

Competence Development in Swedish, South African and Russian SME's: A Study of Attitudes and Preferences Across Countries

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Abstract

Attitudes towards learning, or the understanding of what kind of instruments and methods to utilize in training, are not necessarily the same in different countries. By comparing attitudes towards competence development among small business managers in Russia, South Africa and Sweden as well as their methodological preferences, we here especially pinpoint the differences across countries. Departing from a situation where EET-programs for training small businesses are extensively spread to different cultural settings, this paper addresses the dangers and limitations of an uncritical export of "best practice models".

Introduction and Purpose

The importance of small firms for development of national economies and employment are widely recognized. Initiatives to promote small business development are extensively promoted through both national and international funding bodies. Entrepreneurship Education and Training (EET) programs are utilized extensively in many countries to stimulate domestic entrepreneurship development. A common understanding and an underlying conception is often that there exists a kind of "best practice model" for transferring and exchanging knowledge that can be applied in the most different cultural settings. The export of best practice models, preferably developed on the basis of experiences made in Europe and the U.S., is, however (as been pointed out by e.g. Gibb & Haas 1995), not uncomplicated. Besides suggesting that there exists a standardized model for developing successful businesses¹, fundamental ideas underlying the transfer of best practice EET-programs are, for example,

- that attitudes and motivations towards competence development are the like, and
- that preferences regarding which methods SME-managers prefer and utilize for competence development are independent of, e.g., the cultural context.

In order to investigate similarities and differences relating to the aspects above we elaborate in this paper on some empirical survey data from small firms operating in three

¹Materialised by, for example, the concept of business planning and a formal business plan.

different nations: Sweden, South Africa and Russia. These nations represent significant variety regarding their cultural and economic tradition. Sweden is a traditional and stable capitalistic economy, to a large extent dependent on international trade. South Africa is, with its colonial history and despite its recent political and economical isolation, the most developed country in an internationally under-developed continent with a free market economy system. Russia, eventually, offers the case of a transition economy which after fifty years of command economy now is trying to promote SMEs and entrepreneurship.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to investigate cross-national differences and similarities regarding SME-managers' attitudes towards competence development, as well as their demonstrated preferences for different methods for competence development. The empirical results are based on a comparison of groups of Swedish, South African and Russian SMEs. First, however, we give a brief picture depicting some fundamental differences between the three nations.

SME's in the Three Countries

Throughout the world interest in the small business sector has increased, particularly during the recent decade. One reason behind this is that small businesses are expected to contribute with both new employment and technological innovations (Hendry *et al* 1995, Storey 1994). The statistical evidence is obvious: In for example Sweden 420 000 small businesses employ 64% of the work-force of the non-primary private sector². Small businesses contributed with seven out of ten new jobs in 1985-90 (Johannisson and Lindmark, 1996). This situation is even more pronounced in Europe as a whole: An annual increase of 1.8 per cent in the number of enterprises between 1988-1993 is totally accounted for by the growth in the small business sector (Mulhern, 1995).

In the Republic of South Africa it is estimated that 91 percent of the formal business entities are small and medium sized firms (Haasbroeck, 1996). Figures released by the Department of Trade and Industry indicate that in 1995 there were 793 000 enterprises in the employment size-span 1-200. Of this number 500 000 had between 1-4 employees (Havenga, 1996). These SMEs had an estimated employment of 6.1 million. Apart from this figure another 1.26 million people were employed in the informal business sector. The major portion of these SMEs are to be found in trade (245 000), community and social sector (108 000), construction (93 000) and agriculture, forestry and fishing (91 000) (*ibid*). With regard to the informal small business sector the most prevalent types of businesses appear to be grocery and butcher shops, hairdressers, seamstresses and liquor establishments (Havenga, 1991). Although SMEs already play a significant role, there is a commonly held belief that entrepreneurship and development of small firms play a key role for the further growth and development of the economy and employment.

In Russia the situation is somewhat different. The representation of small businesses, especially in the manufacturing sector, is almost negligible and sometimes referred to as the "Socialist Black Hole" (Vahcic and Petrin, 1989). Small firms accordingly provide employment for only 3.5% of the active labor force (2.5 million people; Shulus 1996). The transition from communist suppression and a centrally planned economy to a decentralized market economy has just only started. The heritage from a command economy based on large, state-owned

²If SMEs belonging to larger corporations are excluded, the SME-share is reduced to 50%; see Johannisson, B. & Lindmark, L. (eds.; 1996), p. 12.

conglomerates, is an absence of a wide range of SME suppliers and sub-contractors (Bateman, 1994), and a stated lack of entrepreneurial spirit (see e.g. Hisrich and Grachev 1993). Consequently, the small business sector is in focus also in the Russian transition economy, but due to different reasons. From a very low level, the number of SMEs in, i.e., Russia is increasing: 60 000 firms in 1993, 100000 firms in 1994 and 200 000 firms in 1995 (Kirillova & Kolesnikov, 1995). According to EEC-estimations, however, Russia referring to its potential and population size should have 10-12 million SMEs (Shulus 1996). One of the means for “catching up” with the economic development in Western countries is substantial investments in educational and training programs in entrepreneurship and small business management (Savtchenko 1995; Shulus 1996).

Research Questions

This places, for somewhat different reasons, small firms, competence and competence development in focus in all three countries. The first underlying factor we investigate in this paper, affecting the content and the design of different measures to enhance knowledge and competence, are competence-related attitudes and beliefs held by firm managers in the different countries. Manager perceptions and attitudes are generally regarded as important for understanding a firm’s behavior (Keats and Bracker, 1988; Davidsson, 1989). This is especially relevant for small businesses, where the relative importance of the manager’s attitudes and perceptions is even more determinant (Storey 1994). Historically and culturally embedded attitudes can accordingly be expected to influence the decision making process in a company regarding its investments in competence development Building on previous research of Ellström (1992), we will here try to detect whether attitudes towards competence development (purpose, target groups, time perspective, etc.) differs between small business managers in Russia, South Africa and Sweden respectively.

The other question that we address in this paper is whether the utilisation of different methods for competence development differs across countries. We here take the broad perspective on competence development of e.g. Argyris (1993) and Senge (1990), where development of competencies is much a wider issue than reading books and taking courses. Competence, then, is regarded here as the synthesis of knowledge, skills and aptitudes. Adopting this definition from Nordhaug (1993), we by competence development here mean all the activities a small firm undertakes in order to stimulate or develop one or several of the factors Nordhaug describes as constituting professional competence. Utilizing a list of different methods for competence development in Ylinenpää and Hörte (1995), the utilization of twenty pre-defined methods for development of competencies in SMEs in Sweden, Russia and South Africa respectively will be compared in this paper.

Method

In order to answer the above questions survey studies South Africa, Russia and Sweden were conducted. In Russia we interviewed eighteen small business managers from north-western Russia (Murmansk region³) utilizing a structured form. The interviews were

³Murmansk is the northernmost region in north-western Russia with borders to Norway, Finland and the Russian Republic of Karelia. The population is 1.1million, of which almost 50% live in the city of Murmansk. The economy is dominated by mining, fish industry and the national defence; branches all at present in decline. The small business sector is here, as in other Russian regions, expanding.

carried out by one Russian and one Swedish interviewer, and the questions and answers were translated between English and Russian. Data regarding the Swedish firms were generated by a mail questionnaire to 108 randomly selected manufacturing SMEs from different parts of Sweden. 64 responses were obtained, of which 52 could be used in this study. To these 52 manufacturing firms we added nine service companies (consultants, tourism and transport firms). Data from South African SMEs were generated by personal interviews and mail questionnaires to 200 SMEs, randomly picked from a register of the Small Business Advisory Bureau containing 4500 small manufacturing and service firms throughout South Africa. Fifty-two answers were obtained, of which 42 could be used. Facts about the survey populations are depicted in Table 1:

<i>Group</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Branches</i> <i>(employees)</i>	<i>Size span</i> <i>size</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Russian SMEs	18	11 service companies 7 manufacturing firms	1-200	38
Swedish SMEs	61	52 manufacturing firms 9 service companies	1-50	17
South African SMEs	42	18 service companies 24 manufacturing firms	1-150	26

Table 1: Facts about the survey populations

The Swedish firms were preferably manufacturers, and operating in three different lines of business: wood processing, mechanical engineering and electronics. In the case of South Africa the division was 43 and 57 percent respectively between services and manufacturing. The service firms represented mainly motor and mechanical engineering, refrigeration, building and construction. With regard to the manufacturing sector it included a variety of businesses with the main classifications being chemical, plastics, wood processing, steel and iron, food, electronics, building and construction. The Russian group of firms represented service companies (trading firms, tourism and other services) and manufacturing industry (mechanical engineering, fishing, textile, building construction and plastic industries). This specific population consisted of a group of former participants in management training courses conducted in cooperation between Swedish and Russian organizers.

The methods used for identifying the different populations were different. The South African group was randomly selected from a register of the Small Business Advisory Bureau consisting of 4500 domestic SMEs. The Swedish group also consisted of randomly selected firms from a national official register, while the Russian group was represented by former participants in specific management courses conducted in 1992 and 1993. One might suspect that this resulted in a comparison of randomly selected SMEs (in Sweden and South Africa) with “front-runners” (in Russia).⁴ In order to check the validity of the data an additional spot

⁴ It is appropriate to remark that the cross-cultural comparison exercised here is based on a limited empirical base. This is at least relevant for the Russian population, which is limited in size ($n = 18$) and with regard to its geographical location (one of the regions in Russia). It should be considered that the specific region (Murmansk) is a border-region to western Europe. Hosting one of the most important harbours in the world has fostered a tradition of comparatively regular contacts with, and influence from, other countries and cultures. A challenge worth exploring in future research is whether the attitudes and method preferences revealed in this study reflect a generic picture for the whole of the Russian federation.

test with small business managers in Sweden was conducted in December 1995. This survey population consisted of SME-managers from northern Sweden taking an academic course in Small Business Management arranged by the University of Technology in Luleå; a course which regarding length and level could be compared to the management training courses conducted in Murmansk region. Eight SME-managers representing service companies (n = 5) and manufacturing industry (n = 3) were interviewed. The firms had in average 17 employees spanning from 1-100. The results from this comparison supported (with one exception) the main results from this study. The exception was the results regarding utilization of networking as a means for competence development. This will be commented on later in this paper.

Also differences referring to the firms distribution on different branches were evident: the Swedish group represented mainly manufacturing industry, while the Russian and South African groups represented service and manufacturing industry. In order to investigate whether Swedish populations orientation towards manufacturing would have any impact on the results, the same spot test population was used for comparing manufacturing and service firms in Sweden. This test did not reveal any major differences regarding attitudes towards, or utilized methods for, competence development that could depend on the fact that firms were operating in different lines of business.

Table 1 also reveals that the average size regarding the number of employees in the Russian group of SMEs was about twice the size of the Swedish and about 50% larger than the South African survey populations. The control group was not useful for investigating the validity of the data in this respect: the mean size was the same as in the larger Swedish survey, and the small size of the control group did not permit any further analysis. Relating data⁵ regarding attitudes towards, and methods utilized for, competence development to firm size disclosed that there may be a bias referring to differences in firm size, affecting 0-2 out of 9 attitudes, and 1-5 out of 20 methods for competence development discussed in this paper⁶. The majority of the variables used in this study, however, could not be related to firm size, and accordingly seem to reflect real differences across nations.

Results

Attitudes Towards Competence Development

In order to monitor the attitudes held by SME-managers in the different economies, we asked nine different questions about opinions and attitudes towards different aspects of competence development (e.g. purpose, target groups and time perspective). The results are presented below. Using a five-graded Likert scale where 5 = “totally agree” and 1 = “do not agree at all” our results depict the degree to which the respondents in each economy agree with following statements:

⁵ A comparison of Swedish and Russian SMEs. For details, see Ylinenpää (1996).

⁶ Compare Storey (1994, p. 145), who suggests that “work-force training is associated with greater size, rather than necessarily growth”.

Statement	group	Medium values (5-graded scale)		
		Swedish group N = 61	South African group N = 42	Russian group N = 18
1. "Competence development should be directed by the firm's goals and strategies"		4.4	4.3	4.4
2. "Competence development should be directed towards those key-persons/specialists needed to fulfill goals and strategies"		3.7	3.9	2.9
3. "Competence development is a way to notice and pay attention to the staff; to make them more engaged & involved, and thereby more productive"		4.3	4.3	4.7
4. "Everybody needs development. Competence development must therefore involve <i>everybody</i> in the firm"		4.2	4.4	4.4
5. "Competence development is mainly a method for making people 'think and act alike'"		2.6	3.2	3.8
6. "Who a company should invest in is a matter for the management to decide after negotiations where needs and arguments are weighed"		3.8	3.9	4.2
7. "Competence development is a long-term investment"		4.5	4.6	4.3
8. "Competence development is a short-term investment"		2.7	1.8	1.9
9. "Competence development investments increase the salary level in a company, and always involve the risk of losing valuable staff, i.e. a risk that you invest and other firms harvest"		2.9	4.0	4.0

Table 2: Attitudes towards competence development held by the groups of Russian, South African and Swedish SME-managers

From Table 2 we can conclude that attitudes held by Swedish, South Africa and Russian small business managers to some extent are shared across countries. Statements 1 (competence development should be directed by the firm's goals and strategies), 3 (the value of competence development as means for paying attention and creating engagement and motivation), 4 (should address all employees), and 7 (is a long-term investment) receives the highest degree of concurrence in all three countries. We, however, also find some clear differences across nations. For example, Swedish SME-managers do not seem to be as afraid to invest in competence development due to the risk that "other firms may harvest what you have invested in" as their colleagues in South Africa and Russia ($p < 0.005$). Accordingly, Swedish managers also to a significantly higher degree than in South Africa ($p < 0.005$) and Russia ($p < 0.1$) recognize competence development investments as being both long-term and short-term investments. The results in this respect may indicate that small firms in an European economy as the Swedish are more familiar with the phenomena that knowledge and competence age more quickly, and to some extent can be regarded as perishable goods. Given

these conditions the “risk of losing valuable staff” becomes less salient, and the inclination to regard investments in competence development as short-term investments more apparent.

The small firm managers in all three countries perceive competence development as something that should be relevant for all their employees. In Sweden and South Africa this opinion, however, is combined with a significantly ($p < 0.1$) stronger orientation also towards key persons and specialists when compared to Russia. We also find that the idea of competence development being “a method for making people think and act alike” is most apparent in Russia and least apparent in Sweden, revealing significant ($p < 0.1$) differences between all three groups of SMEs. The results in this respect may reflect a “collectivist orientation” especially in Russia - a term that Ageev, Gratchev and Hisrich (1995) utilized when analyzing Russian entrepreneurship. The result also can also be referred to the fact that production of concrete products and services in a transition economy is more standardized than, e.g., in Sweden, requiring a higher degree of uniformity among employees. In Sweden, and to some extent in South Africa, the markets are more fragmented, and competition often takes place in highly specialized market niches. This situation requires, to a greater extent than the Russian situation still dominated by standardized production, approaches aiming at sharpening the firm’s competitive edge. This in turn is accomplished by, for example, highly skilled specialists.

A significant difference was eventually also detected regarding the perceived importance of attention and motivation (statement No. 3). Even if all three groups here scored high, the degree of concurrence was significantly higher ($p < 0.1$) among the Russian group of SME-managers. One reasonable explanation to this could be the fact that the question of how to motivate and stimulate work performance has been (and still is) one of the most critical issues in the Russian domestic debate. Russian SME-managers accordingly acknowledge the enormous challenge existing by the need to change work mentality, responsibility and engagement in a work-force that for decades have been trained to behave in accordance with the needs of a centrally planned and command-structured economy. The result, then, refers more to a personal insight than an existing situation among small and medium sized firms in Russia.

Methods For Competence Development

Methods utilized by the groups of SMEs in Sweden, South Africa and Russia respectively are, in rank order, presented in Table 3 (percentage of firms utilizing the specific method during the recent three year period).

Before we dig into the differences revealed in Table 5, a general reflection may be appropriate. All cross-cultural studies face the problem of cultural differences regarding how different conceptions are perceived; a problem that may resist even very ambitious definitions. Appointments, for example, may here have different meanings in different environmental settings. Questions like “What constitutes a course?”, or “What is professional literature?”, are here to a great extent delegated to the SME-managers in each group to define. Accordingly, when using questions like these, researchers always carry the risk of validity problems and biases. Bearing this reservation in mind, Table 3 provides a lot of interesting information depicting both similarities and differences. Group and nation specific differences however dominate:

Sweden (n=61)

1. Visiting expo's/trade fairs	85%
2. In-house training courses	75%
3. External courses	72%
4. Work rotation	64%
5. Study visits outside firm's location	61%
6. Delegation	59%
7. Financed professional literature for reading after working hours	48%
8. Permitted/encouraged reading of professional literature during working hours	44%
9. Personal development meetings	38%
10. Regular meetings with employees incl. elements of education	33%
11. Recruitment of for the firm new competence	33%
12. Tutor/mentor for newly-employed	31%
13. Study visits at the same location	26%
14. Cooperation with external competence	26%
15. Linked competence development to salary by e.g. a bonus system	21%
16. Project work	20%
17. Participation in networks	13%
18. Appointments	12%
19. Senior tutor/mentor for already employed	8%
20. Temporary work in another firm	7%

South Africa (n=42)

1. Delegation	71%
2. Work rotation	67%
3. Visiting expo's/trade fairs	67%
4. External courses	64%
5. Regular meetings with employees incl. elements of education	55%
6. In-house training courses	46%
7. Linked competence development to salary by e.g. a bonus system	45%
8. Project work	45%
9. Tutor/mentor for newly-employed	43%
10. Cooperation with external competence	43%
11. Personal development meetings	31%
12. Recruitment of for the firm new competence	31%
13. Appointments	31%
14. Study visits outside firm's location	24%
15. Financed professional literature for reading after working hours	24%
16. Permitted/encouraged reading of professional literature during working hours	24%
17. Participation in networks	14%
18. Senior tutor/mentor for already employed	14%
19. Study visits at the same location	7%
20. Temporary work in another firm	5%

Russia (n=18)

1. External courses	83%
2. Personal development meetings	83%
3. Financed professional literature for reading after working hours	72%
4. Appointments	72%
5. Participation in networks	65%
6. Visiting expo's/trade fairs	61%
7. In-house training courses	56%
8. Work rotation	50%
9. Permitted/encouraged reading of professional literature during working hours	50%
10. Linked competence development to salary by e.g. a bonus system	44%
11. Delegation	39%
12. Recruitment of for the firm new competence	39%
13. Study visits outside firm's location	33%

14. Cooperation with external competence	33%
15. Regular meetings with employees incl. elements of education	28%
16. Senior tutor/mentor for already employed	22%
17. Project work	17%
18. Study visits at the same location	11%
19. Tutor/mentor for newly-employed	6%
20. Temporary work in another firm	6%

Table 3: Methods utilized for competence development during a three year period (% of firms in each national group)

Focusing on the five methods utilized by the most of the firms in each group reveals that only “external courses” is on the “Top-Four-List” in all three countries. Visiting expo’s and trade fairs in order to develop competence is, for example, significantly ($p < 0.1$) more common in Sweden than in South Africa and Russia. Also study visits outside the firm’s location are more extensively utilized among Swedish SMEs as compared to South Africa ($p < 0.005$) or Russia ($p < 0.1$). The preference for methods facilitating “learning by watching” is combined with a significantly ($p < 0.1$) lower degree of incentives (e.g. a bonus system linked to competence development). In a similar way some characteristics of a South African learning style can be identified. Project work and regular meetings with employees including elements of education are more extensively ($p < 0.1$) used here as compared to the groups of SMEs in Sweden and Russia. On the other hand study of literature during work is significantly ($p < 0.1$) lower. Even more characteristics distinguish the Russian group of SMEs from both the others. The Russian SMEs reveal a significantly higher degree of personal development meetings ($p < 0.005$) and participation in networks ($p < 0.005$) than Swedish and South African SMEs. To finance professional literature for reading after working hours is more common than in South Africa ($p < 0.005$) and Sweden ($p < 0.1$). The use of appointments as a method to enhance competence is also more common (sign. $p < 0.005$ as compared to Sweden; $p < 0.1$ as compared to South Africa). Utilization of tutors or mentors for new employees, however, is less extensive ($p < 0.005$) than in the other two groups.

As mentioned earlier (under “Method”) we utilized a Swedish control group similar to the Russian group of SME-managers to control whether results depended on the constitution of the group. This control group also consisted of SME-managers taking a course in small business management. The results from this test revealed that “participation in networks” was as common among the SME-managers taking the specific course that it was among the Russian group. This indicates that we, regarding the high Russian scores on networking as a means of enhancing competence, are not depicting true cross-national differences.

The utilization of literature for study after work, together with appointments, also turned out to distinguish all three groups of firms. Study of literature after work (paid for by the firm) was highest in Russia and lowest in South Africa (difference between Russia and South Africa significant on the level $p < 0.005$; Russia - Sweden $p < 0.1$). The use of appointments was also highest in Russia, but lowest in Sweden (difference between Sweden and Russia significant on the level $p < 0.005$; Russia - South Africa $p < 0.1$). The results in this respect reflect the literary tradition in eastern European nations as well as traditions formed by half a century of a centrally planned economy.

Conclusions

In table 4 below we conclude the results regarding attitudes towards and methods used for competence development among SMEs in Sweden, South Africa and Russia. Besides results already presented, we here also depict significant differences between two specific nations/groups:

- In-house training courses are more common in Sweden than in South Africa ($p < 0.005$)
- Local study visits are more common in Sweden than in South Africa ($p < 0.1$)
- Delegation in order to develop competence is more common in South Africa than in Russia ($p < 0.1$).

Table 4 gives an overview picture of similarities and differences regarding attitudes towards competence development as well as the practical utilization of different methods. Noticeable is that our results depicting the percentage of firms in each group that have utilised different methods during the recent three year period not necessarily reflect the relative *importance* of specific methods, nor the *frequency* by which each method is utilized by each group of firms. The results, however, indicate interesting differences regarding the *distribution* of different methods among SMEs in each country. Bearing this in mind we can conclude that several attitudes are shared among the national groups, and regarding their distribution among firms utilized to a similar degree:

- The small firm managers in all three countries agree upon the importance of competence development being integrated with the firms goals and strategies, that competence development should address the whole firm, and that investments in competence development are long-term investments.
- The distribution of external courses, work rotation, recruitment of new competencies, senior mentors for employees and temporary work in other firms in order to develop competence is similar in all three groups.

Nation-specific differences regarding attitudes towards competence development varies from the Swedish view of regarding competence development as long- *and* short-termed investments where key persons and specialists are important target groups, to the Russian view of competence development as risky investments in "making people think and act alike". The South African SMEs in this study position themselves somewhere between their Russian and Swedish colleagues. Regarding methods commonly used for developing competence the differentiating characteristics in Sweden seem to be "learning-by-watching methods" such as expo's/trade fairs and study visits combined with a higher degree of on-house training courses and a lower degree of personal incentives (e.g. bonus systems) for competence development. In South Africa "learning-by doing methods" such as meetings that include education, project work and delegation are salient, and combined with a low degree of study of literature. Russia, eventually, scores significantly higher on an interesting mix of traditional methods (such as an extensive use of literature) and methods suggested in modern textbooks on HRM (such as personal development meetings and career planning), but low on utilisation of tutor/mentor systems for new employees. Here appointments to other (higher) positions are extensively used as a method for developing competence. The preference for literature and appointments, but also by the conception that competence development should aim at "making people think and act alike", can be understood as inheritance from Russian culture and history. Other

characteristics such as personal development meetings, salary bonuses for competence development are and the extremely high agreement on the “attention and motivation argument” is better understood recognizing the turbulent transition towards new rules of the game that SMEs in Russia today experience.

	<i>SWEDISH SME'S</i>	<i>S. AFRICAN SME'S</i>	<i>RUSSIAN SME'S</i>
<i>Attitudes</i> <i>a) differences</i>	Orientation towards key persons/specialists		
	“Attention & motivation” important		“Attention & motivation” <u>very</u> important
	“Indoctrination” not important	“Indoctrination” of some importance	“Indoctrination” important
	Recognising competence development as <u>also</u> a short-term investment	Regarding competence development <u>not</u> as a short-term investment	
	Regarding competence development as not especially risky	Regarding competence development as risky: risk of increasing salary levels and “brain-drain”	
<i>b) similarities</i>	Competence development should be directed by the firm’s goals and strategies, should involve everybody in the firm, and is a long-term investment.		
<i>Method preferences</i> <i>a) differences</i>	Extensive use of - study visits outside firm’s location - visiting expo’s and trade shows	Frequent use of - regular employee meetings including some education - project work	Extensive use of personal development meetings
	Less frequent use of individual incentives (e.g. bonus) linked to competence development		Less frequent use of tutors/mentors for new employees
	Some study of literature after work	Less study of literature after work	Extensive study of literature after work
	Less use of appointments	Some use of appointments	Extensive use of appointm.
	Extensive use of in-house training courses	Less use of in-house training courses	
	Frequent use of study visits at the same location	Less use of study visits at the same location	
		Extensive use of delegation	Some use of delegation
<i>b) similarities</i>	Utilisation of external courses, work rotation, recruitment of new competencies, senior tutor/mentor for already employed, and temporary work in another firm		

Table 4: Concluded results

The differences regarding attitudes and method preferences revealed by this study accentuate the need for recognizing national characteristics. Returning to our starting point we may conclude that organizers of EET-programs would benefit from more thorough analysis of national characteristics when transferring concepts across national and cultural borders.

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