LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN KUWAIT: ORGANIZATIONAL VIEWS

Aseel A. Alduaiji
School of Business, Western Sydney University, Australia, and
Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Kuwait
Email: 17366524@student.uws.edu.au

Michael Lyons
School of Business, Western Sydney University, Australia
Email: m.lyons@westernsydney.edu.au
Leadership Development in Kuwait: Organizational Views

The concept of leadership and the adoption of leadership development programs are emerging issues for organizations in Arab societies. This paper reports the ‘organizational view’ of leadership development programs in three Kuwaiti commercial organizations. The aims of the paper are: to shed light on the assumed causal relationship between leadership development programs and manager and organizational performance; identify barriers to effective leadership development in the three organizations; and to understand if these Kuwaiti organizations perceive any tension between the transnational and culture-specific dimensions of leadership characteristics. While there is evidence leadership development in the three Kuwaiti commercial organizations is effective, these organizational perspectives need to be validated by other sources of data to confirm the paper’s tentative findings.

Key words: leadership development; executive training / ability / education; professional development; skills development / training

It has been argued by Svensson and Wood (2006) and Ozcelik, Langton and Aldrich (2008) that leadership influences organizational performance and effectiveness, is also important for group or team performance, and has a positive impact on organizational outcomes. Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, Walumbwa and Chan (2009, p. 783) argue leadership development generates positive indirect consequences for individual employees (the leadership development participant’s peer group by sharing what was learned, and subordinate staff), the unit or department, and unit/organizational culture due to cascading effects. Lawson (2008, p. 10) defines leadership development as ‘strategic investment in a structured process that provides individuals with the opportunities, training, and experiences to become effective leaders in the organization’. This definition contains a number of presumptions: leadership knowledge, skills, and behaviours can be acquired through formal study and training; the study and training programs are planned; program participants have the opportunity to apply their newly acquired leadership knowledge, skills and behaviours; and all this is of benefit to the organization (McCaulley, 2008). The means to achieve these outcomes for any organization is not
straightforward. Jarvis and colleagues (2013) argue there can be frictions with the design and delivery of a leadership development program and methods used to assess the extent there is a benefit to the organization. They suggest there is often a simple ‘cause-effect’ attitude, where leadership development program inputs are credited with improved organizational outcomes (Jarvis, McCririck & Simpson, 2013, p. 33). However, they also note a tension between leadership development program evaluation as a process and evaluation as an audit trail (Jarvis et al., 2013, p. 41). With the former, Avolio et al. (2009, p. 780) suggest measurement criteria are often arbitrarily selected. For instance, Hiller and others (2011) identified four broad criteria by which leadership performances are measured: cognition (e.g. effects that leaders may have on the way individuals process information, or perceive themselves or perceive their work groups); behaviour (e.g. organizational citizenship and staff turnover); attitudes (e.g. motivation and emotions); and effectiveness (e.g. so called tangible outcomes such as profitability). They conclude different measurement criteria used can result in assessing the same individual as being ‘a fantastic leader’ or a ‘less than fantastic’ leader (Hiller et al., 2011, p. 1172). With the latter, Martineau, Hannum and Reinert (2007) suggest every leadership development evaluation scheme needs to be contextualised, Edwards and Turnbull (2013, p. 5) caution against using linear models of evaluation because of their insensitivity to towards ‘contextually related information’, and Packard and Jones (2015, p. 155) emphasize the necessity to have the method of evaluation ‘integrated into ongoing organizational processes’.

There is a dearth of research about leadership development in the Middle East generally, and Kuwait in particular. This paper reports the ‘organizational view’ of leadership development programs in three Kuwaiti commercial organizations, in order to gain insights as to why they established and maintain leadership development programs. One aim of the paper is to shed light on the assumed causal relationship between leadership development programs and manager and organizational performance (Dermol & Cater, 2013). While Black and Earnest (2009, p. 188) note ‘there are no known well-developed theories of leadership development grounded in what is learned through program evaluations’, it is uncertain if leadership development in Kuwait produces identifiable outcomes. The framework of Leskiw and Singh (2007) is used to ascertain the effectiveness of the three Kuwaiti
commercial organizations’ leadership development programs. Another aim is to identify barriers to
effective leadership development in the three organizations, such as those found by Al-Athari and
Zairi (2002). Partly due to the Anglophone bias in the development of leadership concepts, a further
aim of the paper it to understand if these Kuwaiti organizations perceive any tension between the
transnational and culture-specific dimensions of leadership characteristics. For instance, Jones (2009)
found non-Kuwaiti program providers inadequately anticipated cultural differences, where
insensitivities to Arab culture impedes the effectiveness of the program. Lastly, the limitations of
making firm conclusions from single-source data are acknowledged. It is important to appreciate what
the paper is not attempting to do: it does not seek to assess the quality of any program or assess the
merits of any evaluation method used.

In 2001 Abdalla and Al-Homoud (2001) reported less than 10 per cent of the Kuwaiti private sector
workforce was native-born, and the private sector in Kuwait rarely invested in training. In order to
address these problems, the Kuwaiti government established a program called ‘Kuwaitization’ with
the aim of providing Kuwaiti citizens with the opportunity to take the place of foreign workers in the
private and public sectors. This was implemented when the Manpower and Government Restructuring
Program (MGRP) was launched in 2001. The objective of the MGRP department has been to train and
motivate Kuwaiti employees to attain qualifications as well as encouraging the private sector to recruit
more Kuwaiti employees instead of foreign ones. Despite all such efforts by the government, the low
participation of Kuwaiti workers in the private sector remains a concern (Salih, 2010; Abdalla & Al-
Homoud, 2012, p. 6), though some desirable results can be identified. In 2010, 21 per cent of the
private sector workforce was Kuwaiti-born (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2012, p. 9).

Appreciating cultural influences – and national or regional culture – is part of the contextually related
information desirable for leadership development program evaluation. Kabasakal and Bodur (2002)
and Zaitouni, Sawalha and Sharif (2011) report research findings that suggest Kuwaitis have
traditionally valued uncertainty avoidance, ‘power distance’ with hierarchy and authority, and tend to
have a collectivist orientation. However, these cultural influences might be less widespread in the
private sector due to Kuwaiti employees’ exposure to leadership practices of Europe, North America and elsewhere (Muhammad, 2007). One could speculate that this produces dissatisfaction with traditional leadership practices; the ‘wasta’ (Salih, 2010; Al-Hadban & Al-Kandari, 2010). Nelson and Shraim (2014) found some evidence that Kuwaiti culture is being replaced with a transnational organisational culture. This could suggest that the national values of Kuwait may be in a transition phase where both indigenous cultural and cross-cultural factors influence the design, content and delivery of leadership development programs. In order to have a better understanding of leadership development programs and program evaluation in the Kuwaiti private sector, interviews were conducted with the directors of human resource development (HRD) or manager of training (titles varied) in three ‘Kuwaiti Commercial Organizations’ (KCOs); for-profit entities that may have a component of state ownership. Two of the KCOs are in the same general industry (KCO#1 and KCO#2) and the third KCO (KCO#3) is in a different industry to the others. All three KCOs are large in size, employing more than 1000 staff. While the focus of the interviews was leadership development program evaluation, a range to topics related to leadership development was also discussed. The interviews were conducted in late 2014.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND PROGRAM CONTENT

All three KCOs engaged in both general and management skills training and leadership development. KCO#1 provides general training for more than 1000 staff each year, with an emphasis on technical and interpersonal skills. It also has special programs described as ‘talent management’. These leadership developing programs focus on improving the leaders’ skills to help ‘ensure that they perform their job better, making sure that they can achieve the whole organizational objectives, taking into account the [KCO’s] overall strategy and long-term plans’. KCO#2 has training programs ‘for every career path’. A human resources information system (HRIS) is used specifically for leadership development in order to provide senior managers with the appropriate development opportunities of ‘international standard’ every year, where they can select a program from a range of options to participate in after considering the details – location, duration, objectives and course descriptions – of
each option provided. KCO#3 provides technical training for all employees. Its leadership
development programs focus on 12 identifiable team leader competences ‘that reflects their needs as
managers’.

The methods of nominating managers for leadership development differed in each organization. KCO#1 uses an annual appraisal of every senior manager to identify their development ‘needs and objectives’ and their individual training plans. If the manager is assessed at high leadership potential, and their job position is senior enough, they are selected to be one of the dozen or fewer to participate in the leadership development programs for that year. KCO#2 would like to offer leadership development to all its managers, and can see the benefits provided by these courses, but the training budget does not allow this to occur. Hence, only about ‘four per cent’ of its managers participate in leadership development each year. KCO#3 uses a sophisticated method reflecting the 12 competences to select candidates for leadership development programs. In consultation with the organization’s HRM department, managers compile a ‘training and development plan’ to reflect their particular needs. Then a table with appropriate training courses, dates and locations is sent to every manager in order for them to nominate a specific program. They then negotiate with their supervisor (a senior manager) for final approval to participate in the course. KCO#3 considers this process ‘puts the right person in the right place’ to enhance their overall skills, knowledge, and experience as preparation for appointment to more demanding leadership positions in the future.

That all three KCOs, to varying degrees, rely on external providers for their leadership development programs is not surprising. The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) – a state funded entity – has a decades-old practise of supporting the training needs of ‘high ranking employees’ in the private sector by providing leadership development placements for Kuwaitis at European and North American institutions (KFAS Annual Report, 2013). The range of leadership development programs used by KCO#1 is a combination of ‘off-shore’ and Kuwait-based (on-shore) locations. The programs are delivered by ‘well-known training providers … even if the training programs are really expensive’. Nevertheless, KCO#1 seeks to customize the program for its
managers’ particular needs, and is willing to ‘work with more vendors’ if appropriate. With the onshore programs for KCO#1, they try to identify a provider who ‘understands the overall [Middle East] business environment and Arab culture’. They also have a preference for practical rather than ‘academic’ course content. KCO#2 also uses internationally recognised off-shore providers because its participants will become ‘more educated with the latest leading techniques and methods’. Partly due to the costs involved with off-shore programs, KCO#2 has a preference for providers who can conduct their courses in Kuwait. They believe on-shore courses reduce travel time and thus allows for more of its leaders to participate in these courses. KCO#3 likewise uses off-shore institutions with an international reputation in order to expose the participants to ‘best management practices’. It too has a preference for practical rather than ‘academic’ course content. More recently it has moved towards using specially customized programs to better reflect the 12 competencies it desires from its leaders. Given the international aspects of the institutional providers and the range of nationalities of participants enrolled in these leadership development programs, the language of the programs is English. Hence, proficiency in spoken and written English is a prerequisite for managers from each of the three KCOs selected for the programs. Another prerequisite is that all participants have tertiary qualifications; though it is unlikely they would be appointed to their management position without a postgraduate qualification.

EVALUATION OF THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Al-Athari and Zairi (2002) examined the training and development activity in 77 Kuwaiti organizations, including results from 37 ‘private’ (non-government) organizations. The purpose of the study was to understand the extent to which these organizations evaluated the training and development provided to staff, the methods or procedures used for such evaluations, and the challenges the organizations confront when conducting evaluation. The Al-Athari and Zairi (2002) results for the private sector Kuwaiti organizations are useful to contrast with the attitudes towards leadership development program evaluation of the three KCO. Al-Athari and Zairi (2002, pp. 242-243) report a majority of Kuwaiti private sector organizations surveyed considered program evaluation
was very important. All three KCOs in this study likewise consider evaluation important. Al-Athari and Zairi (2002, p. 245) found the predominant evaluation model used was the Kirkpatrick model (see Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006), though for about half the private sector organizations this model was used only to a ‘small extent’. Both KCO#1 and KCO#2 are aware of the Kirkpatrick model, and both organizations seek to use the model (no other model of program evaluation – such as Brinkerhoff (2005) – was mentioned by the interviewees). While the KCO#3 director of HDR did not specifically nominate the Kirkpatrick model as the method of program evaluation used, there is strong evidence from sources other than the interview with the director of HRD that the Kirkpatrick model is used (internal KCO#3 ‘Leadership Development Journey’ document). In short, all three KCOs follow the Kirkpatrick model in varying ways as their method of leadership development program evaluation. The Kirkpatrick model seeks to evaluate programs at four levels: (1) the program itself (Reaction) – usually by using post-course participant evaluation forms; (2) the knowledge transfer process (Learning) – usually by assessing participant’s assimilation of new skills or knowledge; (3) application of the new skills and knowledge (Behaviour) – usually by assessing how the participants are applying in the workplace what was learned from the program; and (4) organizational change (Results) – usually by assessing if there has been a difference to organization outcomes (e.g. financial, quality, productivity, or customer satisfaction) (see Table 1). How the three KCOs apply the Kirkpatrick model varies for all stages, as the discussion below indicates.

Kirkpatrick Model – Level 1

Level 1 evaluation attempts to understand to what extent participants react favourably to the learning event, both the course overall and specific components of the program, such as content, materials used, schedule and delivery methods or style. This information is usually gathered by use of a questionnaire. Al-Athari and Zairi (2002, p. 244) found when evaluation was conducted the principal method used by the Kuwaiti private sector was a questionnaire (‘smile sheet’). KCO#1 uses a post-course evaluation questionnaire to gauge participants’ satisfaction with ‘course outcomes and quality’,

Insert Table 1 about here

---

Kirkpatrick Model – Level 1

Level 1 evaluation attempts to understand to what extent participants react favourably to the learning event, both the course overall and specific components of the program, such as content, materials used, schedule and delivery methods or style. This information is usually gathered by use of a questionnaire. Al-Athari and Zairi (2002, p. 244) found when evaluation was conducted the principal method used by the Kuwaiti private sector was a questionnaire (‘smile sheet’). KCO#1 uses a post-course evaluation questionnaire to gauge participants’ satisfaction with ‘course outcomes and quality’,
including satisfaction with ‘tutors [instructors or facilitators], venues, duration, materials, [and] documents’. An additional questionnaire is sent to participants shortly after they return to work where any recommendations to improve the program can be made. These suggestions are then given to the provider of the program. The information collected with these processes indicates ‘the majority of participants in different training and development courses are really happy with the overall outcomes’.

Similarly, KCO#2 uses a two-stage process. The first stage involves a representative from its HRM department asking participants – during the conduct of the training – if they are satisfied with the overall conditions and environment of the course. The second stage occurs when the leadership program is completed. Here, HRM department personnel gain information of ‘every participant’s experience in the training program to make sure that they reach the target and course expectations’ including attaining the expected knowledge and skills. These two stages do not use questionnaires, but rather ‘face-to-face evaluation techniques’. KCO#3 also uses a two-stage process. During the conduct of the program HRM department personnel ask participants if they are satisfied with the overall conditions and materials of the course. If the program is conducted off-shore HRM coordinators contact participants ‘to ensure their safety and comfort and to check that everything is moving smoothly’, and HRM department personnel ‘are available to them 24/7 if a participant needs to communicate any concerns about the program. At the conclusion of the program each participant completes a ‘Training Competency Survey’ to evaluate their overall experience, program outcomes, and program quality. The internal KCO#3 ‘Leadership Development Journey’ document describes this process as post-program feedback and quality control. This information is then used to update the profile and leadership development history of each participant so they can ‘be provided with other training courses that reflect their needs and fill the gap in their competences’.

**Kirkpatrick Model – Level 2**

Level 2 evaluation attempts to understand if the participants acquired the intended new knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a result of their participation in the learning event. This knowledge transfer is partly evaluated when participants progress through a program, course or program module and are assessed by the program providers as having achieved the objectives of the learning event. As all three
KCOs rely on European and North American institutions’ leadership development programs with international reputations as high quality training providers, knowledge transfer is somewhat assumed (confirmed by program participant interviews, though not reported in this paper due to space limitations). The HRD directors of KCO#1 and KCO#2 outlined the process each organization uses to supplement this assumption.

About three months after the conclusion of the program KCO#1 sends each participant an ‘evaluation form’. This questionnaire gathers information relevant for both Kirkpatrick model Level 2 and Level 3 evaluations (the Level 3 evaluation is accompanied with other evaluation processes). The Level 2-type information collected includes responses to the questions: ‘Do you think that this course is related to your job?’; ‘Do you think that you can apply most of what you gained from the training program?’; ‘I feel that this course has enhanced my overall performance’; and ‘I will recommend it [the recently completed course] to my colleagues’. KCO#2 uses an evaluation questionnaire for every externally provided training program that asks participants their ‘overall impression of the learning process being provided’. The information gathered with this questionnaire is compiled into a report and supplied to the participant’s supervisor. The participant and supervisor then discuss what support is needed for the participant to apply what they learned, and to ‘update their yearly training plans and objectives’. The interview with the HRD director of KCO#3 did not reveal a process that could be categorized as the Kirkpatrick model Level 2 evaluation. However, the ‘Leadership Development Journey’ document does describe just such a process to evaluate any ‘increase in knowledge before and after the program’. Information is gathered by methods including ‘learning logs’ and ‘peer and manager conversations’.

**Kirkpatrick Model – Level 3**

Level 3 evaluation attempts to understand the extent to which participants can apply what they learned during training when they return to their work, usually evaluated by identifying a change in behaviour. Level 3 evaluation is more complex than Level 1 and Level 2 evaluations as it requires a longer period of time for the change to occur and measuring the change can be problematic. For KCO#1 the
questionnaire completed three months after the conclusion of the program (which is also used for Level 2 evaluation) collects information that can be used for Level 3 evaluation. The relevant questions relate to changes in the participant’s overall behaviour, and includes questions ‘Do you think your contribution to the department has increased or not?’ and ‘Did the training program change the way that you are practicing your job or work?’. In addition, a similar behavioural questionnaire is completed by the participant’s supervisor, containing questions such as ‘Do you notice any change in the performance or behaviour of any specific employee in the last quarter?’. The results of participant questionnaire responses and the supervisor observation are then discussed between the two individuals. KCO#2 uses a somewhat more sophisticated procedure. Between three and six months after the course the HRM department appraises the participant’s performance by ‘applying the 360-degree assessment’. This involves a selected number of the participant’s subordinate staff assessing the ‘overall attitude and performance’ of their manager. Additionally, the participant’s peers (other team leaders or executive mangers) also assess the participant. Once more, the interview with the HRD director of KCO#3 did not reveal a process that could be categorized as Level 3 evaluation, though the ‘Leadership Development Journey’ document does. It describes a process to evaluate ‘the extent to which learning is applied in the workplace.’ The methods nominated include ‘360-degree feedback’ and the normal HRM activity of ‘personnel reviews … but timed and tracked to be pre- and post-program’.

**Kirkpatrick Model – Level 4**

Level 4 evaluation attempts to understand the extent to which when specific outcomes occur they can be attributed to the learning event. Arguably, Level 4 evaluation is the more challenging of all the Kirkpatrick model evaluations as it is difficult to identify a direct relationship between a particular leadership development program and an outcome. Bates (2004, pp. 344-45) summarized this concern: ‘The linkage between individual-level training outcomes and organizational outcomes is at best complex and difficult to map and measure even when training is purposely designed to address organizational objectives.’ For this reason indirect relationships tend to be inferred. For instance, Al-Athari and Zairi (2002, p. 248) found a range of indirect measurements were used by the Kuwaiti
private sector organizations in their study; customer satisfaction, employee job satisfaction, productivity, sales, profitability and even staff absenteeism rates. It is, therefore, not surprising that no director of HRD from any of the KCOs could explain how Level 4 evaluation is conducted in their organization. The director from KCO#1 explained ‘we try to follow Kirkpatrick’s recommended evaluation periods as much as they can’, yet implied an improvement in organizational outcomes is partly a result of the investment in their managers’ leadership development. If this were not the case the leadership development courses would be ‘a waste in terms of time and money’. The director from KCO#2 conceded a range of factors or variables – in addition to the leadership development programs – can contribute to positive outcomes. Any beneficial outcomes for this organization, such as improvements in the staff turnover percentage, overall business growth, and customer services quality, are indirectly attributed to leadership development. While the director from KCO#3 did not canvass Level 4 evaluation, the ‘Leadership Development Journey’ document suggests the methods used in this organization are the ‘normal reporting measures related to business objectives’. In this regard KCO#3 seems to be applying the methods nominated by Packard and Jones (2015) by incorporating Level 4 evaluation into ongoing organizational processes. In short, none of the KCOs conduct Level 4 evaluation with precision. This suggests the direct relationship between leadership development programs and improved organizational performance is not established in the three KCOs.

DISCUSSION

In summary, all three KCOs engage in leadership development. All three organisations rely on off-shore programs conducted by European and North American institutions for their more senior leaders, and also use on-shore programs for their non-executive managers. The preference is for practical rather than academic program content, with a focus on strategy. Two directors of HRD specifically mentioned that leadership development is of benefit to the organization: ‘investing in our leaders means investing in the whole organization’ (KCO#1); and ‘providing these courses [helps] achieve overall organizational objectives’ (KCO#2). The same two directors of HRD specially referred to the Kirkpatrick model as their organization’s method of evaluating leadership development, and apply the
model – with varying intensity – at three of the four levels. Given that these two organizations are in the same industry this could imply program evaluation is as much an industry practice as it is an organizational practice. Albeit the internal KCO#3 document ‘Leadership Development Journey’ explicitly mentions the four levels of program evaluation of the Kirkpatrick model (reaction, learning, behaviour and business results), the ‘silence’ of the director of HRD from KCO#3 regarding program evaluation can be potentially explained; evaluation is integrated into the organisation’s ongoing motivation and reward HRM functions and activities. For example, the director from KCO#3 remarked ‘external training courses play around 30-40% of the rewarding system for team leaders [sic]’. And the internal document refers to ‘normal business practice’ and ‘normal reporting measures’ for evaluating behaviour and business results, respectively. In short, all three Kuwaiti commercial organisations use the Kirkpatrick model. Unlike the Kuwaiti private sector organizations in the study of Al-Athari and Zairi (2002, pp. 245-46) – who only selectively applied the model to mostly Level 1 (‘reaction’) and to some extend Level 4 (‘results’) evaluations – the three KCOs in the present study have processes that also include Level 2 (‘learning’) and Level 3 (behaviour’) evaluations.

It would be wrong to suggest the Kirkpatrick model is easily adopted in the KCOs. For KCO#1 insufficient time, money and expertise were mentioned by the director of HRD as impediments to ‘applying the evaluation techniques effectively’. Another concern with applying the Kirkpatrick model raised by the director of KCO#1 is the cumulative effects of a manager’s participation in more than one course, program or program module in any six-month period. First, participants can be confused about which leadership development intervention the behavioural questionnaire – the Level 3 evaluation – is asking them to attribute any change in behaviour to. And second, both the participant’s supervisor and the HRM department struggle to precisely identify which program had the most influence on the participant’s behaviour. While this might suggest deficiencies with the way KCO#1 conducts its Level 3 evaluation, it can take several months before either supervisors or subordinates detect changes in a program participant’s behaviour, particularly in complex managerial situations (Baldwin, Ford, & Blume, 2009). Furthermore, this second aspect can be a problem with any leadership program evaluation, as Packard and Jones (2015, p. 165) note changes in participant performance over time can
be influenced by factors other than a single developmental event. Yet unlike the Kuwaiti private sector organizations in the study of Al-Athari and Zairi (2002, pp. 248-49), gaining the support of senior leaders in the organization does not seem to be an issue for any of the KCOs in the present study.

Finally, in the debate about program evaluation it can often be overlooked that a principal reason for conducting evaluation is to use the results to ascertain how the program can be improved (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006, Chapter 2). Al-Athari and Zairi (2002, p. 249) criticized Kuwaiti organizations because ‘no action is taken to improve training activity and training results based on evaluation’. All three KCOs have modified, or are in the process of modifying, their leadership development programs based on the results of evaluations. The HRD directors from KCO#1 and KCO#3 both commented their organization seeks to ‘customize’ the programs to better reflect the circumstances of either the industry or company. The HRD director from KCO#1 further commented the ‘future is to look for more coaching and E-learning training courses’ to reduce the disruption for its managers caused by participation in lengthy programs. The HRD directors from KCO#1 and KCO#2 also remarked they are now opting for programs and/or providers that are more amenable to ‘Arab culture’. Lastly, the HRD directors from KCO#2 and KCO#3 indicated something of a shift towards ‘collective learning’ of their leaders as a group – rather than individuals – by adopting innovations for managers to share the new knowledge gained from a leadership development program with their peer group.

CONCLUSION

In their review of the relevant leadership development literature, Leskiw and Singh (2007, p. 444) concluded that six fundamental elements contribute to effective leadership development: a detailed assessment for the need of the program(s); an appropriate means to select participants; suitable organizational infrastructure to support the initiative, the design and implementation of an entire learning system; a method of evaluation; and taking necessary actions to correct any shortcomings. From the information supplied by the three Kuwaiti commercial organizations all six of the Leskiw and Singh (2007) elements can be identified. The need for leadership development in larger
organizations is supported by research (Svensson & Wood, 2006; Ozcelik, Langton & Aldrich, 2008; Avolio, et al., 2009). A process to identify the managers who will benefit the most – be that due to potential, position or desired competencies – is used. Considerable financial and organisational resources are devoted to leadership development. Internationally recognised providers – reputable higher education institutions – are used. A system of multi-level program evaluation is used, that is both contextualized and a quasi audit trail. And each organization has identified ways to improve its leadership development.

Two of the three aims of the paper are fulfilled: while no obvious barriers, except for financial constraints, for the conduct of leadership development in the three organizations were detected, some barriers to conducting program evaluation were found; and tension between ‘Western’ concepts of leadership and Kuwaiti organizational culture were detected. The other aim – understanding the connection between leadership development programs and organizational outcomes – was not achieved, mostly due to the challenges of performing Level 4 evaluation of the Kirkpatrick model in the three KCOs. This finding was not unexpected, as most organizations struggle – for a number of reasons – to directly establish this causal relationship (Kennedy, Chyung, Winiecke, & Brinkerholff, 2014). Consequently, the findings of this paper add to the knowledge of why leadership development is pursued, and how these programs are evaluated. The findings also provide insights into leadership development in Kuwait, which suggest notable advances from the situation reported by Al-Athari and Zairi (2002). Despite all this, caution should be applied before it is concluded that leadership development in the three Kuwaiti commercial organizations is effective, as the data reported in this paper is only an organization perspective. Other sources of data, such as the program participants themselves, are needed to validate the information supplied by the three organizations (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009).
References


### Table 1: Kirkpatrick’s Four-Level Model of Training Program Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>What is evaluated</th>
<th>Why it is evaluated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
<td>This is a measure of how participants feel about the various aspects of a training program, including setting, materials, and learning activities. Reaction is basically a measure of participant satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>This is a measure of the knowledge acquired, skills improved, or attitudes changed due to training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>This is a measure of the extent to which participants change their on-the-job behavior because of training. It is commonly referred to as transfer of training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>This is a measure of the final results that occur due to training, including increased sales, higher productivity, bigger profits, reduced costs, less employee turnover, and improved quality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Kirkpatrick (1996) and Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2006).*