“Exemplarity in management, factors of implementation and process of learning”

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Abstract

Can exemplarity in management be learned? To answer this question, we have utilized a research framework, in cooperation with a leading consulting firm, to focus on one mode of diffusion for best practices, that of management learning. The clarification of management concepts and exemplarity has enabled us to further examine research questions related to the learning process and the factors associated with its implementation. Through this work, we formulate two initial assumptions considering that the learning process of exemplarity is a process of representation changes that emerge from experience.

In this article, we present the methodology and results of a longitudinal study of a group of managers following targeted training principally reflective of experience. These results represent the first of three research phases performed between February 2006 and December 2008. They define an exploratory study primarily based on participant-observer involvement, and is complemented by two series of semi-directive interviews and the collection of written follow-up documents, both before and after training. This design allows us to construct a triangulation within the data analysis. Results were equally validated by examining the perceptions and experiences of the trainer, yielding more enriched analysis.

Considering the theories of social learning, the results highlight that learning is translated by a change in two representations: self-representation, being found in the notion of personal efficacy as discussed by Bandura; and representation of the implementation context. Linked to these representations, there exist, respectively, two types of dissonance: emotional and cognitive. These results define two models, one representing factors of the perceived level of exemplarity implementation, and another, representing learning at four levels.

The study also highlights that the development of capacities linked to reflexivity and autonomy emerge first through the acquisition of practical management skills, in which managers must demonstrate these behaviors in order to accomplish tasks. Accompaniment becomes a fundamental springboard, and is just as appropriate as the exploitation of heuristic situations that impose one form of learning. This consists in learning how to reorient actions originating from experience, while drawing from the lessons of failures.

Keywords: organizational learning, management, exemplarity.
JEL Classification: M53.

Introduction

How are best practices designed? How are they diffused? How do the individuals that utilize these practices put them into action? In order to answer these questions, we lean on a specific social practice, management, and on one of its modes of diffusion in organizations, professional training. Treating the theme of "best practice to be diffused" through the concept of exemplarity, the objective of the research is to identify the factors of implementation[1] while clarifying the learning process.

The initial focus of the study on management learning presents a dual question and concerns as much as the "what to learn", as well as the "how to learn it". The content and initiation of learning rebound as interrelated.

1. Research questions and assumptions

A management literature review yields evidence that managers must adapt, conform and update the standards of organizational behavior. The study is focused on one of the notions – exemplarity – that we have endeavored to clarify in order to define research questions and assumptions concerning learning.

1.1. Management as norms of organizational behavior. Multiple definitions of management arise from the literature. Some only assimilate management of an organization to financial, commercial or administrative activities. A broader approach considers that management consists of seeking to achieve "goals by the means of other people" (Robbins and Judge, 2006, p. 5). A manager can, from this perspective, be responsible for a structure without direct and/or daily interaction with members. On the opposing side, the term "management" is presented as an alternative to that of framing, of which it will represent "a linguistic conquest". This theme emerged between 1985 and 1990, to indicate the mission of ensuring "that others work" in order to achieve the organizational goals (Mispelblom Beyer, 2006, p. 18).

For this research, we propose that managers constitute a community of practices, sharing knowledge, ways of acting and beliefs (Lava and Wenger,

[1] The concept of implementation must be understood at the same time as the acting out process of the exemplary behavior and the appropriation process by the trainees.

1991). For Plane (2003, p. 48), one of the five major contributions of Drucker was to view the company as a group of individual actors and not just as a collection of resources to be optimized. Management arises as a relational exercise, requiring the development of human qualities for the people who exert it (Chanlat, 1990). This becomes true, even when a manager's role is confined to that of framing, or as legitimate spokesman (Bourdieu, 2001), or as strategy and policy implementer. It also exists when the attempts to "professionalize management" are analyzed or viewed as "a handling of symbols" (De Coster et al., 1999, p. 140) intended to revalue its statute and to increase its capacity.

The relevance of this focalization on management's relational dimension is supported by the same nature as to what is to be developed. More than knowledge, it is a question of learning how to interact. Raising the question of the conduits in a given social condition, management is thus learned, as suggested by Mintzberg[1] (1973) as a whole of behaviors to be adopted. In this research, management learning is considered as a mode of diffusion within a social standard: that is, the "right behavior to manage".

1.2. Exemplarity as the content and the process of learning. The notion of exemplarity in management makes it possible to standardize organizational behaviors (the example given), while understanding its mode of diffusion (to give the example), by avoiding the trap of questioning its value. Relevant to the "epistemology of common sense", one may use the formula of Farr (1984, p. 388), in which exemplarity has become one of the current concepts in management sciences (Ballet and De Bry, 2001; Melkonian, 2007).

This premise draws from a common base and raises the issue of tacit practical knowledge, commonly defined as "what one does" in professional situations. It then becomes a question of targeting one aspect, the archetype of managerial behavior. This highlights that the concept of exemplarity goes beyond the example given and cannot be reduced to a simple phenomenon of social reproduction in both its positive and negative attributes. This is reflected in companies where subordinates seem to regard their managers as role models and tend to adopt their way of working without necessarily applying the directives of management (Wimbush, 1999). The importance of learning for exemplarity is, consequently, to make it possible for each manager to become a "reference which is incarnated" within an organization (Melkonian, 2002, p. 353).

Defined as a "model to follow", an exemplary performer shows three facets. First, an ideal-type, that serves as an example; second, an attitude consisting of being the example; and third, a mode of influence offering validation for the example to be followed. If an ideal-type is generally an emblematic figure of perfection, towards which each employee must rise (without being able to reach it) as associated with exemplarity, it will indicate, on the contrary, the implementation of the ideal. Beyond a personal alignment between words and actions, exemplarity thus seems an injunction of practical application of models and values. Exemplarity arises from "incarnated ethics" (Dherse and Minguet, 1998), in the daily act of management. It is also accompanied by the concept of congruence, as discussed by Rogers (1961), in which it becomes a question of converging individual preferences and personhood with all forms of externalization, including nonverbal aspects. Alignment then relates not only to actions, but also to thinking and feeling. What we retain from this research is the relevance to problems for management learning in search of exemplarity, insofar as it relates to and dictates professional control. Managers must demonstrate exemplarity concretely in daily situations, while also essentially representing one of its modes of diffusion.

The problems raised by exemplarity deficiencies in organizations and the development of management learning fall into three aspects: 1) models of exemplarity are not provided to individuals; 2) the development of exemplarity passes through third-party intervention; 3) exemplarity is not confined to the virtues of good management from which it emerges. It is thus necessary to learn exemplarity in order to become a good manager. Consequently, which learning type and structure must be implemented? The original assumption of that research is that the learning process proceeds by imitation of that which proved reliable and reflects the example observed, serving as a form of transmission through experience[2].

To understand the role of experience, our concepts are grounded in research from the MRI-Mental Research Institute (Palo Alto, California), on the interactional and systemic approach. This research proposes two types of reality representations found in two different language forms: digital and analogical language (Bateson, 1972, 1979; Watzlawick et al., 1974; Watzlawick, 1978).

The first corresponds to verbal language and use of induction, logic, factual and analytical skills. The second is defined by the suggestive thought, antici-

[1] Ten roles were identified by Mintzberg (1973) from the study of five managers' practices. The roles were gathered in three categories: interpersonal relations, data processing and decision-making.

[2] For Kant (1963), the experience is a language too.

pation, holistic and conceptual approaches. One proceeds by analogies, metaphors and other forms of artistic communication, or by action-experience. If, as discussed in other bodies of research, the representations or images of the world determine behaviors and attitudes, the theories of the Palo Alto researchers define analogical language, and consequently experience, as the language which carries managerial change.

These research assumptions are that implementation of the learning process for exemplarity is a process of representation change and proceeds by experience. Two research questions result from these assumptions. The first one relates to the impact of management learning and aims at identifying the levers for participating professionals: which are the factors supporting the development of exemplary behavior, through learning, in the organization? The second question relates to learning dynamics and teaching methods: how is it possible to initiate and support a learning process for exemplarity through experience?

2. Methodology

The objective of the study is to first identify and then to model the determinants for putting in place training, as well as the learning process for managerial behavior.

2.1. Research setting. Utilizing research relating to aspects of relational management, we focused on proximity management, suggesting the existence of a "regular interaction and exchange between people, possibly structured by a hierarchical exchange" (Autissier and Wacheux, 2007, p. 107); that is to say, training destined for qualified mid-managers as opposed to directors of organizations.

The training selection criteria studied flow first from the research question: how does one propose content for training in exemplary management and utilize experience as a mode of learning? The objective, from a secondary perspective, was to validate the model and to measure over time the impact of cultural variables. Thus, we sought out organizations largely established on an international level, the organizations providing multiple management profiles as well as a greater number and diversity of trained personnel to support quantitative data processing and international analyses. This process also suggests that the same training module is reproduced in a comparable way and consequently, that the training process was not only explicit but standardized. The training and coaching firm, with which an agreement was signed to conclude this research project, corresponds to these criteria. We will indicate the firm with the denotation "KI".

On an international scale, KI proposes the same training entitled "Exemplarity and Impact", which is conducted in 12 countries. In 2006, this seminar was also dispensed in an inter-company format for 30 groups of 10 participants in France, and 90 groups at the international level. Each training is delivered by experienced facilitators from the "KI University". In this way, each participant benefits from the same documentation and the same resources regardless of the facilitator. The training content is elaborated on the basis of a mixture of "common sense" resulting from professional experience of the KI founders, communication theories and humanistic values. Centred on the implementation of best practices, the seven training days utilize heuristic role-plays. These training days are spaced out, on average, within one month of the participants' return to their job duties in order to allow transposition within professional situations. During each training day, the participants are invited to complete an "Action Sheet", on which they indicate the concrete actions that they will implement within their organization. The following training session commences with an assessment of their practical application and the lesson to be gained.

2.3. General research plan and collection of longitudinal study data. The research project is divided into three phases. The first phase is that of an exploratory nature. Almost completed, it was set to model the learning process and the factors of implementation. The second, aiming at confirmation, will be carried out by another researcher within the framework of a thesis for his Masters of Research, followed by his doctoral dissertation. This second phase concerns the validation of the models' factors associated with the implementation of best practices by the trainees. The third phase represents a deepening of the research through the role played by the individual characteristics of participants in the learning process and the study of the interaction between individual and organizational learning.

In this article, we present the results of the longitudinal study. The data are mainly based on participant observation of an inter-company training group of 10 people of which one of the researchers collected during 2006. This method consisted of "being integrated into the group" as a trainee, while being made to "practically forget being an observer, but remaining an individual". It was necessary to "participate in the activities" while "conforming to the standards of the group" without identifying the researcher with the group (Grawitz, 1984, p. 868). We endeavored to collect a maximum of factual data, such as the actions and remarks of the participants, taking into account our own experience from the training. Written secondary data were collected from

the trainees, most specifically from their "Action Sheets", feedback experience documents, and results of a 360° performance evaluation during their training.

Finally, we performed two series of semi-directed individual interviews, for one hour on average, before the training workshop in March 2006, followed by another interview after the training in November 2006. Based on the open question: "Speak to me about the training from KI", participants related first to the representation of good management before identifying their own possible evolution within it, and secondly, to their expectations of actions developed from the training. After having been transcribed, these interviews were the object of a thematic content categorization following semantic criteria (Bardin, 1977: 118). These three sources in the data collection enabled us to build the triangulation necessary to ensure the validity of the research results (Eisenhardt, 1989). These results were examined in the course of non-directive interviews with the researcher, trainees or trainer.

Concerning the training group, the variety of profiles with respect to age, ranged from 26 to 59 years old, and consisted of four women and six men. The education level varied from the self-taught to higher education graduates, thus opening the prospect for numerous assumptions on the role of individual factors. The organizations proved relatively homogeneous, representing industry or the building sectors, with average to very large structures. If heterogeneity is desired in the exploratory phase as a source of multiple information, its low degree enabled us to consider the whole of trainees, apart from the enquiring trainee working at the university. These trainees were in comparable professional situations and it can be initially considered that the necessity to apply a contextual variable was neutralized in this first phase of research.

3. Results and discussion

The exploratory study led us to solicit the theories of social learning, which aided in the development of the research model. Clarifying the mode of diffusion for management best practices through learning makes it possible to connect the accompaniment of trainees to their perceived level of implementation of exemplary performance. We will approach this concept in the first part of the discussion by clarifying the choice of mediating and moderating variables within the model. The second part of the discussion will deepen the understanding of explanatory variables and will address the question of their measurement, having passed through the analysis of the learning process. Finally, we will conclude with a discussion of an organizational case study.

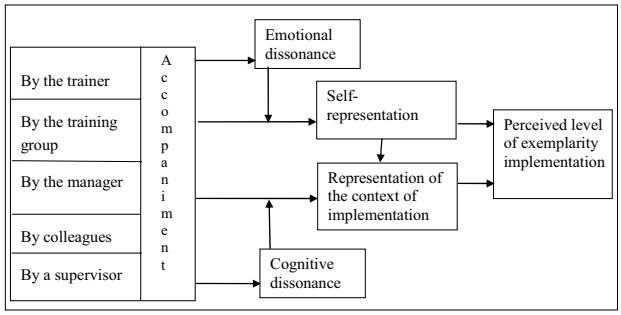


Fig. 1. Research model of factors of implementation

3.1. Representation changes and feeling of self-efficacy? The results have confirmed that on one hand, the process of setting up training for exemplarity is a process involving representation changes. On the other hand, this change seems to relate to the self-representations and the context of actualization, rather than exclusively and directly based on that of best practices.

3.1.1. Towards a moderating variable of cognitive dissonance. Since the first interviews in March 2006, the nine people surveyed have all shown great difficulties in tackling the question of what makes a good manager. Five of the nine experienced a negative perspective, based on appreciation from those managed: *"I do not know... a good manager?... your people immediately feel if you are bad"* (MP).

Associated with "*the confidence that you generate*" (IT) and concerning personal relational qualities, feelings of doubt were generated within the group of trainees concerning their potential for managing effectively: "*I am not certain I have the strength of a manager*" (RS).

The comparison between responses before and after the training emphasizes a clarification and a translation in practices of an initial conception, at times fuzzy, general, more or less tacit, and not through an evolution of content. Thus, the only defined elements initially given were: to mobilize on the objectives of the workshop or service, to manage or alleviate conflicts, to make decisions and to achieve results, found in 2, 4, 2 and 1 people interviewed, respectively. Following training, seven respondents utilized the reference frame of KI by connecting it to concrete professional situations, with a preference for "preparing their talks and meetings", asking, "What do you propose?" and "giving acknowledgement", preferences cited systematically.

During the course of the meetings and according to the managerial behavior concerned, the reaction oscillated between "I knew it without knowing" and "That's what should be done, and I knew it already", being repeated for the group by four and three persons, respectively. One trainee concluded: "*It's not really the content which brings something.*

You discover nothing at the end. It's learning how to do that gives the most important benchmark; for that, it's powerful" (TP, November 2006).

This result seems to be due in part to the fact that the training relates to the "ways of doing" and not on "what to do", leading, for example, trainees to learn "the way to say no", without their indicating "as to what they must say no to". Joining the notion defined by Bandura (1977) of learned behavioral standards, the initial representations of those trained in best management practices and the model transmitted by KI seem to correspond.

Despite everything, for the following research phase, we retained as a moderating variable of the impact of the action of the trainer on the setting for the assimilation of training, a possible cognitive dissonance, as referred to by Festinger (1957). This results in a distortion between the individual standard of the trainees and the KI standard. For example, one of the participants rescheduled several times and then finally cancelled the post-training follow-up, which could be interpreted as a sign of dissension. In addition, certain beliefs expressed in the course of training appeared to us as likely to conflict with the orientations of KI: "*In certain cases if you do not show who is the boss, you are trampled upon*" (RS, July 6, 2006).

Lastly, if the KI standard is similar to that of the trainee nationalities, we can suggest that the individual standards, whatever they may be, will differ as a function of the cultural variable.

3.1.2. Self-representation and representation of the context as mediating variables, and emotional dissonance as a moderating variable. Two representation changes arise from the data analysis. The first relates to self-representation, leaning towards a positive self-evaluation of one's capacity to implement best practices. This was identified twice for the seven questioned trainees, with a variable level of change. The elements of self-representation seem to correspond with the concept of perceived self-efficacy as defined by Bandura (1977, 1997), as an individual's belief in his capacity to organize and carry out the necessary means to produce results desired (Bandura, 1997). Thus, "in order to be motivated to achieve" students must believe that (a) certain means are effective, (b) they possess the means, and (c) they can control the desired outcomes (Bandura, 1999).

The adoption of a self-representation as an effective person abandons the belief that right managerial behavior is "*natural*", that "*it is a question of temperament; you either have it, or you do not*" (RS, March 2006), and leads the trainees to consider that management can be learned.

The variable level of change of this representation appears related to the difficulty of some trainees to manage their emotions in their professional situations: "*It is stronger than me, I get angry and then…the acknowledgement, you forget it*" (I, May 16, 2006).

This realization is at the origin of the introduction of the research model concerning the moderating variable, "emotional dissonance", defined as discordance between the felt emotions and the standards of behavior in a given situation (Hochshild, 1983).

The second representation change relates to the professional situation of the trainees perceived as an unfavorable or favorable context for the use of skills acquired from the training. The general tendency encountered during training and at the time of the second series of interviews corresponds to an abandonment of the "self-confirming" belief, that in one's environment it is impossible to implement management best practices. Often associated to the urgent financial requirements of the organization, it has become apparent through the analysis of participants' remarks the existence of a paradoxical dimension, demonstrating that it is the problem which prevents the solution. This is seen in one trainee's assertion: "*Things would go more quickly if I delegated, but when you have time constraints... it's as though pressure is placed on us to produce good figures..., you do not have time to manage, even with all that we know and should be doing. So I take it all on myself and never make it out*" (RS, April 25, 2006).

For some, this raises a form of fatalism, and for self-representation, its change develops into another belief, which concludes that personal actions determine results (Bandura,1999): "*I tried, giving acknowledgement…I asked him if it was what he really meant... and well, I could not believe it, but that worked... It was perhaps he who was the most astonished*" (CV, September 5, 2006).

As we emphasized in the preceding section, cognitive dissonance seems to arise as a moderating variable of the impact of training on the representation of the implementation context. Thus, the standards concerned can oppose the different conceptions of people at work and their motivation drivers.

"*Congratulate, congratulate! Sure, it's OK to give statements of recognition. Me, I know my people. Then afterwards, to make them work... it's like kids; don't ever tell them too much that it's good, if you want them to work in school*" (ER, June 13, 2006).

We advance the assumption that self-representation has an impact on the contextual representation. Indeed, to regard oneself as the best person for managing tends to modify a perceived context as unfavorable for the application of best practices into a context perceived as difficult but allowing the application. This represents a stimulating challenge for the manager. The contextual representation becomes, thus in the model, a partial mediator on the impact of self-representation on the utilization of skills from the training.

Lastly, that it acts on the cognitive dissonance or the emotional dissonance, the training location and the various forms of accompaniment by a third party led us to consider the existence of an influence on these two variables. Thus the possibility offered to the trainees to verbalize their emotions seems to play a role in reducing the state of tension. This allows a suitable expression within the situation to avoid being overcome by sorrow and anger (Rosenberg, 2005). This verbalization is not formally presented by KI as a practice-type for the managing of one's emotions. It intervenes in an indirect way at the time when one verbalizes their experience.

Some participants, on the contrary, even seem to have integrated that they should control their emotions. The origin of this interpretation is undoubtedly due to the fact that KI's training on "Exemplarity and Impact" primarily treats cognitive and conative levers of behavior. It stresses the necessity of taking into account the internal processes of another person to find and maintain communication, without explicitly approaching the modes of management by the manager of his own emotions.

However, this injunction perceived to conform to a behavioral norm for self-control "neglects the internal process of emotions" (Van Hoorebeke, 2003, p. 13), and consequently can generate a state of emotional dissonance. More concretely, this research unlocks a preliminary recommendation to KI aiming at preventing the transmission of a control standard for internal processes. This can be accomplished by formalizing a standard of acceptance for feelings and externalization by verbalizing emotions relevant to an exemplary manager. Therefore, for example, a technique for verbal expression of emotions, would reinforce the capacity of trainees to manage their state of dissonance, this accompaniment making it possible to raise what is found in the research, as the principal obstacle for actualization of skills derived from training.

3.2. Modelling the learning process and clarification of variables. Analysis of the various levels of learning by KI enabled us to look further into managerial exemplarity by integrating the concept of autonomous reflexivity. This is done while clarifying the modes of associated accompaniment stages, in order to profile the measurement methodology of the model's explanatory variables. This should lead to the implementation of the third research phase as demonstrated in a case study. It aims at specifying, on the one hand, the possible individual factors likely to intervene as a lever for passing from one learning level to another, and on the other hand, it will show the interaction between individual and organizational learning.

3.2.1. Definition of the variable to be explained by the learning process. To identify the learning process implemented from KI management learning, we based the investigation on work of Bateson (1972). We identified four levels of learning, corresponding to one division in two stages of Levels I and II from the five levels categorized by Bateson. These two levels are at the origin of learning by a double loop, as defined by Argyris and Schön (1978). From this work, we borrow the terms "core management values" which structure the individual cognitive charts, and from which learners will elaborate "action strategies" to implement within organizations.

However, we dissociate ourselves from the organizational learning model of Argyris and Schön. This model suggests learning as a simple loop, preceded by correction of the gaps between practices in progress. This notion arises from the results as a necessary step and not an obstacle for achieving learning in a double loop, thus allowing the development of these practices and their adaptation to the environment. We will use data from our participating observation to illustrate this learning process at four levels. One of the KI action strategies, termed "straight to the point", exists on Level 1. It consists of learning how to clearly communicate a decision while sustaining adhesion through six key stages using several KI techniques. These include "how to say yes to the person" or asking the question, "what do you propose?" for the action plan. Once placed within an actual situation, allowing the integration of practice-types as well, we move to Level 2 by transferring it into our professional context.

The difficulty that arises is related to the non-predictive character and reaction of our interlocutor, who became angry. Upon returning from training, we realized that we had poorly applied one of the six stages: for our interlocutor, our explanations had been neither short nor concrete. We should have pressed upon his frame of reference, that of financial concerns and the respect of budgets and deadlines, and not on our frame of reference, that was more centred on the project and people.

Table 1. The four levels of learning by KI

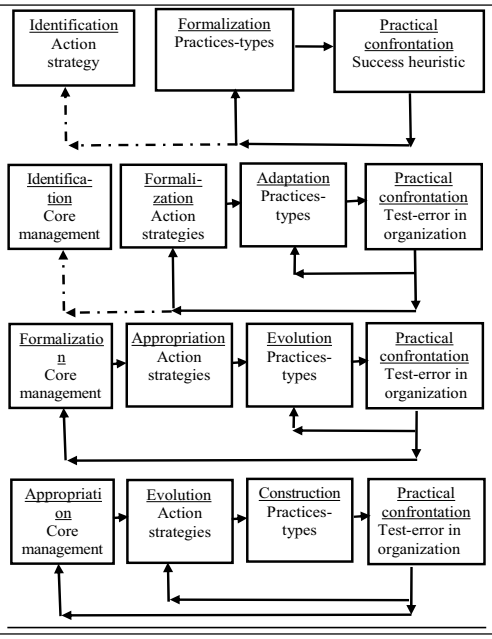
Level of learning		Method of accompaniment	Learning process
Appropriation of practice type	Level 1 Application of a practice type to a context in training situation	by the trainer . verbalization of the experiment . setting in confronting situation . coaching by imitation . written commitment of implementation	
	Level 2 Transfer of the practice type to the professional context	by the trainer and the trainees . verbalization of test-error . discursive confrontation . adjustment of the practices-keys to contexts	
Appropriation of action strategy	Level 3 Innovative actualization from the core management values	by the trainer, the trainees, and if it is possible by a third person in the organization . translation of the errors out of practices-keys	
Appropriation of the core management values	Level 4 Development of an autonomic reflexivity	by a mediator in the organization. . . . translation of the errors out of action strategies	

Fig. 2. Three dimensions of perceived levels of exemplarity implementation

A second attempt enabled us to achieve our goals. Access to Level 3 resulted in the addition of a seventh step in the practice-type. This consisted in recognizing felt emotions caused by the announcement of a shocking decision or even one which opposes another, to indicate to our associate that we took his reactions into account. Level 4 was obtained when, while continuing to dialogue and assume the decisions, we asked in an emergency situation "Can I count on you?", and obtained immediate mobilization of the person concerned.

The learning process roll-out at four levels enables us to better understand the variable in light of the construction of measurement scales. These scales aid in positioning participants along three dimensions: the appropriation level for the KI behavioral standard, the perceived learning capacity, and the effects expected from the behavior.

3.2.2. Accompaniment by a mediator as an explanatory variable. Accompaniment by a mediator arises as a determinant for learning, which for Vygotski (1997) cannot take place without mediation or social interaction. Thus, the results stress that the trainees who found themselves after the seven training sessions at Level 2, with some being able to take on the role of trainer to accompany others to Level 4 (I, ER and RS), tended abandon the implementation of exemplarity, and consequently, that of management best practices: "*The training is quite beautiful. At the beginning, it structures you. It almost explains how you must breathe; but after, you're left to fend for yourself... they do not take into account that management is not easy for everyone*" (ER, November 2006).

The informal follow-up with the training group several months after the training even seems to indicate that the absence of accompaniment can leave some trainees confronted with major difficulties, such as the management of an interpersonal conflict or poor financial results. This may cause them to give up their management activity and to re-orient themselves towards jobs without the responsibility of people management, regardless of their final learning level. The hypothesis, requiring validation through follow-up of trainees in their organization, is that the absence of post-training accompaniment is a factor of "de-learning" at the time of the trainee's return to their organization. This results in the emergence of a personal feeling of inefficiency and a deterioration of self-representation.

These results lead us to make a second recommendation to KI consisting of continuing the accompaniment of trainees at least until they reach Level 4, possibly in the form of supervised practice meetings. This would ensure and even initiate a continuity of accompaniment in the organization. This recommendation demands the development of an evaluation tool which aids in positioning trainees according to their learning level. The tool would be based on the measurement scale concerning the perceived level of actualization of exemplarity.

It may be noted that the principal accompaniment is that which is given by the trainer, being developed primarily around three tools: communication, two forms of confrontation (practical and discursive), and the written (formalized) and concrete action plan. Verbalization disperses through the existence of a language to label management actions. The "KI jargon" previously used becomes suitable for this function. Verbalization also consists of proposing to the participants a place and a moment in which to share their practices and experience. This enables them to orient themselves with respect to their professional contexts and represents a true exercise in reflexivity (Giddens, 1984).

"*To talk about what I do and to listen to others speak was new for me; it gave me a lot... to take a little step back*" (MB, November 2006).

Confrontation modes appear to vary according to the learning level. For Levels 1 and 2, it is first necessary to anchor the feeling of self-efficacy through successful experience. It is these heuristic settings, arranged by the trainer, which will offer a practical form of confrontation, one that is differentiated from a discursive nature purely based on statements. "*I did not manage badly. Deep down inside, it's not so complicated. It's almost enough just to follow memo cards*" (MP, April 25, 2006).

Experience emerges as irreplaceable, solidifying one of the original research assumptions. At the University of KI, the trainers of trainers are requested not to leave apprentice trainers focused on a failure, but rather to encourage them to start again until they succeed. We can only recommend to KI the systematic application of this suggestion, at both the time of manager training sessions and during follow-up for the transfer of best practices within the organization.

A third tool used by KI trainers is the written action plan. To move from good intentions to decision-making and to implementation, the trainees are invited to note on an "individual movement sheet" the concrete actions which they will implement in their organization. A copy is symbolically preserved by the trainer. Understanding that good intentions do not always lead to acts, this formalization seeks to engage the trainees in a structured process of commitment (Joule and Beauvois, 1998). This is done by obtaining an initial behavior from the trainee, and the writing of the decision in order to implement a concrete action, thus allowing them to remain focused on professional situations.

Training group dynamics also play a very important role, as its nature interferes, in particular, with the learning process. "*What is good is that nobody seeks to compete with or beat another person. One can step out and try*" (CV, May 16, 2006).

The introduction of a cooperative climate within the group is found as favorable for the adoption of a learning attitude and the reinforcement of self-efficacy. Several works in social psychology support this conclusion, showing that "competition has harmful effects" on learning (Butera et al., 2006, p. 33). From the perspective of measuring the variable, the hypothesis is that accompaniment also varies according to the cooperative or competitive nature of training group interactional dynamics. It not only consists of an external social support for facing professional difficulties and experience-sharing, but one which allows reflexivity through the discovery of other viewpoints concerning the experience (Dessus and Gentaz, 2006).

Conclusion

A new requirement for managers in search of exemplarity emerges from the first results of the research: reflexivity. Indeed, concerning behavior to acquire and values to be personalized, it is a question of knowing how to evolve one's practices and to develop a capacity to transform experience into know-how (Drucker, 1999). Learning arises on two accounts as a powerful lever of diffusion of exemplarity in management: in the learning of best practices and in the learning to make them advance.

Conditioned by the emergence or the reinforcement of positive self-representation and its application context representation, the success of this double learning cannot be regarded as only relevant to accompaniment by the trainer. The necessity of continuation by the hierarchical person in charge or colleagues arises from the longitudinal study as one of the determinants for actualization of exemplarity.

For Argyris (1964), if an organization seeks to function effectively from the psychological energy which increases (or decreases) according to the psychological success of its members, two organizational conditions are necessary: the organization must provide its members with the opportunities to prove their effectiveness in the pursuit of the objectives; and secondly, the culture in which the individuals and the organization exist must equally value self-esteem and individual competence.

A pre-requisite to the learning of reflexivity involves the recognition of the "right to error" (Carbonnel and Roux, 2006), without which it appears vain to await its implementation within the organization. Melkonian (2002, 2007) more specifically highlights the interaction between managerial exemplarity and organizational exemplarity, through

the need for a "triple alignment of perceived signals of justice, support and example" (2002, p. 356).

Consequently, is it necessary to train all organizational actors so that exemplarity can be installed? If the articulation between individual and organizational learning emerges as the theme of one of the following research phases, we might conclude, through comments by the KI consultants and trainees, that there exist two modes of privileged diffusion concerning "exemplarity and impact". One mode would exist by cascading downwards from the top of the hierarchy; another mode, starting from a key actor, would be presented less in the form of a "champion of exemplary practices", but rather as a coach, a diffuser of reflexivity, who confirms the exemplarity of his colleagues.

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