An empirical study on managerial intellectual learning (MIL) and managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism (MILCBM)

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Abstract:

The contemporary external environment facing the management education and development field gives rise to certain key concerns in the field. In this context, the notion of managerial intellectual learning (MIL) and the associated notion, managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism (MILCBM), have been put forward by Ho (2013, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d) based on the literature on management development and contemporary systems thinking. They are developed in response to the concerns in the field of management education and development. This paper reported some pioneering empirical findings on MIL and MILCBM based on a Facebook-based questionnaire survey. The findings turn out to be supportive of the basic ideas underlying the MIL and MILCBM notions. Nevertheless, these findings should be treated solely as useful for stimulating further investigation of these notions rather than as convincing evidence due to the low internal and external validities of Facebook-based questionnaire survey as a research method. The paper encourages more empirical research on the notions of MIL and MILCBM.

Key words: managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism (MILCBM), managerial intellectual learning (MIL), Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research, Facebook-based questionnaire survey

Introduction

Like many other management disciplines, the management education and management development field has been facing significant challenges (see, for examples, Ho (2013), Su (2011) and Millican (2014).) arising from the turbulent external environmental changes which are generally considered to have been driven by inter-related political, economic social and technological factors. Thus, for Su (2011), "Confrontation with the fast-changing nature of the current times, which we experience as being nonlinear, dynamic, and unpredictable, indicates that simply thinking of learning as the acquisition of knowledge is insufficient.."; and the Internet has also had the unintended impact of creating a learning barrier on people's learning (Lodge, 2013) and critical thinking ability development (Machineslikeus.com, 2009). These challenges set up the problematic context in the management education and management development field for the writer to work on the notions of managerial intellectual learning (MIL) and managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism (MILCBM), which are relevant for addressing the concerns in the field of management education and development. MIL and MILCBM are newly formulated notions in the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research (Ho, 2014a). The two notions are mainly a recent product of literature review on management learning, systems thinking and the writer's personal working, research and teaching experience. In other words, they are not directly supported by any empirical research efforts. This paper reviews the notions of managerial intellectual learning (MIL) and managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism (MILCBM), followed by an account of the findings from a recently conducted Facebook-based questionnaire survey by the writer.

An updated view on managerial intellectual learning (MIL) and managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism (MILCBM)

Drawing on Ho (2013; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d), *managerial intellectual learning* (MIL) is described as learning of management theories and notions from the academic and professional publications, which is employed to understand and guide management practices. When anchored on the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research, a *multi-perspective, systems-based (MPSB) managerial intellectual process* is produced, which involves four phases: (i) Data Management, (ii) Absorbed reading, (iii) the MPSB knowledge compilation and (iv) Practice-based intellectual learning (Ho, 2014c). The MPSB managerial intellectual learning process offers a learning path to develop scholar-practitioners in business management that are multi-disciplinary, multi-perspective and holistic (Ho, 2014e, 2014f). MIL is practiced by people who have the MIL capability to do so. In this respect, another notion, the *managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism* (MILCBM), is formulated, which is defined as the self-sustaining (learning) energy acquisition and combustion function to drive the managerial intellectual learning process (Ho, 2014c). Knowledge on how to strengthen the three elements of the MILCBM to actually build up the MILCBM is briefly examined in Ho (2014c), which also identifies the relevant literature on how to do so. These two notions of MIL and MILCBM are portrayed in Figure 1 (Ho, 2014c) in the form of *an integrated view on the managerial intellectual learning process*.

Figure 1: An integrated view on the managerial intellectual learning process
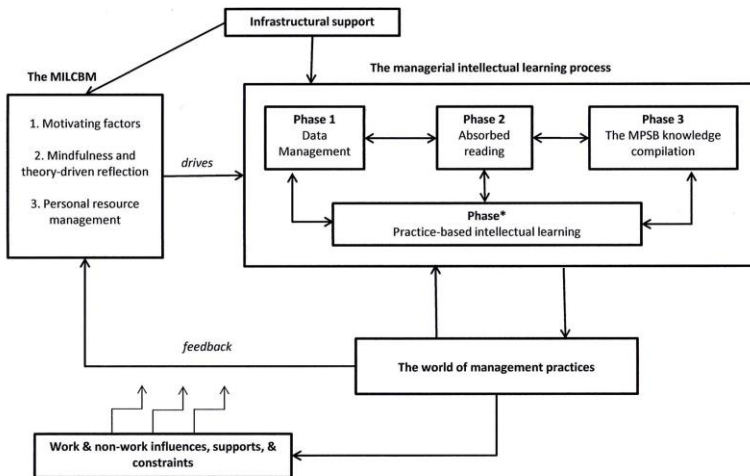
Overall, in the words of Su (2011), MIL, which encompasses both formal and informal learning, ultimately is supportive of the dynamic ability to "make sense of knowledge" (Su, 2011) in the process of "dynamic interaction between learner and context". Its dynamic, multi-disciplinary, multi-perspective, practice- and life-based, critical and holistic orientations, when grounded on the MPSB Research foundation (Ho, 2014a), possess the robustness and practical relevance for learners to cope with the challenges identified in the management education and development field. Readers are referred to Ho (2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d) for a full account of these notions.

There are two core parts in the *integrated view on the MIL process* (Ho, 2014c):

Core part 1 is the MILCBM, which consists of three elements, namely, (i) motivating factors, (ii) mindfulness and theory-driven reflection, and (iii) personal resource management.

Core part 2 is the MIL process, which is made up of three iterative phases, namely (i) Data management, (ii)

Absorbed reading, (iii) the MPSB knowledge compilation and (iv) Practice-based intellectual learning.

The two core parts are related: the MILCBM (core part 1) is the mechanism that drives the MIL (core part 2). Figure 1 does not indicate explicitly how to build up the MILCBM. Since the notions of MIL and MILCBM are mainly formulated based on literature review and the personal teaching/ research experience of the writer, they have not yet been examined with empirical research efforts, other than one reported in Ho (2014d). This empirical study deficiency in the process of their theoretical development is now addressed by means of a Facebook-based questionnaire survey recently conducted by the writer. The questionnaire survey exercise, together with its major findings, is reported in the next section.

Findings from a Facebook-based questionnaire survey on MIL and MILCBM

A questionnaire survey was conducted from August 2 to August 20 this year on the writer's Facebook. Most of the Facebook friends are the writer's current or past students in Hong Kong with education backgrounds in business administration, accounting, mechanical engineering and computing science. The survey questionnaire was constructed with a free-of-charge online survey tool provided by kwiksurveys.com. The questionnaire was posted on the writer's Facebook wall, with also Facebook messages sent to his Facebook friends as invitations to participate in the survey, see appendix for some of the illustrative screens of the survey exercise. Ho (2014g) provides a more detailed review on the nature of the Facebook-based questionnaire survey research method. In addition, (2014d) offers another example on Facebook-based questionnaire survey application.

There are 156 respondents to the survey. Based on the raw survey statistics and further interactive query analysis

with Excel's data filtering function, the following main findings are observed:

Finding 1: 149 (96%) of the respondents are or were motivated to learn management theories[1] taught in their business-related degree programmes.

Finding 2: 87 (56%) of the respondents can or could maintain a satisfactory level of work-life balance[2] during their part-time study of business-related degree programmes.

Finding 3: 24 (15%) of the respondents reported that their work-life balance status has adverse effect on their learning process[3] during their part-time study.

Finding 4: 24 (15%) of the respondents reported that their interest[4] drops/ will drop when they do not need to study for a formal business-related degree programme.

Finding 5: 133 (85%) of the respondents felt that continuous managerial intellectual learning is reasonably or strongly (positive) related to their career aspiration[5].

Finding 6: For the 24 respondents who reported adverse effect of work-life balance status on their learning process, 7 (29%) of them also indicate that their interest drops or will drop substantially when they do not need to study for a formal education programme. This 29% is larger than the overall percentage of 15% (24 respondents) for all the 156 respondents. This indicates that adverse work-life balance status has negative impact on the respondents' interest in managerial intellectual learning.

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[1] "Motivation to learn" is related to the element of **motivating factors** in the MILCBM.

[2] "Satisfactory level of work-life balance" is related to the element of **personal resource management** in the MILCBM.

[3] "Learning process" is related to the **MIL process** in the integrated view on the MIL process of Figure 1.

[4] "Interest in managerial intellectual learning" is related to both the elements of **motivating factors** and **mindfulness and theory-driven reflection** in the MILCBM.

[5] "Career aspiration" is related to the element of **motivating factors** in the MILCBM.

Finding 7: For the 14 respondents who reported much difficulty to focus their attention on their study, 5 (36%) felt that continuous managerial intellectual learning is insignificantly related to their career aspiration. As the overall percentage is 14.2% (22 respondents), the figures suggest that difficulty to focus attention on study affects negatively on respondents' perception on the relevance of continuous managerial intellectual learning to their career aspiration.

Finding 8: For the 4 respondents who are not motivated to learn at all, 1 (25%) expressed that continuous managerial intellectual learning is insignificantly related to his/her career aspiration. The overall figure is 14.2%. Thus, motivation to learn might affect a respondent's perception on the relevance of continuous managerial intellectual learning to career aspiration. As the number of respondents is very small, this finding's external validity is very low.

Finding 9: For the 56 respondents who are highly motivated to learn, 34 (61%) are or were able to focus their attention on their study. As the overall percentage is 42.2% (65 respondents), the figure suggests that high motivation to learn has positive effect on respondents' ability to focus their attention on their study[6].

Finding 10: For the 56 respondents who are highly motivated to learn, 25% (14 respondents) expressed much difficulty to achieve work-life balance during their study. This is close to the overall figure of 21.6% of respondents expressing difficulty to achieve work-life balance. Thus the figures indicate that motivation to learn has minimal impact on the respondents' feeling on difficulty to achieve work-life balance during their study.

Finding 11: For the 14 respondents who have much difficulty to focus their attention on their study, 36% (5

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[6] "Focus attention on study" is related to the element of **mindfulness and theory-driven reflection** in the MILCBM.

respondents) reported that their interest in managerial intellectual learning drops or will drop substantially when they do not need to study for a formal education progamme. As the overall figure is 15.6%(24 respondents), the figures suggest that difficulty to focus attention to study are negatively co-related to respondents' interest in managerial intellectual learning when they do not need to study for a formal education programme.

Finding 12: For the 80 respondents who are married, 15% (12 respondents) expressed much difficulty to achieve work-life balance during their study. As the overall figure on that is 21.6% (33 respondents), the figures suggest that married respondents[7] are more able to achieve work-life balance during their part-time study than their single counterparts.

Finding 13: For those 24 respondents who expressed that their interest drops/ will drop substantially when they do not need to study for a formal programme, 17% (4) reported that continuous managerial intellectual learning is strongly related (positive) to their career aspiration. As the overall percentage is 23.9%, the figures indicate that interest to learn (without studying for a formal programme) is positively co-related to the perceived relevance of continuous managerial intellectual learning to respondents' career aspiration.

Findings 1 to 5 are based on raw statistics of the Facebook-based survey while findings 6 to 13 are derived from interactive querying on the raw statistics using the Excel data-filtering function. Though the internal and external validities of the Facebook-based questionnaire survey are both weak, the findings still offer some crude ideas about how the various causal factors, e.g., marital status and work-life balance status, can influence or co-relate to certain outcome factors of managerial intellectual learning, e.g. relevance to career aspiration and interest in managerial intellectual learning.

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[7] "Marital status" is related to the component of **work & non-work influences, support, & constraints** in the integrated view on the MIL process of Figure 1.

These findings appear to be supportive of the mutual cause-effect relationships between the elements in the integrated view on the managerial intellectual learning process (re: Figure 1). This is further clarified in Table 1.

Table 1: How the findings from the Facebook-based questionnaire survey are related to the integrated view on the managerial intellectual learning process

Specific elements of the integrated view on the MIL process (re: Figure 1)	*Related Facebook-based survey findings*
The managerial intellectual learning process	Finding 5
The MILCBM elements:	
1. Motivating factors	Findings 1, 8, 9, 10, 13
2. Mindfulness and theory-driven reflection	Findings 7, 11
3. Personal resource management	Findings 2, 3, 4, 6, 12

As the various elements of the MIL process are inter-related (Ho, 2014b), the Facebook-based survey findings illuminate on more than one MIL process elements, some directly and some less directly. The survey findings are pioneering, given that empirical research specifically on managerial intellectual learning has not been conducted before other than Ho (2014d). Nevertheless, this survey has broader research coverage on MIL and MILCBM than that of Ho (2014d) which mainly examines one element, i.e., on work-life balance, in the MILCBM.

Concluding remarks

The Facebook-based questionnaire survey reported in this paper makes a small contribution to the empirical research of MIL and MILCBM for both its scope of study and its quality of validity are quite limited. Hence, it is clear that more need to be done on empirical study of MIL and MILCBM to further develop these notions. More fundamentally, as Jubas (2011) explains, learning is a "holistic process, with emotional,

spiritual, and intellectual dimensions". Thus MIL, to be effective, also needs to take care of the emotional and spiritual dimensions of learning. These dimensions identified by Jubas are not covered in the necessarily brief Facebook-based questionnaire survey as reported in this paper.

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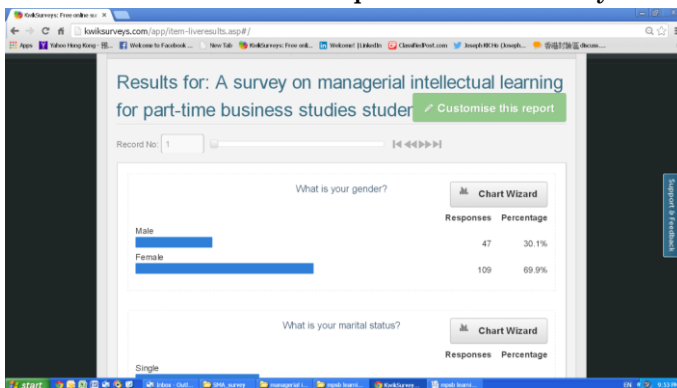
APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Survey questions and responses

| Survey questions	Survey statistics
Question 1: What is your gender?	Male: 47 (30.1%) Female: 109 (69.9%)
Question 2: What is your marital status?	Single: 75 (48.4%) Married: 80 (51.6%)
Question 3: What is your age?	18 to 24: 3 (1.9%) 25-31: 39 (25.2%) 32-38: 57 (36.8%) 39-45: 36 (23.2%) 46-52: 20 (12.9%) 53-59: 0 (0%) 60 or above: 0 (0%)
Question 4: What is your education background in business studies?	Not yet a degree-holder: 19 (12.2%) Finished university undergraduate degree study: 114 (73.1%) Finished Master Degree study: 23 (14.7%) Finished Ph.D. Degree study (or equivalent): 0 (0.0%)
Question 5: What is your employment status?	I have a full-time permanent job: 141 (90.4%) I am a freelancer: 8 (5.1%) I am an active job-seeker, currently unemployed: 4 (2.6%) I am not an active-job seeker, e.g. retired, a housewife or a full-time student: 3 (1.9%)
Question 6: Are you currently studying for a part-time degree related to business studies?	Yes: 41 (26.3%) No: 115 (73.7%)
Question 7: Did you study for a part-time degree programme related to business studies over the last 6 years?	Yes: 113 (72.4%) No: 43 (27.6%)
Question 8: During your part-time study of business-related degree programme, are you or were you motivated to learn those management theories taught in your programme?	Highly motivated to learn: 56 (36.6%) Basically willing to learn: 93 (60.8%) Not motivated to learn at all: 4 (2.6%)
Question 9: During your part-time study of business-related degree programme, are you or were you able to focus your attention on your study?	Quite able to do so well: 65 (42.2%) Just able to do so: 75 (48.7%) Have much difficulty to do so: 14 (9.1%)
Question 10: During your part-	Have/ had much difficulty to achieve work-life

time study of business-related degree programme, are you or were you able to achieve a satisfactory level of work-life balance at the same time?	balance: 33 (21.6%) Yes, I can/ could maintain a satisfactory level of work-life balance: 87 (56.9%) I can/ could improve my ability to maintain work-life balance 33 (21.6%)
Question 11: Did or does your work-life balance status during your part-time study of business-related degree programme affect your learning process in your part-time study?	It has adverse effect on my learning process: 24 (15.5%) It has favourable effect on my learning process: 81 (52.3%) It has no significant effect on my learning process: 50 (32.3%)
Question 12: Do you feel that your interest in managerial intellectual learning is/ could be affected by your part-time study of business-related degree programme?	My interest drops/ will drop substantially when I do not need to study for a formal programme: 24 (15.6%) My interest remains/ will remain about the same after my graduation from the education programme: 88 (57.1%) My interest increases/ will increase after graduation from the formal education programme: 42 (27.3%)
Question 13: Do you feel that managerial intellectual learning is related to your career aspiration?	It is strongly related (positive) to my career aspiration: 37 (23.9%) It is reasonably related (positive) to my career aspiration: 96 (61.9%) It is insignificantly related to my career aspiration: 22 (14.2%) It has negative impact on my career aspiration realization: 0 (0.0%)

Appendix 2: Online results for the questionnaire survey

Appendix 3: Statistic on responses over time as shown on the online questionnaire survey tool report
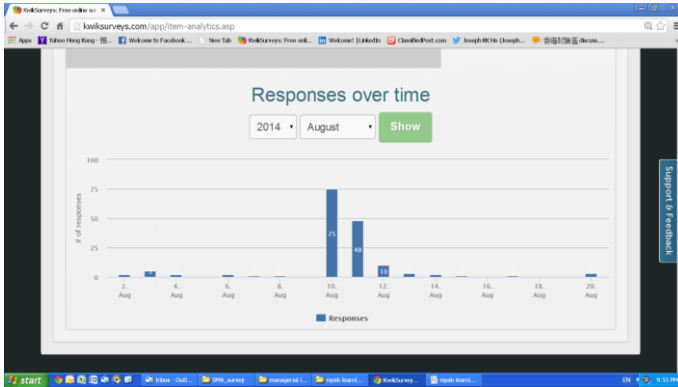
Appendix 4: Survey data can be exported to Excel for further analysis with the Excel data filtering function