Assessing Performance in Talent Development Program through Learning Outcomes in Leadership Course

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ABSTRACT

A well-structured talent development program is a key driver of organizational success. Assessing participant performance within such programs is essential, as it directly reflects their effectiveness and impact. One effective method of performance evaluation is through the assessment of learning outcomes. This study examines a talent development program involving 28 participants from a single organization, whose performance was measured based on the learning outcomes of a leadership course. The findings reveal that participants performed above average, successfully achieving the targeted learning outcomes and academic benchmarks. While they demonstrated strong capabilities, continuous development remains essential to ensure long-term success, particularly in evaluating the practical application of their learning beyond the program.

Keywords: Talent, Development, Assessment, Learning Outcome, Performance

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business environment, organizations increasingly adopt diverse strategies to enhance talent development and maintain long-term sustainability. Both in-house training programs and external outsourcing are widely utilized to ensure employees remain competitive and capable of driving organizational success (Noe, 2020; Garavan et al., 2021). In the context of talent development using academic courses, industries have the flexibility to select specific courses to address skill gaps and enhance employee competencies to ensure that their workforce remains competitive in an evolving business landscape (Hussin & Yusoff, 2022).

One of the most commonly chosen courses for talent development initiatives is the leadership course, which is designed to develop managerial leaders equipped with relevant and contemporary knowledge and skills. The course aims to prepare leaders who can sustainably manage organizations while considering diverse stakeholder interests. Additionally, it fosters strategic thinking abilities and leadership qualities essential for driving organizational change and development (Yukl, 2013).

The leadership course adopts a dual perspective in talent management. First, it provides talents with theories, concepts, strategies, and practices that organizations can implement to manage, retain, and engage their talents effectively (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Secondly, it emphasizes that all individuals are leadership talents, encouraging them to take self-initiatives in planning their own professional development (Day et al., 2014). These perspectives are achieved by integrating insights from human resource management (HRM), talent management (TM), and leadership studies. Additionally, to address the complex challenges of global business, the course adopts a multi-disciplinary approach that blends mainstream strategic HRM theories with emerging concepts such as ethical, responsible, and sustainable HRM (De Vos & Dries, 2013).

The course can be delivered through active learning methods, including, lectures (to introduce key leadership theories and concepts), technology tools (for interactive learning and digital assessments), case studies (to analyze real-world leadership challenges, and knowledge-sharing sessions (that provide students with

exposure to both global and local talent management practices). By incorporating these diverse learning approaches, the course ensures that participants not only develop theoretical knowledge but also gain the practical skills and leadership mindset needed to excel in dynamic business environments (Northouse, 2021). This study evaluates the learning outcomes achieved by participants in a talent development program in assessing their performance in leadership course through course learning outcome.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Academic programs in Malaysia are systematically structured with clearly defined program outcomes, ensuring that participants attain specific learning outcomes by the completion of their studies. The Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) 2.0 outlines eleven (11) Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), which serve as the foundation for curriculum development and academic program accreditation (Malaysian Qualifications Agency [MQA], 2019). These PLOs are as follows:

1. Knowledge and Understanding
2. Cognitive Skills
3. Practical Skills
4. Interpersonal Skills
5. Communication Skills
6. Digital Skills
7. Numeracy Skills
8. Leadership, Autonomy, and Responsibility
9. Personal Skills
10. Entrepreneurial Skills
11. Ethics and Professionalism

An effective academic program should integrate all eleven PLOs through a combination of courses designed to develop a well-rounded skill set among students (MQA, 2019). However, in the context of talent development, industries have the flexibility to select specific courses that address skill gaps and enhance employee competencies. One of the most commonly chosen courses is leadership development, which is designed to cultivate managerial leaders equipped with contemporary knowledge and skills relevant to dynamic business environments (Noe, 2020). Leadership courses play a crucial role in preparing individuals to manage organizations sustainably while considering the diverse interests of stakeholders. Furthermore, these courses foster strategic thinking capabilities and leadership qualities essential for driving organizational change and long-term development (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

A leadership course in talent management can be designed to adopt a dual perspective. First, it equips participants with essential theories, concepts, strategies, and best practices that organizations can implement to effectively manage, retain, and engage their talent. Second, the course emphasizes that all individuals possess leadership potential, encouraging proactive self-initiative in planning their professional development. These perspectives are achieved by integrating insights from human resource management (HRM), talent management (TM), and leadership studies. To address the evolving complexities of global business, the course adopts a multidisciplinary approach that blends mainstream strategic HRM theories with emerging concepts such as ethical, responsible, and sustainable HRM. The curriculum is delivered through active learning methods, including lectures, digital tools, case studies, and knowledge-sharing sessions. This approach provides participants with exposure to both global and local talent management practices, fostering a comprehensive understanding of leadership development.

The course is designed to achieve five key learning outcomes (LOs), mapped to the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) 2.0 Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):

- Assess organizational strategies and practices in talent management against relevant indicators. (*PLO1: Knowledge and Understanding*)

- Analyze potential solutions to address talent management challenges using relevant theories and concepts. (*PLO2: Cognitive Skills*)
- Develop self-improvement strategies to enhance leadership character and potential. (*PLO8: Leadership, Autonomy, and Responsibility*)
- Exhibit effective and persuasive communication skills when presenting solutions to talent management issues. (*PLO9: Personal Skills*)
- Demonstrate professionalism, ethical awareness, and accountability in promoting responsible talent management practices. (*PLO11: Ethics and Professionalism*)

By aligning learning outcomes with both theoretical foundations and real-world applications, the course aims to develop well-rounded leaders who can navigate the complexities of talent management in diverse organizational contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design, a widely used approach for measuring learning outcomes and assessing training effectiveness (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research enables systematic data collection and statistical analysis, making it well-suited for evaluating participants' performance in a structured leadership course (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

The study examines 28 participants from a single company who were enrolled in a leadership course as part of their talent development program. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants based on their leadership potential, a method commonly used in training evaluation studies (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Data was collected through assessment scores to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of learning outcomes. Participants' performance was measured through various course assessments, including assignments, case studies, and final evaluations, following the framework outlined in Kirkpatrick's (1994) training evaluation model. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess participants' average performance and determine whether they met the required learning outcomes (Field, 2018). Additionally, an overall course performance analysis was conducted, translating the results into corresponding grades

FINDINGS

This study evaluates the performance of participants in the leadership course, which is designed to enhance leadership competencies within a structured talent development program. A total of 28 participants were assessed based on their course performance, with results categorized according to standard grading classifications: A+, A, A-, B+, B, and B- The findings from Table 1 indicate that 36% (10 talents) achieved an A+ (excellent pass), while 50% of the participants (14 talents) obtained an A (excellent pass). Meanwhile, two talents (7%) received a B+ (good pass), and another two talents (7%) obtained a B (good pass). These results demonstrate a strong overall performance in the course, reflecting the participants' ability to comprehend and apply key leadership concepts.

TABLE I SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE FOR LEADERSHIP COURSE

Grade	A+	A	A-	B+	B
Number of Talents	10	14	0	2	2

In assessing the course learning outcomes, five Learning Outcomes (LOs) were evaluated. The results indicate that LO11 (Ethics and Professionalism) demonstrated the highest performance, with an average achievement of 91%. Other learning outcomes also showed strong results, with LO1 (Knowledge and Understanding) achieving an average of 83%, LO2 (Cognitive Skills) at 76%, LO8 (Leadership, Autonomy, and Responsibility) at 90%, and LO9 (Personal Skills) at 80%. All participants successfully met the minimum Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of 65%, further highlighting the effectiveness of the course in fostering essential

leadership capabilities. Figure 1 illustrates the achievement of the learning outcomes (LO), which can be summarized as follows:

LO1: 100% of talents met the 65% KPI, with an average achievement of 83%.

LO2: 100% of talents met the 65% KPI, with an average achievement of 76%.

LO8: 100% of talents met the 65% KPI, with an average achievement of 90%.

LO9: 100% of talents met the 65% KPI, with an average achievement of 80%.

LO11: 100% of talents met the 65% KPI, with an average achievement of 91%.
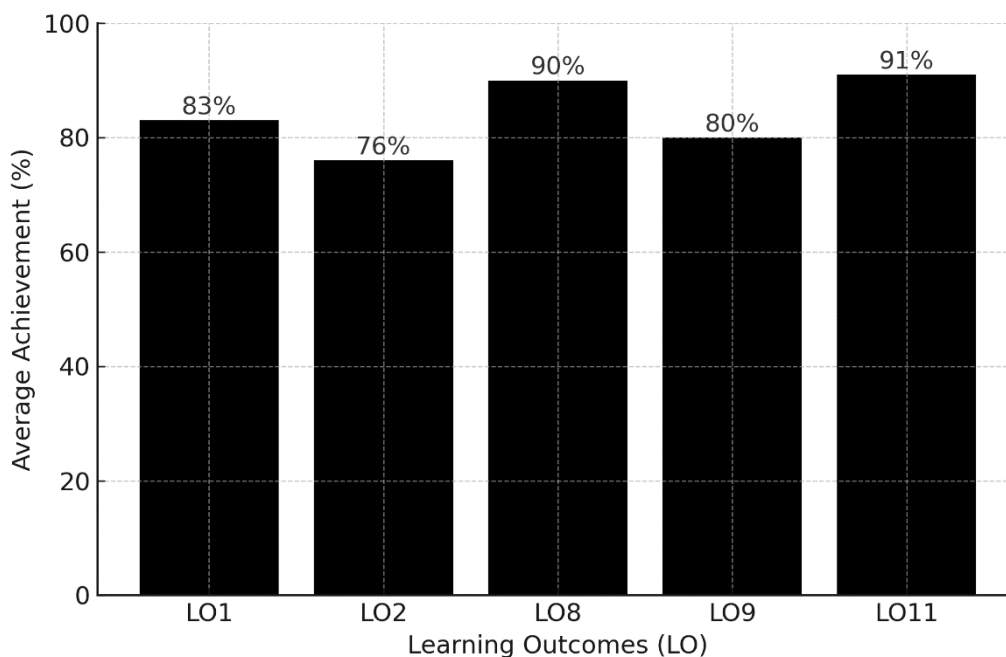

Fig. 1. Learning Outcomes Achievement

The strong academic performance suggests that participants have effectively internalized leadership principles, equipping them with the strategic thinking, decision-making, and communication skills necessary to navigate complex organizational challenges. The course is designed to develop leadership competencies that extend beyond theoretical knowledge, preparing individuals to take on managerial roles with confidence. However, while academic achievements are commendable, the practical application of these leadership skills in real-world settings remains an essential area for further evaluation. Future assessments should explore the extent to which participants can effectively implement leadership strategies in workplace scenarios, ensuring a holistic approach to leadership development that integrates both theoretical knowledge and practical application.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the leadership course indicate strong academic performance among participants, with 86% achieving either an A or A+ (excellent pass). Furthermore, the analysis of LOs reveals that all participants successfully met the targeted benchmarks, exceeding the 65% KPI across all five assessed LOs. Notably, LO11 (Ethics & Professionalism Skills) recorded the highest achievement at 91%, followed closely by LO8 (Leadership, Autonomy & Responsibility) at 90%. These results underscore the program's effectiveness in developing leadership competencies, ethical awareness, and professional responsibility.

While the findings reflect a strong grasp of leadership concepts and theoretical knowledge, the practical application of these skills in organizational settings remains an essential area for further exploration. The transition from academic excellence to real-world leadership execution requires continuous assessment to ensure sustained competency enhancement. Future research should employ a pre-experimental design, incorporating pre- and post-training assessments to measure the course's impact on participants' leadership capabilities and long-term professional growth.

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