

The Conceptual Review of Managerial Competency Frameworks in Contemporary Management Education

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Abstract

The dynamic and volatile global business environment has necessitated a critical evolution in the competencies required of effective managers, compelling management education to continually adapt its frameworks. This conceptual review paper aims to synthesize and analyze the dominant managerial competency frameworks that underpin contemporary management education programs. Employing a qualitative, desk-based research methodology, this study examines scholarly literature to trace the theoretical underpinnings, core components, and pedagogical implications of these frameworks. The analysis reveals a pronounced shift from static, functionalist models towards more dynamic, integrative, and context-sensitive constructs that emphasize metacognitive, ethical, and adaptive capabilities. Key debates center on the balance between universal versus contingent competencies, the integration of sustainability and digital agility, and the alignment of educational outcomes with rapidly changing industry demands. The paper concludes by proposing a synthesized, holistic framework and outlining critical avenues for future research to bridge persistent gaps between theoretical constructs, pedagogical delivery, and practical application in complex organizational settings.

Keywords: managerial competencies, competency frameworks, management education, leadership development, conceptual review

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of global business is characterized by unprecedented volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), driven by technological disruption, socio-political shifts, and evolving stakeholder expectations (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). In this context, the role of the manager has transcended traditional boundaries of planning, organizing, and controlling, demanding a more sophisticated and agile skill set. Consequently, the core mandate of management education institutions worldwide is under intense scrutiny to produce graduates capable of navigating this turbulent terrain. The foundational tools for defining, developing, and assessing these necessary capabilities are managerial competency frameworks, which serve as blueprints for curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, and learning assessment (Boyatzis, 2008).

Historically, managerial competencies were often derived from functional, Tayloristic principles, focusing on discrete technical skills and knowledge applicable to stable industrial environments. The seminal work of Robert Katz (1974) on conceptual, human, and technical skills provided an early tripartite model that influenced generations of

business programs. However, the late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed a paradigm shift towards more holistic and behaviorally-anchored models. Scholars like Richard Boyatzis (1982) in *The Competent Manager* pioneered a research-based approach, defining competency as an underlying characteristic causally related to effective performance. This laid the groundwork for frameworks that integrate motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skills.

The evolution continued with the recognition of emotional intelligence as a critical managerial competency, popularized by Goleman (1998), who argued that emotional competencies often outweigh purely cognitive abilities in determining leadership success. Simultaneously, the rise of globalization necessitated the inclusion of cross-cultural competencies and ethical decision-making into the managerial repertoire (Javidan & Walker, 2013). More recently, the digital revolution has spurred the discourse on digital literacy, data analytics proficiency, and managing virtual teams as essential components of a modern competency framework (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Despite this evolution, contemporary management education faces a significant challenge: the potential lag between the rapid change in business realities and the slower pace of academic curriculum renewal. Many existing frameworks, while theoretically robust, are critiqued for being overly generic, decontextualized, or inadequately addressing the "soft" yet critical skills of resilience, systems thinking, and sustainability mindset (Mintzberg, 2004). Furthermore, there is ongoing debate regarding the universality of competencies across cultures and industries versus the need for contingent, context-specific models.

The pedagogical translation of these frameworks also presents a dilemma. Traditional lecture-based methods may be insufficient for developing complex behavioral competencies like empathy, ethical judgment, or innovative thinking. This has led to calls for more experiential, reflective, and practice-based learning approaches, such as action learning, simulations, and coaching, which are better suited to competency development (Raelin, 2009). The effectiveness of these pedagogical interventions in reliably cultivating the competencies outlined in frameworks remains a key area of inquiry.

To bridge the theory-practice gap, there is a growing emphasis on co-creation and strong partnerships with industry. Leading business schools are increasingly engaging corporate leaders to validate and inform their competency models, ensuring relevance and applicability (Datar, Garvin, & Cullen, 2010). This collaboration seeks to align academic pursuits with the concrete talent needs of organizations, making management education a more responsive partner in human capital development. However, the mechanisms for sustaining and leveraging these partnerships effectively are still being refined.

In light of these complex dynamics, a comprehensive and critical review of the conceptual foundations of these frameworks is urgently needed. This paper therefore seeks to explore and analyze the construction, application, and critiques of managerial competency frameworks in modern management education.

To guide this inquiry, the following research questions are posed: (1) What are the dominant conceptual models and theoretical underpinnings of managerial competency

frameworks utilized in contemporary management education? (2) How have these frameworks evolved to address emerging challenges such as digital transformation, sustainability, and global complexity? (3) What are the principal critiques and persistent gaps in existing frameworks concerning their pedagogical implementation, contextual relevance, and alignment with future-oriented leadership needs? By addressing these questions, this review aims to provide a synthesized understanding that can inform educators, curriculum designers, and institutional policymakers in their efforts to develop more effective, relevant, and impactful management education programs for the 21st century.

1. Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of managerial competency frameworks is multifaceted, drawing from psychology, organizational behavior, and education. The competency movement itself is rooted in the critique of traditional job analysis and the search for characteristics that differentiate superior from average performers. David McClelland's (1973) influential article, "Testing for Competence Rather Than for 'Intelligence'," challenged the supremacy of IQ tests and advocated for identifying specific competencies that predict job performance. This functionalist perspective views competencies as observable and measurable behaviors that can be developed to enhance organizational effectiveness (Boyatzis, 1982). It provides the bedrock for many HR and educational systems focused on competency-based assessment and development.

A significant stream of literature explores the structure and categorization of competencies. One enduring model is the dichotomy between "hard" and "soft" competencies. Hard competencies refer to technical, functional, and cognitive knowledge (e.g., financial analysis, marketing strategy), while soft competencies encompass interpersonal, intrapersonal, and ethical capabilities (e.g., communication, self-awareness, integrity) (Andrews & Higson, 2008). However, this dichotomy is increasingly seen as artificial, with scholars arguing for integrative models where technical prowess is ineffective without the soft skills to implement and communicate ideas (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). More nuanced typologies have emerged, such as the distinction between threshold competencies (essential for entry) and differentiating competencies (which drive exceptional performance).

The application of competency frameworks in education is heavily influenced by constructivist and experiential learning theories. The work of Kolb (1984) on experiential learning cycles is central, positing that competencies are best developed through concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This aligns with the pedagogical shift from knowledge transmission to competence development, where learning is an active process of meaning-making and skill application. Furthermore, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) underscores the importance of modeling, observation, and social interaction in acquiring complex behavioral competencies, supporting methods like mentoring, coaching, and peer learning in management programs.

Finally, the critical management studies (CMS) perspective offers a substantial critique of mainstream competency frameworks. Scholars from this tradition argue that many frameworks serve as instruments of managerial control, promoting a homogenized, corporate-centric view of effectiveness that may suppress dissent, diversity, and ethical questioning (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992). They question the ideological neutrality of competencies, suggesting they often reinforce neoliberal values and power structures. This critical lens is vital for evaluating the broader societal and ethical implications of the competencies we choose to prioritize and cultivate in future leaders, urging a more reflexive and humanistic approach to framework design (Sowcik et al., 2018).

2. Previous Research

Research into managerial competencies has a rich and evolving history. An early foundational study by Boyatzis (1982) conducted a large-scale empirical investigation to identify competencies correlated with effective management performance across various organizations. He proposed a comprehensive model clustering competencies into goal and action management, leadership, human resource management, and focus on others. This work established a research-driven methodology for competency modeling that moved beyond intuition. Building on this, Goleman (1998) brought emotional intelligence (EI) to the forefront, arguing through his research that EI competencies—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill—were the crucial differentiator in outstanding leadership, a claim supported by subsequent studies linking EI to leadership effectiveness and team performance (Druskat & Wolff, 2001).

In the 2000s, research began to address the global and strategic dimensions of management. Javidan and colleagues (2006), in the GLOBE study, identified culturally-endorsed implicit leadership theories, demonstrating that while some leadership attributes (like integrity) are universally valued, others (like specific styles of decision-making) are culturally contingent. This research critically challenged the assumption of universal competency models and highlighted the need for cultural adaptability. Concurrently, Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) conducted a landmark study of MBA curricula, identifying a set of core competencies—including critical thinking, communication, and a sense of accountability—that programs should deliver, while also critiquing the gap between educational offerings and real-world managerial work.

More recently, inquiry has turned to the demands of the digital age and sustainable development. A study by Volini et al. (2019) from Deloitte emphasized the rise of "superjobs" that combine work and skills from traditional roles, requiring competencies in human-machine collaboration, digital ethics, and continuous learning. Complementing this, research by Ploum et al. (2018) systematically reviewed literature on competencies for sustainable entrepreneurship, identifying systems thinking, normative competence, and strategic action competence as key pillars, arguing for their integration into mainstream management education to address grand societal challenges.

Despite this substantial body of work, identifiable gaps persist. First, there is a conceptual-integration gap. While research has proliferated on discrete competency domains (digital, emotional, cultural, sustainable), there is a lack of synthesized frameworks that cohesively integrate these diverse and sometimes competing demands into a coherent whole for curriculum design. Second, an implementation-measurement gap exists. Extensive research defines "what" competencies are needed, but less critically examines "how" they are most effectively cultivated through pedagogy and reliably assessed beyond self-report surveys. Many frameworks remain as abstract lists without clear developmental pathways. Finally, a temporal-adaptivity gap is evident. Most frameworks are backward-looking or present-focused, derived from current or past successful practices. There is limited conceptual work on developing proactive, anticipatory, and adaptive frameworks that can equip managers for unforeseen future disruptions, focusing more on cultivating a meta-competency of learning and adaptation itself.

3. Theoretical Framework

This conceptual review is grounded in an integrative theoretical perspective that views managerial competency frameworks as dynamic social constructs situated at the intersection of organizational needs, pedagogical theory, and socio-economic context. The primary theoretical anchor is the behavioral-functionalist approach derived from the works of McClelland (1973) and Boyatzis (1982, 2008), which posits that competencies are underlying characteristics causally related to superior performance and can be identified, measured, and developed. This approach provides the foundational logic for why management education seeks to operationalize learning outcomes into specific, observable competencies. It justifies the very endeavor of creating frameworks as tools for enhancing managerial effectiveness.

However, to avoid the limitations of a purely functionalist view, this review incorporates the lens of experiential and social learning theories (Kolb, 1984; Bandura, 1977). These theories shift the focus from a static inventory of competencies to the process of competence development. They argue that frameworks must be pedagogically actionable, emphasizing learning through experience, reflection, and social interaction. A competency framework that cannot be translated into experiential learning activities (e.g., simulations, team projects, coaching) is of limited utility. Therefore, the theoretical underpinning demands that we evaluate frameworks not only on their content comprehensiveness but also on their pedagogical coherence and potential for enabling transformative learning.

Furthermore, to address issues of context and power, the review engages with insights from critical management studies (CMS) (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992) and cultural contingency theory (Javidan et al., 2006). The CMS perspective serves as a crucial counter-balance, prompting critical questions: Whose interests do dominant competency frameworks serve? Do they promote conformity over creativity? Are ethical and emancipatory competencies adequately represented? Simultaneously, cultural contingency theory destabilizes the notion of a "one-size-fits-all" model, insisting that the relevance and manifestation of

competencies are shaped by cultural and industry contexts. Thus, the theoretical framework acknowledges that effective competency models must navigate the tension between seeking generalizable principles and respecting necessary contextual adaptations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically a conceptual review methodology. Unlike a systematic review that aims for exhaustive coverage using strict protocol, a conceptual review seeks to provide a critical analysis and synthesis of key concepts, theories, and debates within a field to develop new perspectives or frameworks (Torraco, 2005). This approach is ideally suited to the research objectives, which are to analyze, integrate, and critique the conceptual foundations of competency frameworks rather than to aggregate empirical findings.

The data source for this research is exclusively textual data from published scholarly works. This includes peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and seminal reports from internationally recognized institutions (e.g., World Economic Forum, AACSB) that are directly relevant to managerial competencies and management education. The data collection technique is a structured and iterative process of document analysis. An initial search was conducted in major academic databases (e.g., Google Scholar, Web of Science, EBSCO) using keywords such as "managerial competency framework," "management education," "leadership development," and "future skills." The search was limited to English-language publications from the last three decades, with a focus on high-impact journals and influential texts. This was followed by snowball sampling from the reference lists of key articles.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved: (1) Familiarization with the collected literature; (2) Generating initial codes related to framework origins, components, evolution, and critiques; (3) Searching for themes by collating codes into potential thematic areas (e.g., "The Shift from Hard to Integrative Skills," "The Pedagogical Translation Gap"); (4) Reviewing and refining themes to ensure they form a coherent pattern relative to the research questions; and (5) Defining and naming the final thematic constructs that structure the findings and discussion. Conclusion drawing involved synthesizing these themes to construct a nuanced argument that addresses the research questions, identifies overarching conceptual gaps, and proposes directions for future theoretical and practical development in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The conceptual analysis of the literature reveals a rich and contested terrain surrounding managerial competency frameworks in contemporary management education. The findings are not merely a catalog of models but illuminate deeper thematic currents regarding what constitutes effective management, how it should be developed, and for what purpose. The discussion that follows is structured around the three research questions, synthesizing key conceptual evolutions, tensions, and critiques.

This review identifies a movement from reductionist, list-based models towards more dynamic, systemic, and layered conceptualizations of managerial competence. The discourse has transcended simple debates over "hard versus soft" skills to grapple with how to foster integrative mindsets, adaptive capacities, and ethical fortitude. Furthermore, the analysis underscores a persistent and troubling disconnect between the sophistication of proposed frameworks and the pedagogical practices commonly employed to realize them. The following subsections delve into these findings in detail, engaging in dialog with prior research to build a comprehensive conceptual understanding.

1. Dominant Models and Theoretical Underpinnings

The conceptual landscape of managerial competency frameworks is dominated by several influential models, each with distinct theoretical roots. The most pervasive foundation is the behavioral-psychological approach, epitomized by Boyatzis's (1982, 2008) model of emotional and social intelligence competencies. This model, clustering competencies into self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, draws heavily from personality and social psychology. It posits that these competencies are learned capabilities, based on neural circuitry that can be developed through intentional practice, thus offering an optimistic and actionable basis for management education (Boyatzis, 2008). Its widespread adoption in business schools is due to its empirical grounding and direct applicability to leadership development programs.

A second dominant strand is the functional-strategic approach, often aligned with traditional business school disciplines. Frameworks like the AACSB's accreditation standards, while encompassing ethics and communication, heavily emphasize competencies in core functional areas: accounting, finance, marketing, operations, and strategy (Datar et al., 2010). The theoretical underpinning here is derived from industrial organization economics and strategic management, viewing the manager as a rational decision-maker optimizing organizational performance. This approach ensures technical rigor but has been critiqued for producing siloed thinking and undervaluing the integrative and political skills required to implement strategies in real organizations (Mintzberg, 2004).

A more recent but rapidly gaining influence is the consciousness-based or values-driven approach. This perspective, informed by positive organizational scholarship and authentic leadership theory, frames competencies around purpose, ethics, and sustainability. For instance, the "UN Principles for Responsible Management Education" (PRME) advocate for frameworks that develop competencies for responsible leadership, including systems thinking, intercultural ethics, and long-term value creation (Laasch & Conaway, 2015). The theoretical shift here is from a purely instrumental view of competencies (as means to profit) to a more normative one, where competencies are directed towards creating sustainable value for a broad range of stakeholders.

Despite their differences, these models increasingly exhibit theoretical convergence towards integrative complexity. The most contemporary frameworks attempt to bridge psychology, strategy, and ethics. For example, the "Handbook of Competencies" by Cardy and Selvarajan (2006) presents a multi-

level model that links individual traits and skills to team and organizational outcomes, acknowledging the nested systems in which managers operate. This reflects a theoretical absorption of systems theory, recognizing that a manager's effectiveness is contingent on aligning personal capabilities with team dynamics and organizational context, a point underscored by Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) in their work on leadership for organizational adaptability.

However, a critical analysis reveals a theoretical tension between the quest for universality and the acknowledgment of contingency. The behavioral models of Boyatzis and Goleman often imply a degree of universality, suggesting emotional intelligence is always beneficial. In contrast, research from the GLOBE study (Javidan et al., 2006) robustly demonstrates cultural contingency, showing that specific leadership behaviors deemed competent in one culture (e.g., direct confrontation) may be ineffective in another. This creates a fundamental challenge for globalized management education: should frameworks be standardized for parity, or localized for relevance? Most current models pay lip service to context but remain predominantly Western-centric in their underlying values and behavioral prescriptions.

The theoretical underpinnings also shape pedagogical assumptions. The behavioral model lends itself to assessment-center techniques, 360-degree feedback, and coaching. The functional model aligns with case studies and lectures. The values-driven model calls for service learning, ethical dilemmas, and critical reflection. An unresolved theoretical question is whether these pedagogical streams are complementary or contradictory when combined within a single program. The lack of a unifying "theory of competency development" that effectively integrates these diverse learning mechanisms is a significant gap in the conceptual foundation.

Furthermore, the influence of critical management studies provides a crucial theoretical counterpoint that is often marginalized in mainstream frameworks. This lens, drawing from Foucault and other critical theorists, views competency frameworks not as neutral tools but as disciplinary technologies that shape managerial subjectivity towards neoliberal ideals of self-management, entrepreneurship, and perpetual improvement (Costea, Crump, & Amiridis, 2008). From this view, the relentless focus on developing "agility" or "resilience" can be seen as downloading systemic risks and uncertainties onto the individual manager. This critique challenges educators to engage reflexively with the ideological content of the competencies they teach.

Finally, the theoretical evolution points towards the concept of meta-competencies—competencies for learning, adapting, and managing oneself in the face of novelty. Scholars like Helfat and Peteraf (2015) in the strategy field discuss "managerial cognitive capabilities," while others refer to "adaptive leadership" or "learning agility" (DeRue, Ashford, & Myers, 2012). The theoretical shift here is profound: from defining a fixed set of capabilities for a known world, to developing the higher-order capacity to acquire and apply new capabilities in an unknown future. This represents the frontier of theoretical development in competency framework design, moving from a content-centric to a process-

centric paradigm, a theme that directly addresses the third research question on future-oriented needs.

2. Evolution to Address Emerging Challenges

The evolution of competency frameworks is a direct response to seismic shifts in the business environment, most notably digital transformation, the sustainability imperative, and increased global complexity. The response to digitalization has moved beyond simple "IT literacy" to encompass a suite of sophisticated digital competencies. Early frameworks might have listed "computer skills," but contemporary models, such as those discussed by Bughin, Hazan, and Lund (2018), emphasize digital mindset, data-driven decision-making, and cybersecurity awareness. Crucially, the focus is not just on using technology, but on leading in a digital context, which includes competencies for managing hybrid/virtual teams, fostering digital culture, and making ethical judgments about AI and data privacy (Kane, Phillips, Copulsky, & Andrus, 2019). This evolution reflects an integration of technical knowledge with strategic and ethical leadership domains.

Regarding sustainability and grand societal challenges, the evolution has been from peripheral "corporate social responsibility" modules to central, integrated competency sets. The work of Wiek, Withycombe, and Redman (2011) on sustainability competencies for problem-solving is highly influential, identifying systems thinking, anticipatory, normative, strategic, and interpersonal competence as core. In management education, this translates to frameworks demanding managers who can evaluate triple-bottom-line impacts, engage with diverse stakeholders (including communities and NGOs), and innovate for circular economies. This represents a significant expansion of the manager's accountability horizon, from shareholders to a broad spectrum of stakeholders and future generations (Laasch & Conaway, 2015).

The challenge of global complexity and VUCA has driven frameworks to prioritize adaptive and cognitive capacities. While traditional models valued strategic planning based on predictable forecasts, new frameworks emphasize cognitive agility—the ability to reframe problems, tolerate ambiguity, and integrate contradictory information (DeRue et al., 2012). Competencies like resilience, mental flexibility, and situational awareness have gained prominence. This evolution is supported by neuroscience and cognitive psychology, understanding that effective performance under volatility requires not just skills but also the mental and emotional regulation to manage stress and uncertainty (Yates, 2020). Management education is thus incorporating mindfulness, scenario planning, and design thinking to cultivate these capacities.

However, this evolutionary process is often additive rather than transformative. A common critique is that new competencies are simply appended to old lists, creating bloated, overwhelming frameworks that are impossible to fully address within constrained curriculum timelines. As Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen (2019) argue in their research on innovative leaders, the key may not be more competencies, but a different foundational mindset—one of innovative intelligence characterized by questioning, observing, networking, and

experimenting. This suggests evolution should involve pruning obsolete competencies and re-framing core ones around new mental models, a process that many institutional frameworks, bound by accreditation and tradition, find difficult.

The integration of these new challenges also exposes a pedagogical lag. While frameworks now mention "systems thinking" or "digital ethics," the dominant teaching methods—lectures and standard case studies—are poorly suited to developing them. Developing systems thinking requires immersive simulations or real-world complex project work. Cultivating digital ethics demands deep engagement with emergent, real-time dilemmas, not historical cases. Therefore, the evolution of framework content must be matched by a concurrent evolution in signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005). Research by Bridges (2020) indicates that experiential, project-based, and technology-enabled learning environments are more effective for these complex competencies, yet their scalable implementation remains a challenge.

Furthermore, the evolution raises questions of depth versus breadth. Can a two-year MBA program realistically develop high proficiency in advanced data analytics, cross-cultural negotiation, sustainable supply chain design, and resilient leadership? There is a risk of producing "jack-of-all-trades, master of none" graduates. This tension points to a potential need for more specialized, track-based competency frameworks within general management education, or a focus on cultivating the meta-competency of learning mentioned earlier, enabling graduates to deeply specialize in areas relevant to their context as needed. The framework, in this view, becomes a compass for lifelong learning rather than a checklist for a degree.

The role of industry partnerships in this evolution is critical and twofold. First, companies are laboratories for emerging competency needs, providing real-time data on skill gaps. Collaborative research between academics and practitioners, as seen in reports by the World Economic Forum (2020) or McKinsey, helps ground frameworks in reality. Second, corporations are essential partners in providing the experiential learning venues—internships, live projects, apprenticeships—necessary to develop these evolved competencies. Thus, the framework's evolution is not an academic exercise but a co-evolutionary process driven by the changing nature of work itself.

Finally, this evolutionary trajectory highlights a shift from competency as possession to competency as process. The older view implied that once a competency (e.g., strategic planning) was acquired, it was a stable possession. The new environment suggests competencies are dynamic; they must be constantly updated, reconfigured, and applied in novel combinations. This aligns with the dynamic capabilities view from strategic management (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997), applied at the individual level. The most advanced frameworks are beginning to reflect this by emphasizing learning processes, feedback-seeking behavior, and peer coaching networks as core managerial competencies for the 21st century.

3. Principal Critiques and Persistent Gaps

A critical analysis of contemporary competency frameworks reveals several enduring and interrelated critiques that point to significant conceptual and practical gaps. The most prominent is the theory-practice or relevance gap. Scholars like Mintzberg (2004) have long argued that formal frameworks, often developed in the "ivory tower," are detached from the messy, political, and intuitive reality of managerial work—what he terms "managing quietly." Managers often rely on tacit knowledge, heuristics, and interpersonal intuition that are poorly captured by sanitized competency lists derived from surveys or idealized models of rational decision-making. This gap renders frameworks potentially irrelevant to practicing managers who perceive them as academic abstractions.

Closely linked is the pedagogical implementation gap. Even when a framework is conceptually sound, the translation into curriculum and assessment is fraught with difficulty. As Raelin (2009) notes, many competencies, particularly those related to character or judgment, are not easily taught through instruction but must be cultivated through reflective practice. Yet, assessment often defaults to quantifiable, easily graded metrics, favoring knowledge recall over behavioral change. There is a lack of robust, validated assessment tools for complex competencies like ethical leadership or systems thinking, leading to a disconnect between what frameworks claim to develop and what is actually measured and certified.

The contextualization gap remains a profound challenge. The push for global rankings and standardized accreditation (e.g., AACSB, EQUIS) encourages business schools to adopt similar, homogenized competency models. However, this can erase local cultural, economic, and institutional nuances. A framework effective for developing managers in a Scandinavian cooperative model may not suit an emerging-market family business context. Research by Amann and Stachowicz-Stanusch (2013) on integrity competencies across cultures shows significant variation in interpretation and application. The critique is that universal frameworks can be culturally imperialistic, failing to develop the contextual intelligence needed to lead in diverse settings.

A more fundamental critique, emanating from critical management studies, is the ideological and power gap. Frameworks are not neutral; they embody specific values and serve particular interests. Costea et al. (2008) argue they are instruments of "human perfection" that extend managerial control into the very subjectivity of the individual, promoting constant self-optimization. Competencies like "change agility" or "resilience" can be seen as downloading the burdens of organizational instability onto employees, pathologizing resistance as a lack of competence. This critique urges a reflexive examination of whether frameworks encourage conformity and uncritical adoption of corporate agendas over ethical resistance, moral courage, and the competence to challenge unjust systems.

Looking forward, the future-orientation gap is particularly acute. Most frameworks are inherently backward-looking, codifying competencies that have

led to success in the recent past. In an era of disruption, this is a recipe for obsolescence. Ives (2019) points out the difficulty of educating for "unknown unknowns." The gap lies in the lack of frameworks that prioritize anticipatory competence—the ability to scan weak signals, imagine alternative futures, and probe systems through experimentation. While scenarios and foresight are discussed, they are rarely central pillars of core managerial competency models, which remain anchored in executing against known strategies.

Furthermore, there is an integration and prioritization gap. As frameworks expand to include digital, sustainable, global, and emotional competencies, they become unwieldy "Christmas trees" decorated with every desirable attribute. This lack of strategic prioritization overwhelms both educators and learners. The crucial task of defining a parsimonious set of core, threshold, and differentiating competencies specific to a program's mission is often neglected. The work of Tett, Guterman, Bleier, and Murphy (2000) on competency dimensionality suggests that more is not always better; understanding the interactive and compensatory relationships between competencies is key, a level of sophistication most frameworks lack.

Finally, the individual-collective competency gap is a significant oversight. Management education frameworks overwhelmingly focus on developing the individual manager. However, in today's networked, team-based organizations, critical work is often done collectively. The competence of a team or an organization as a whole is more than the sum of individual manager competencies. Frameworks seldom address how to develop collective leadership capacity, team psychological safety, or networked intelligence (Edmondson, 2019). This individualistic bias limits the ability of frameworks to prepare managers for fostering collaborative ecosystems and leading through influence rather than authority.

In synthesis, these critiques highlight that the primary gaps are not about identifying new competency content, but about contextualizing, integrating, implementing, and critically evaluating that content. The next generation of frameworks must move from being static, universal, and individualistic lists towards being dynamic, contextual, and relational guides for developmental learning. They must be coupled with innovative pedagogies and assessments, and be subjected to ongoing critical scrutiny regarding their purposes and consequences. Addressing these gaps is the paramount challenge for the relevance and impact of management education in the coming decades.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual review has synthesized and critically analyzed the scholarly discourse on managerial competency frameworks within contemporary management education. It has traversed the theoretical foundations, evolutionary trajectories, and prevailing critiques to construct a nuanced understanding of how we define, develop, and deliberate on the capabilities of future managers. The analysis confirms that these frameworks are indispensable yet imperfect tools, constantly evolving in response to a

turbulent external environment while grappling with internal tensions between theory and practice, universality and context, and content and pedagogy.

In response to the first research question, the review concludes that the dominant models are anchored in behavioral-psychological, functional-strategic, and increasingly, values-driven theoretical approaches. However, the most progressive frameworks are moving towards integrative complexity, blending these streams while wrestling with the tension between universalist claims and contingent realities. The theoretical underpinnings are shifting from a static view of competency as a personal possession to a more dynamic view that incorporates systems thinking and acknowledges the influence of critical perspectives on power and ideology within these models.

Regarding the second question on evolution, the review confirms that frameworks have substantively evolved to incorporate digital, sustainable, and adaptive competencies. This evolution, however, is often additive and creates challenges of breadth versus depth. The integration of these new domains necessitates a parallel evolution in management education's signature pedagogies towards more experiential, technology-enabled, and co-creative methods with industry. The ultimate evolution may be a shift from framing competencies as discrete skills to viewing them as manifestations of underlying adaptive and learning mindsets.

Concerning the third question on critiques and gaps, the review identifies several persistent and interlinked gaps: the theory-practice relevance gap, the pedagogical implementation gap, the contextualization gap, the ideological critique gap, and the future-orientation gap. These are not merely shortcomings in current frameworks but represent fundamental conceptual challenges in defining management for an uncertain world. The most significant gap may be the collective one—the failure of most frameworks to adequately address the development of collective leadership and team-based capabilities, remaining overly focused on the heroic individual manager.

Limitations of this review must be acknowledged. As a conceptual review based on published literature, it is subject to publication bias, potentially overlooking innovative but unpublished practices in business schools or corporate academies. The analysis is also limited by its scope to English-language, predominantly Western sources, which may skew the perspective on what is considered "dominant" or "critical." Furthermore, the qualitative thematic analysis, while rigorous, is interpretive; other researchers might identify different thematic emphases from the same body of literature.

Recommendations for future research and practice are threefold. First, researchers should engage in more design science and action research projects that co-create and test new, integrated competency frameworks in live educational settings, measuring their impact on graduate capabilities and career outcomes. Second, there is a need for comparative and indigenous studies that develop and validate competency models from non-Western cultural and institutional perspectives, enriching the global discourse. Finally, for educators and policymakers, the priority should be on developing dynamic curriculum architectures that treat the competency framework not as a fixed blueprint but as a living document, coupled with investment in faculty development for the new pedagogies and assessment methods required to bring these complex competencies to life.

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