of this research is that current leaders in the retail industry in South Africa perceive a difference in the leadership competencies required now and in the future. This in itself impacts on leadership selection and development in the South African retail industry. It is therefore suggested that organisations in their leadership selection and development approaches:

- Focus on aspects such as values, integrity and honesty towards all;
- Move from the traditional focus on leadership towards a focus that is more orientated towards leadership of organisations and not the leader per se; and
- Take into account emerging forms of distributed leadership

– more effective leadership at more levels - to assure organisational innovation and change at all organisational levels.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to conduct explorations into the future world of work as well as the competences required by leaders in the future world. The results of the exploratory research were used to create preliminary concepts and therefore indicate certain limitations in terms of the validation of the meta-competence model.

The main limitations of employing this approach in this study were:

- During the quantitative pilot study the initial validation of the meta-competence model only business leaders from the Furniture and Appliances retail sector formed part of the pilot group. This clearly did not cater for the impact that other variables like age, gender and the type of retail industry might have had on the results;
- Making use of a convenience sample. Although a convenience sample is a good source of preliminary data it is not necessarily representative of the whole population. The validation was further limited by only targeting senior management in the 16 different retail companies. This implied an age and gender limitation as most senior managers were male and in the age categories of 40-49 years. The convenience sample was further too small to cater for other differences like education, experience and type of retail industry;
- It was further assumed that a person's current level of work complexity would be based on the current hierarchal level of the employee, which is not necessarily the case; and
- The general problem of mono-operation bias occurred as a limited number of questions (namely, 41) in the questionnaire were used to determine the behavioural subtleties of competencies at different levels of work complexity.

Based on these limitations it is suggested that future research assessing the perceptions of the nature and work of future business leaders should focus on the broadening the pool of behavioural manifestation of competencies at different levels of work complexity. The following suggestions are made that may assist in improving the research methodology: better differentiation between the different levels of work (Level II to IV); larger sample size with better representation at the different levels of work; and to use an instrument like the Career Path Appreciation (CPA) of Stamp (1991) to determine an individual's current and potential level of work complexity;

In terms of future research it is also suggested that a longitudinal study is conducted to research development trends over the life span of an individual and/or an organisation. This could lead to a better understanding of individuals as they move through the different levels of work during their career as well the requirements of organisations when an "advance" level becomes relevant due the increase in complexity that needs to be catered for.

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