

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to understand the views, experiences and inspirations shared by a group of fifteen current and former managers from various government departments in Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) who, at some point in their career, have demonstrated effective managerial skills and, hence, have been recognized as successful managers in the public sector. In essence, the three main questions tackled in this study comprise: 1) What do managers do? (Their roles and the nature of their work); 2) What are the capabilities of an effective manager? (The profile of their capabilities); and 3) How do they develop their managerial skills? (Ways to nurture managerial expertise and overall implications for their career path). The outcome of this study is expected to serve as a reference for new and aspiring managers in their future career development in the local public sector. For both academic and career development reasons, it is interesting and worthwhile to study and explore the current topic of profiling the effective managers from the local public sector, since it has not been previously attempted either in English or Portuguese literature.

The research method employed in this study is qualitative in nature. The whole process has been conducted using semi-structured interviews to collect primary data pertaining to the chosen managers' background and competence in areas such as management, training and development as well as individual lifestyle, based on an interview guide consisting of 28 key questions. The interviews were administered in two formats: personal "face-to-face" and

interface by electronic medium. For complementary information or clarification of issues, where necessary, some follow-up questions were posed to the participants, either in person or electronically.

The managers involved in the process comprised 8 males and 7 females; however, the gender factor was found to have no effect on the findings of this study. The sample included Top Level Managers, represented by one CEO; one Director and one Deputy Director; Middle Level Managers, by several Heads of Department and Heads of Division; and Frontline Level Managers and Supervisors, by one Head of Section and one Supervisor. Other details of their general profile showed they belonged to the age group between 36 to 45 years, had 21 to 30 years work experience, of which, 10 to 20 in a managerial position.

These managers are vested with power and responsibilities to perform key functional roles such as directing, planning, managing, controlling, delegating, recruiting, evaluating and compensating, and so on. Like public sector elsewhere, what they do is very much laid down in established procedures and approved processes. What distinguished these effective managers from their peers is the way they perform their duties. Literatures in management commonly highlighted various significant contributing factors to the career success of effective managers. These factors can be categorized as: 1) born with personal traits, such as a positive attitude; and 2) nurtured capabilities, e.g. behavioral skills by professional training and development. Indeed, by recalling the numerous comments given by the participants, it can be concluded that such

managers' personal and career achievements could have been influenced by a mix of these factors.

Findings on their personal and functional background have shown that MSAR public managers were engaged, either on a continuous basis or at some point in their career, in professional development, namely by attaining a post-graduate degree; participating in short-term courses to learn and improve their managerial capabilities, training on-the-job, observing other effective managers, and taking various thematic professional training and development courses promoted by the Government.

Having participated in conferences, seminars, visits and exchanges, both locally and overseas, the majority had learned, experienced and observed new managerial skills and techniques to fulfill their job duties. Nonetheless, they still have high hopes and aspirations as well as great need to improve their current skills and expertise to reach their ultimate goal of job excellence. It is important to note that those managers who have committed themselves throughout their career path, in developing the necessary professional, social and managerial skills and techniques have become good managers in their own working fields within the public sector. The managers have also shared some personal insights and recommendations for the newer generation of, and aspiring managers for professional development and achievement of job excellence.