

**Applied Management Knowledge:
Theoretical Framework and Results for Managers and Students**

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Applied Management Knowledge: Theoretical Framework and Results for Managers and Students

Applied Management Knowledge (AMK) refers to the capability of managers (or management candidates) to apply their conceptual knowledge of accepted management theories, principles and concepts to properly diagnose and appropriately handle real-world management situations. AMK is a special case of “applied knowledge” where applied knowledge refers to the capability of a member of any particular profession to apply the conceptual knowledge associated with the profession to properly diagnose and appropriately handle the real-world problem situations that are encountered by members of that profession.

Tests designed to measure applied knowledge consist of real-world problem situations. While the testing process needed to measure applied knowledge resembles work sample testing, it is substantially different in that it also involves measuring the individual’s knowledge of the underlying theories, concepts and principles in the various real-world problem situations included in the test, as well as the individual’s success in planning and implementing the actions needed to resolve the problem situations.

The members of a profession who possess the highest applied knowledge are, by definition, those who can solve the full-range of problems encountered, including the more complex problems. Therefore, high applied knowledge represents greater expertise and such people will logically be considered more successful.

On purely logical grounds, if most of the members of a profession can satisfactorily handle all (or most) of the *basic, commonly-occurring real-world problem situations* that are routinely encountered by members of their profession, we would have to conclude that members of the profession are, as a group, *fundamentally competent* (or better). In this same vein, if a member of the profession does not understand and cannot satisfactorily handle the commonly-occurring “nuts and bolts” problem situations that all members of the profession encounter, we would have to conclude that the individual is less than fundamentally competent. In this model, conceptual (or book) knowledge is irrelevant in itself – what matters is whether or not individuals can apply their knowledge to real-world situations to identify the true nature of the problems encountered, then devise and implement actions that are appropriate and likely to maximize outcomes.

Applying conceptual knowledge to real-world problem situations may be viewed as a three-step process:

- (1) Recognition of the relevant theories, principles or concepts that are embedded in the situation and which define the true nature of the problem;
- (2) Formulation of a plan of action that is consistent with the relevant theories, principles or concepts; and
- (3) Implementation of the action plan.

For example, if the lights go out in several rooms of a home, the electrician needs to (1) understand electrical theory and the principles and concepts that are involved in the situation; (2) formulate a plan of action that is consistent with, and therefore responsive to, the relevant theory, principles or concepts; and (3) implement the plan needed to correct the problem (get the lights back on). Importantly, getting the lights back on is not the sole way in which the electrician's applied knowledge should be evaluated. To solve the problem correctly, and avoid taking actions that might get the lights on in the short run but cause a bigger problem, the electrician needs to understand the relevant theory, principles and/or concepts and take the correct actions needed to truly solve the problem.

Using this reasoning, we would not want our electrician to disable a device that trips circuit breakers when the electrical current is too high. Yes, this might get the lights on immediately, but could lead to an electrical fire. Therefore, the measurement of applied knowledge must be based on evaluating the extent to which an individual (1) correctly analyzes the problem, (2) formulates an action plan that is consistent with a correct analysis of the problem and sufficiently comprehensive to address all aspects of the problem, and (3) succeeds in implementing the plan so that the problem is appropriately resolved (which may require skills or other abilities, e.g., skill in using a voltage meter).

The thesis of this paper is that managerial success is principally a function of AMK, not factors that are primarily heritable or relatively immutable such as personality traits, emotional intelligence, or various managerial skills. A manager must first understand the management situations encountered, and secondly, be able to formulate viable action plans before skill in taking actions comes into play. Personality traits or skills cannot account for correctly understanding and appropriately planning the actions needed to resolve problems (steps 1 and 2 in the process). Rather, personality traits and skills only play a role in step 3 of the process (i.e., the manner and/or skill with which needed actions are implemented).

While arguments may be made to the effect that emotional intelligence plays a role in understanding management situations and knowing what to do, there is no logical reason to believe that abstract multiple-choice or self-report measures of emotional intelligence can have validity approaching what can be attained by administering real-world management situations which have no cues (no question stems) to indicate the nature of what is being

measured. In the AMK model, high AMK is evidenced by the capability of managers to thoroughly understand and act upon the full-range of management situations encountered on the job, which include situations that tap the individual's ability to understand interpersonally sensitive situations and respond appropriately. Thus, in this sense, AMK measures what may be viewed as emotional intelligence, but does so in a manner that is job-related, not susceptible to faking by using socially desirable responses, and theoretically sound. *Fundamental competency* as a manager is evidenced by the possession of sufficient AMK to understand and appropriately handle the *relatively simple, commonly-occurring management situations that all managers encounter*.

Baldwin, Pierce, Joines and Farouk (2011) conducted AMK research on 308 students at a major Midwestern university enrolled in an upper-level management course. They used the Managerial Skills Assessment Test (MSAT) to measure AMK. The MSAT is an abbreviated form of the General Management In-Basket (GMIB)(Conoley & Impara, 1995; Joines, 1987; Joines, 1991; Joines, 2011), and consists of eight relatively simple, routine, commonly-occurring management situations that all managers encounter. The MSAT (and GMIB) are scored using the three-part process described above, thus these instruments yield AMK scores. These authors found that course exams correlated significantly with MSAT total scores, but the magnitude of the correlation was in the low-moderate range ($r=.25$), thus course exams accounted for only about 6% of the variance in AMK scores. The correlation of cognitive aptitude with AMK was in the same range ($r=.24$), thus cognitive aptitude explained only a small portion of AMK scores. The Big Five personality characteristics fared even worse, with the range of correlations being .04 (conscientiousness) to .17 (agreeableness). These results, collectively, suggest that AMK is (1) different than conceptual knowledge, and (2) is unexplained by commonly-used predictors of success in management.

The proposition that AMK is the primary determinant of fundamental competency as a manager is a theoretical one, but is logically compelling and consistent with the way in which competency in other occupational areas/professions is typically determined. In judging the competency of members of blue-collar professions such as plumbers or electricians, there is unlikely to be any argument with labeling those members who cannot solve the common problems encountered in the field as less than fundamentally competent. We judge members of white-collar professions in the same manner. If an accountant cannot correctly deal with commonly-encountered accounting issues, we consider the accountant less than fundamentally competent. If a medical doctor (general practitioner) cannot correctly diagnose and treat commonly-encountered illnesses, we consider the doctor less than fundamentally competent.

With respect to ascertaining *fundamental competency*, the logical proposition is that members of a profession must be able to *apply* their knowledge to the specific types of

commonly-occurring situations that members of the profession routinely encounter. They must be able to correctly diagnose the nature of the problems with which they are confronted, devise appropriate, viable plans for correcting problems, then implement their plans. If members of the profession cannot successfully carry-out these steps for the routine, commonly-encountered problems associated with the profession, they must be considered less than fundamentally competent.

While the reasoning here regarding managers is straightforward, it represents an evolution in how we must view the job of the manager. To date, there have been no educational or other standards established that treat management as a profession. In reality, it's easier to become a manager than a pest control inspector or barber since these professions have specified the types of knowledge and performance requirements that apply to incumbents. In the AMK model for understanding managerial performance, there are right and wrong ways of handling management situations that entail accepted management principles and concepts that should guide the manager's actions. Thus, the AMK model is a prescriptive one that argues for training managers to apply their knowledge appropriately to the real-world management situations that they encounter.

Theoretical Underpinnings of AMK Model

The autocratic style of management, complete with threats and punitive measures to attempt to control and motivate employees, was common in the 1950-1970 era, lost support in the 1980's and 1990's, and was essentially discarded in favor of participative management by the year 2000. While there is no magic date designating the point in time that virtually all organizations embraced participative management principles, it is safe to say that the process was pretty well completed by the year 2000, and certainly by 2005. What organization today takes the view that employees are essentially incompetent, lazy, and in need of close scrutiny, control, and threats in order to get them to perform their jobs? This belief set, which is the basis of autocratic management, is dead. Today's organizations universally subscribe to positive beliefs about employees and strive to create organizational cultures that unleash the capabilities of their employees (i.e., empower employees).

The AMK model incorporates acceptance of participative management, thus is theoretically-driven with respect to those management situations that require managers to distinguish between autocratic vs. participative management principles. In such situations, we may view the underlying participative management principles that are embedded in these situations as the "operative or relevant" principles that should guide the manager's actions; with any appeals for autocratic management that are embedded in these situations to be considered "distractor" information. In this way, it becomes possible to assess whether managers correctly identify and act upon the operative/relevant management principles in such situations. Scoring schemas can be established to rate managers (or management candidates)

on the extent to which they understand and correctly handle these situations.

Without acceptance of the principles and concepts of participative management, there can be no right or wrong way of handling many management situations -- and management remains in the Wild Wild West in which anything goes. Without the theoretical underpinnings of participative management, purely autocratic managers who always exclude others from any input in decision making must be viewed just as favorably as managers who vary their decision-making style to take into account characteristics of the decision-making situation – resulting in including others in situations in which the underlying principles embedded in the situation call for inclusion (i.e., to improve quality or employee motivation and morale). In today’s world, it is no longer acceptable to treat employees in a highly autocratic manner. The practice of management has moved beyond this, and participative management is accepted across both private and non-profit organizations. Thus, management has sufficiently evolved to provide us a framework for evaluating the competency of managers in identifying and acting upon participative management principles and concepts that characterize many situations that managers encounter.

In addition to participative management principles, there has been general acceptance of other management principles and concepts over the past several decades. Management textbooks commonly teach, for example, concepts such as the need to hold personnel accountable, the need to deal effectively with performance problems, how to deal with teamwork problems, etc. The AMK model also incorporates these kinds of principles and concepts, thus while it is always consistent with participative management, it is not solely based on the principles of participative management

In the AMK model, there is no one best leadership or management style that should be applied to all situations. Rather, leadership/management action must be suited to the specific situations that are encountered. More specifically, management action must be based on a correct understanding and response to the accepted management principles and concepts that are embedded in management situations.

The AMK Model as a Basis for Educating Managers to be Fundamentally Competent

The AMK model for assessing the *fundamental competency* of managers presumes that managers should recognize and understand how to deal with the *routine, commonly-occurring problems/situations that all managers encounter*. In other words, in order to be considered fundamentally competent, managers should possess sufficient knowledge – specifically, *Applied Management Knowledge*, to understand and appropriately handle the “nuts and bolts” management situations that all managers encounter on a regular basis. While this assertion may seem straightforward and logically unassailable, it represents a significant change in the way in which managers (and/or students) would be trained and

educated. Rather than simply providing concepts and principles that impart conceptual knowledge, people need to be taught to recognize these principles and concepts in real-world management situations, and respond to them appropriately.

Six Types of Management Situations Related to Fundamental Competency

To assess fundamental competency as a manager in the AMK model, six commonly-occurring types of management situations have been identified (See Table 1). These six types of management situations may be viewed as the core AMK building blocks for fundamental competency. While additional management situations may be relevant and important at higher organizational levels, the six core AMK building blocks apply to all levels of management. The six core AMK areas were not developed based on observation of any particular group of managers, but rather, on reflection about what managers do and the principles and concepts that should guide their actions in the various routine management situations they commonly encounter.

When the AMK of managers (or management candidates) is measured, their understanding and handling each of the six core situations is measured using a five point rating scale that is tailored to each specific situation being assessed. Each point on the rating scale is precisely described. Research on this rating system has produced extremely high inter-rater reliability coefficients ($r=.92$) (Joines, 2011). Very importantly, the rating scales are not relative rating scales as are so often used in interview and assessment center processes. Rather, they are absolute rating scales that have fixed standards. In order to score better than 0, candidates must, in fact, meet the standards established for higher ratings. Thus, there is no forced or suggested distribution of ratings (i.e., all candidates will be scored 0 if that is the appropriate score). Finally, the fixed standards rating scales may be understood in terms of the overall rating framework which is stated in terms of AMK, as shown below:

- 0 = No AMK
- 1 = Partial but less than minimally satisfactory AMK
- 2 = Minimally satisfactory AMK (fundamentally competent)
- 3 = Good AMK
- 4 = Excellent AMK

Thus, for each tailored rating scale, a score of "0" always means that the individual has No AMK, and a "2" always specifies the response that indicates fundamental competence.

Table 1
The Six Core AMK Building Blocks
Used to Assess Fundamental Competency as a Manager

1. **How and when to involve others in decisions:** Knows when to make a unilateral decision, when to obtain input, when to proceed with a consensus decision-making strategy, and understands the consequences of erring when choosing a decision-making strategy.
2. **Evaluating and managing new ideas:** Understands the need to screen ideas and proposed changes and ensures sufficient information is available to do so; avoids premature actions that might lend credibility to an idea or potential change before it has been properly evaluated; guides subordinates to do completed staff work and prepare business cases where appropriate.
3. **Dealing with performance problems:** Ensures that personnel are held accountable for satisfactory or better performance; avoids actions that have the effect of reducing or eliminating personal accountability.
4. **Coaching for accountability, empowerment and success:** Guides personnel to accomplish tasks and objectives that are within their sphere of responsibility; refuses to accept upward delegations; coaches personnel to become more self-sufficient in carrying-out their responsibilities.
5. **Dealing with common teamwork problems:** Intervenes when necessary to reinforce the team concept and use of collaborative methods oriented toward accomplishing organizational goals and objectives; encourages team members to engage in effective planning and teamwork; deals effectively with interpersonal rivalries by taking action to create a participative, team-oriented culture.
6. **Responding to people outside your organization:** Understands the interpersonal and public relations elements of responding to people who are external to the organization, including those who (a) have power over you/your organization, (b) have no power over you/your organization but have status in the community, and (c) have no power or status but who may have a legitimate complaint.

The AMK model shares one important characteristic with the Vroom & Yetton (1973) decision-making model (sometimes referred to as situational leadership). Both models are prescriptive, that is, they prescribe the actions that managers should take based on characteristics of the management situation with which the manager is confronted. Indeed, the AMK model incorporates the work of Vroom & Yetton (see Table 1, *How and when to involve others in decisions*). While researchers may struggle to prove the merits of involving others in appropriate situations, management has moved forward and few experts would question the need for managers to evaluate the characteristics of decision-making situations to determine the best strategy for making the decision (i.e., unilateral, input, or consensus). In this same vein, the AMK model has extended the prescriptive approach to include other commonly-occurring management situations that embed one or more accepted management principles and concepts that should guide the manager's understanding and actions. While research is important and can shed valuable light on many issues, it is important that management move forward where logic and accumulated knowledge can guide the way. Only in this way can management establish standards that lead to the treatment of management as a profession.

Support for the relevance of the management situations used to assess AMK (in the GMIB and MSAT) comes in the form of criterion-related validation studies (Conoley & Impara, 1995; Joines, 1987; Joines, 1991; Joines, 2011), as well as the fact that over 21,000 management candidates (cutting across at all hierarchical levels) have been tested using these management situations, and no candidate has ever claimed any of these management situations is not related to management. In the litigious era of employment testing over the past 25 or so years that the GMIB and MSAT management situations have been used, this fact is highly affirmative of the job-relatedness and relevance to management of the real-world management situations included in these tests.

Developing Test Situations to Measure AMK

While test security concerns for the GMIB and MSAT prevent showing any of the actual test situations, it is important to understand how these situations are constructed. Therefore, a purely illustrative situation is given below.

Prior to the test situations, candidates are given background information about a hypothetical organization, including an organization chart. Each situation takes the form of a memo, email, or letter that has been received. For each test situation, candidates must provide their analysis of the issues they consider important as well as the actions they would take; and in addition, if they would write to anyone, they must prepare their correspondence. In the sample management situation below, the management candidate plays the role of Jan Smith, the Division Manager. Jan receives a memo from a subordinate manager, John Jones.

To: Jan Smith, Division Manager
From: John Jones, Manager Special Projects
Subject: Completion of Disciplinary Report Based on Data from Human Resources

As you will recall, I inherited the Disciplinary Report task when my predecessor left for another position three months ago. Frankly, I'm not experienced in evaluating disciplinary data. Given this, I'm wondering if you might be able to handle this task or parts of it so that I can get back on schedule with more important projects, such as my project to develop a new set of procedures for evaluating quality in our production operations. I realize I'm asking a lot, but I'm just trying to be a good team member and am hoping you feel the same way and can help me out. Importantly, if you could get the needed disciplinary data from our HR Department, that would be a great start because I'm inexperienced in dealing with HR with regard to such issues. If you are able to make some sense of it, then perhaps you can let me know if there are pieces of the project that you want me to handle so that we can get it done in short order, but of course, I think it would be best if you could handle this project or assign it to someone else.

Thanks in advance for your assistance,
John Jones

Evaluating AMK in Candidate Responses

The operative (relevant) management principles and concepts that are embedded in a management situation should be explained in a brief narrative summary to ensure that raters clearly understand them. Afterwards, an AMK rating scale that is tailored to the situation should be developed. The rating scale will range from 0-4. The "2" rating level represents a satisfactory (competent) response and should be developed first. Meaningful gradations below and above this point can then be defined.

While a tailored rating scale for our sample management situation is not provided herein, one may readily be developed based on an understanding of the operative management principles and concepts that are embedded in the situation. It should also be noted that the management situation contains *distractor information* and the rating system would detail the common misinterpretations that are likely to be demonstrated by candidates who have insufficient AMK.

The AMK of University Business School Students and Managers

Table 2 shows AMK results for university business school students and managers combined. The mean score column shows the mean score (ranging from 0-4) on each management situation, with “2” being the score that indicates fundamental competency. The AMK % Score column shows the mean score as a percentage of the possible points, thus a mean score of 2.0 results in an AMK score of 50%. Regarding Management Situation 5 (Common Teamwork Problems), three of the eight MSAT management situations are used to assess this area. For each of the other management situation categories, only one MSAT management situations is used.

It should be noted that scores on all six of the management situations have an AMK score less than 50%. This dismal finding reveals that AMK is sorely lacking across the commonly-occurring management situations that are used to assess fundamental competency.

Table 2
AMK Results for Fundamental Competency

Management Situation	Mean Score ^a (0-4)	AMK % Score (Mean/4)	Standard Deviation	Sample Size ^b (N)
1	1.93	48.25%	1.14	20,963
2	1.33	33.25%	.92	19,997
3	1.54	38.50%	1.23	20,772
4	.77	19.25%	1.01	19,312
5	1.17	29.25%	1.06	18,177
6	1.18	29.50%	1.01	16,462
Total Score	1.28	32.06%	1.06	19,536

^a Items not attempted excluded from analyses

^b Total N = 23,963 (21,319 managers + 2644 students)

Table 3 shows the AMK results by organizational level of candidates using the following classification system:

<u>Organizational Level</u>	<u>Description</u>
0	Students (not yet ready to apply for management jobs)
1	Entry-management candidates
2	Mid-level management candidates
3	Senior-level management candidates
4	Upper-management candidates (Department Head through CEO)

Table 3
AMK Results by Organizational Level of Candidates

Org. Level	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 4	Situation 5	Situation 6	Average N ^a
0	30.75%	24.75%	22.50%	6.00%	24.00%	29.25%	2246
1	43.75%	30.50%	35.00%	17.00%	26.25%	27.75%	4412
2	51.25%	35.50%	42.00%	22.50%	29.83%	29.75%	7944
3	53.25%	35.25%	42.75%	23.00%	31.92%	29.25%	3033
4	59.25%	37.50%	45.50%	23.75%	34.50%	32.25%	1901

^a The average N is used for ease in conveying results. Subjects who failed to attempt items were excluded from these results, hence the average N is based on the number of candidates who attempted each management situation. The unadjusted N was 21,319 managers and 2644 students.

These results reveal a modest tendency for those at higher organizational levels (thus, typically those with more experience) to score higher on the MSAT management situations ($r=.25, p < .001$). For actual management candidates (levels 1-4), it is clear that the differences, in absolute AMK terms, are insubstantial and certainly far less than what most observers would expect. Apparently, experience counts but is not the great teacher that it is usually thought to be. Overall, AMK training is needed for all areas, but with the greatest need evidenced by management situation #4. This particular AMK area taps benign autocratic tendencies, and these were strongly demonstrated, leading to very low AMK scores.

Importantly, it should be noted that there are only three instances (all for management situation #1) in which mean AMK exceeded the level representative of minimal competency. In all other cases, it must be concluded that managers and students are less than fundamentally competent.

Discussion of AMK Results and the AMK Model

While business school students and managers likely have satisfactory conceptual knowledge, it is abundantly clear that both students and managers are lacking in AMK. This finding argues strongly for changing the educational process to teach how management principles and concepts manifest themselves in real-world management situations. This includes how to recognize and act upon accepted management principles and concepts, and how to avoid opting for solutions whose appeal is rooted in what may be termed contra-principles; that is, principles and concepts that have some appeal (with respect to efficiency, team harmony, or some other organizational goal), but which are in direct conflict with the relevant principles and concepts in the situation that should guide the manager's actions.

One notable outcome of low AMK is that both students and managers frequently adopt autocratic action plans in situations in which such action plans are clearly inappropriate (inconsistent with the operative management principles and concepts embedded in these situations). Autocratic management may therefore be explained as a function of low AMK without resort to an explanation based on any particular combination of personality traits or other predominantly inherited characteristics (e.g., emotional intelligence).

Truly professional managers should possess a common understanding of the routine types of problems encountered by all managers. This would lead to relatively consistent ways of dealing with these situations. Thus, for example, managers should have a common understanding of situations involving poor-performing personnel, and should implement action plans that are consistent with one another. If managers in the same organization have radically different and inconsistent ways of dealing with poor-performing personnel, employees will not experience a uniform organizational culture. Rather, management action will be perceived as arbitrary and morale will suffer. This is the norm in the AMK test data; that is, for any given organization that has tested a substantial number of people, there tends to be wide variation in the AMK test scores for each of the management situations in the test.

Clearly, there should not be a variety of contradictory interpretations of these situations combined with widely-varying sets of management actions. The existence of such variation should be taken as strong evidence that, collectively, management in the organization is not operating at a professional level. Where this situation exists across organizations and positions at all levels in the management hierarchy, we may conclude that management is not operating as a profession. Unfortunately, this is what the AMK test data indicate.

What would we think if medical doctors had widely-varying diagnoses and treatment plans for commonly-occurring illnesses? If a patient has a cold, yet the diagnoses of different doctors routinely range from influenza to pneumonia to allergies to a cold, we would conclude there is a problem in the medical profession. We generally expect medical professionals to correctly diagnose and treat commonly-occurring medical situations. Why should we accept anything less from managers? If management is to rise to the level of a profession, our managers need to be able to correctly evaluate commonly-occurring management situations and implement appropriate courses of action (i.e., action plans that are consistent with the operative management principles and concepts). When this is the case, the variation in performance on each of the management situations used to assess fundamental competency will be greatly reduced. In other words, as management becomes a profession, all managers will tend to view the same situations in the same way, and will take similar actions.

While personality traits or specific skills used to undertake needed actions may dramatically affect our judgment of an individual's overall competency (lower it or elevate it), there can be little argument with the assertion that the individual must first understand the problem and know what needs to be done. Correctly diagnosing problems and developing appropriate action plans are essential to the very idea of competency. Thus, these are essential elements of competency that must be present in order to be judged as competent, but to the extent that personality traits and/or skills affect the outcome, our judgments of the individual's overall expertise and fundamental competency must be affected also.

The main point to understand is that fundamental competency cannot be attained merely as a result of personality traits or other heritable characteristics or specific skills. There is simply no substitute for the initially required steps, i.e., correctly understanding the nature of the problem/relevant issues, and knowing what actions are needed. These two steps come first. The manner with which actions are taken is a part of step 3 of the process. It is at this point that personality traits and/or skills may play a role in determining the ultimate success of the actions taken. Again, however, fundamental competency is rooted in understanding the problem and knowing what to do. A flawed understanding and/or action plan cannot be rectified by an interpersonally adept and/or other skilled manner of implementation.

Another example may help illustrate these issues. We all want our own doctor to be empathetic and patient and overtly concerned with our well-being. The question is whether or not it is wise to choose a doctor solely on these grounds. In reality, a medical doctor with a great bedside manner should be judged incompetent if he cannot correctly diagnose and treat commonly-occurring illnesses. This view does not detract from the proposition that a fundamentally competent doctor with a great bedside manner (good personality with empathy) is better than a fundamentally competent doctor with a bedside manner that is

lacking or non-existent. At the same time, everyone should agree that the fundamentally competent doctor with a weak or lacking or non-existent bedside manner is better for patient health than a doctor who cannot apply his knowledge successfully in diagnosing and treating common illnesses.

Finally, leadership theories and research over many decades have focused almost exclusively on personality traits or other inherited characteristics, and in this sense, appear to implicitly embrace the assumption that leaders/managers know what they need to know, hence success must lie elsewhere (i.e., in inherited characteristics). It now appears that this assumption is false. AMK provides a logical explanation for the way in which subordinates perceive their manager. *How* managers act is, in the AMK model, a function of their understanding of the management situations with which they are confronted, thus low AMK may readily account for how subordinates perceive their managers (e.g., open, inclusive, sensitive, participatory, or closed, dogmatic, insensitive, autocratic, etc.). If AMK is indeed the primary mechanism that operationalizes a manager's leadership style and the consequent perceptions of subordinates, then a pattern of autocratic managerial actions may not mean that the manager is or intends to be an autocrat -- rather, the manager may just be suffering from low AMK, a condition which, unlike heritable traits, can be significantly impacted by appropriate training.

In support of this view is a finding obtained by administering a leadership questionnaire to 268 of the university business school students who were subjects in the research cited above. The questionnaire contained three items that asked students to report the extent to which they agreed with statements that represented a strong commitment to participative leadership principles and practices. The mean rating (on a 5 point scale) was 4.15. These results indicated that students typically viewed themselves as the kind of people who were, or who would in the future, be participative managers. And yet, students generally demonstrated very autocratic tendencies in the MSAT (See Table 3, in particular, Situations 1 and 4).

Thus, while the idea that people may be committed to participative management yet behave as autocrats is indeed a novel idea, there is support in the student research for this proposition. It may very well be that this would be a common finding for managers as well. In fact, this is a likely finding given the disappointingly low AMK of managers at all organizational levels.

For these reasons, it is hoped that researchers will take a fresh look at the role of personality traits and other heritable characteristics in relation to AMK. Research in these areas may add value to the prediction of success in management, but should be understood in the context of AMK as the primary determinant of success and fundamental competency.

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