



LEVEL 7 ASSIGNMENT SPECIFICATION

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Programme:	DBA		
Module:	Approaches to Research and Academic Communication	Module Level:	7
Module code:	SBPD7001	Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):	100% (20%)
Lecturer:	Dr Millissa Cheung	Internal Verifier:	
Assignment Title:	Portfolio	Assignment No :	1 of 1
Hand Out Date:	7 July 2018	Submission deadline:	26 August 2018

Referencing:	In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have read or quoted in order to complete this assignment (e.g. for books: surname of author and initials, year of publication, <u>title of book</u> , edition, publisher: place of publication).		
Disclosure:	Please include the following statement on the title page of the submitted assignment, followed by your name: I declare that this assignment is all my own work and that I have acknowledged all materials used from the published or unpublished works of other people. All references have been duly cited.		
Student's Signature:	(Only where hard copies required)	Date:	
Turnitin: Lecturer to tick to indicate if an electronic version of the assignment must be submitted to Turnitin. Note: the Turnitin version is the primary submission and acts as a receipt for the student. All students MUST submit their assessments by the specified deadline. Late submissions will be subject to penalties.			YES
			✓

TASK DESCRIPTION

TASKS

Choose a well-focused topic in your field of interest. You are to prepare a critical review of the research carried out on this topic over the past ten years, in which you also fully examine the epistemological, ontological and ethical issues in this research. Your portfolio should consist of the following:

- A critical literature review and bibliography of key research carried out on your topic over the last ten years. (Note that you may also include older references if they are considered foundational for the more recent research.) (4,000 words, 50%)
- A detailed discussion of **one** of the research studies mentioned in your literature review, focusing on research philosophy, ethics, reliability and validity. (3,500 words, 30%)
- A thirty-minute oral defense (viva) of your research (20%)

LENGTH REQUIRED

7,500 words +/- 10%.

FORMATTING AND LAYOUT

Please note the following when completing your written assignment:

1. **Writing:** Written in English in an appropriate business/academic style
2. **Focus:** Focus only on the tasks set in the assignment.
3. **Length:** 7,500 words +/- 10%
4. **Formatting:** Typed on A4 paper in Times New Roman or Arial font 12 with at 2 centimetre space at each edge, 1.5 spaced and pages numbered.
5. **Document format:** Word
6. Ensure a clear title, course, and name or ID number is on a cover sheet and a bibliography using **Harvard referencing** throughout is also provided.
7. **Research:** Research should use reliable and relevant sources of information e.g. academic books and journals that have been peer reviewed. The research should be extensive.

The use of a range of information sources is expected – academic books, peer reviewed journal articles, professional articles, press releases and newspaper articles, reliable statistics, company annual reports and other company information.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This section details the assessment criteria. The *extent* to which these are demonstrated by you determines your mark. The marks available for each criterion are shown. Lecturers will use the space provided to comment on the achievement of the task(s), including those areas in which you have performed well and areas that would benefit from development/improvement.

Criteria	Marks Available	Marks Awarded
Identification and selection of appropriate research papers	10%	
Thematic structure	10%	
Critical evaluation	20%	
Writing clarity, style, grammar, correct use of Harvard referencing	10%	
Understanding of research philosophy	10%	
Critical discussion of ethical and methodological issues	10%	
Writing clarity, style, grammar	10%	
Presentation skills (Clarity, audibility, enthusiasm)	10%	
Ability to respond to questions	10%	
TOTAL	100	
Assignment Mark (Assessment marks are subject to ratification at the Exam Board. These comments and marks are to give feedback on module work and are for guidance only until they are confirmed.)	Late Submission Penalties (tick if appropriate)	
	Up to one week late, maximum of 50%	%

University of Wales Trinity Saint David
DBA Programme
Module: SBPD 7001

Approaches to Research and Academic Communication
Assignment: Research Portfolio 20%

- **A Literature Review on Corporate Core Competence**

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I. Introduction

- The **topic**: Corporate **core competence**
- Core competence is the “**engine**” of operational and managerial activities of a company, and “**crown jewelries**” of a firm.
- Core competence **underpins** a firm’s competitive strategies which enables the firm to achieve its sustainable competitive advantage for the ultimate objective of economic benefits.
- The presentation includes **two parts**: 1) a **literature review** on the topic, and 2) a **discussion** on a chosen article on the same topic of the literature.
- The literature review covered a collection of **24 papers** in the past ten years including older references. And the chosen article is **Core competence for sustainable competitive advantage: a structured methodology for identifying core competence** (subject paper) by Hafeez et al (2002).
- The **objective** of this review is to find out a **general view** of the topic over the past ten years. The **research issue** is to find out a **solution** to build core competence for achieving competitive advantage in a context of Chinese State-owned Enterprise (**SOE**) in Hong Kong.
- Key words:
- core competence, identification, building, leveraging, competitive strategy,
- sustainable competitive advantage, Chinese state-owned enterprise

I. Introduction (continued)

- The **research questions** are: **What** is the definition of core competence? **How** to identify core competence? **How** to build core competence? **How** to leverage the core competence? This review was lent by mainly three **philosophies**, the ontology, epistemology and axiology.
- The reviewer would present a **framework** of related subjects under the topic of competitive advantage and a **table of topic relevance** of the literature for analysis.
- In this literature review, the reviewer identified **a gap** based on a unique context among the literature within his interests. This gap was about the identification of core competence of Chinese **state-owned** passenger transportation **enterprise** in Hong Kong; because no such researches have been done on this topic (the niche).
- **Methodology:** Throughout this review, the basic methods used include **comparing, abstracting, summary, analyses, synthesis, and inference**. **24 papers** were included in this review according to the selection criteria: empirical studies, published in peer reviewed journals in the past ten years (including older references). Ten articles in full text were reviewed, and the rest of the papers were reviewed in sections of abstract, introduction, literature review, results, discussion and conclusion.

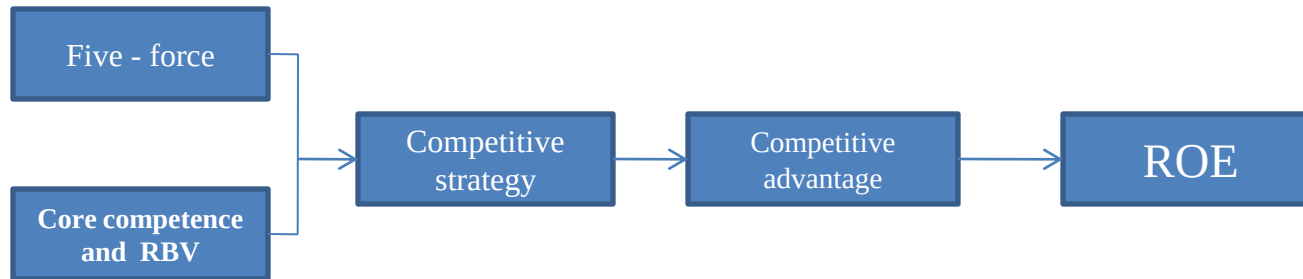
II. Literature review

II.1. The review

- Over the past **30 years**, researches had been rich and extensive on the topic of core competence (**Prahalad et al** 1990) since the concept was initiated on the basis of resources-based view (**Wernerfelt** 1984).
- The reviewer found useful information and acquired solid knowledge in the literature under **three categories** relating to the topic: **identification**, **building**, and **leveraging** of core competence. This literature review **provided a solid knowledge base** for understanding the concept of core competence and its utilization for futures studies on the topic to close the gap, and find solutions to resolve the practical problems for practitioners.

II.1. The review (continued)

The framework of sustainable competitive advantage



On this continuum, before the five forces and core competence there are other factors should be considered, such as the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions; and to the right end after the sustainable competitive advantage, there are factors like return on equity and other corporate economic objectives or benefits that should also be considered. In this literature review, the reviewer shall focus on the part of core competence.

II.1. The review (continued)

The table of topic relevance: Synthesis of literature and niche

Paper		Categories		
No	Context	Identification	Building	Leveraging
1	Definition	Prahalad et al (1990)		
2	Conceptual framework	Edgai et al (2011)		
3	Technology and innovation	Ball (1973)		
4	Definition and framework	Hafeez et al (2002)		
5	Core process	Boguslauskas et al (2009)		
6	Organizational knowledge	Scarbrough (1998)		
7	Small firms	Hussain et al (2006)		
8	Guidelines	Marino (1996)		
9	Quantity of elements	Lazarus (2002)		
10	Implementation	Prayor et al (2007)		

II.1. The review (continued)

The table of topic relevance: Synthesis of literature and niche

Paper		Categories		
No	Context	Identification	Building	Leveraging
11	Critical competence		Srivastava (2005)	
12	Integrated conceptual model		Liu (2012)	
13	Outsourcing		Mascarenhas et al (1998)	
14	Integration		Chawla (2015)	
15	Partnership		Sun (2013)	
16	FDI		Diez (2014)	
17	Micro-multinationals		Johnson et al (2014)	
18	HR development		Clardy (2007)	
19	Context-dependency		Ljungquist (2007)	
20	Auto industries in SEA		Hsu et al (2014)	Hsu et al (2014)

II.1.The review (continued)

The table of topic relevance: Synthesis of literature and niche

Paper		Categories		
No	Context	Identification	Building	Leveraging
21	Management of core compt.			Barney (1991).
22	Air cargo forwarding			Cheng et al (2007)
23	Risk of outsourcing			Mehta et al (2007)
24	Green core competence			Trott (2009)
Identification of gap/ niche for further studies:				
Context: Passenger ferry services by Chinese state-owned enterprise in Hong Kong		<u>Niche exist</u>	<u>Niche exist</u>	<u>Niche exist</u>

II.1. The review (continued)

Category analysis of literature

Category	Identification	Building	Leveraging	Total
Number of paper	10	10	4	24
Percentage	0.415	0.415	0.17	1.00

According to the tables above, it was salient that researches on core competences in terms of identification and building took a substantial percentage (83%) in the study of core competence; and the study in terms of leverage of core competence took only 17%. These facts revealed three implications: 1) more efforts had been made to the study of the core competence in terms of identification and building, 2) there were still plenty of rooms for further studies in terms of context or methodologies in the first two categories, and 3) there will be a boom in study in terms of leveraging core competence in future, when studies gradually fill up gaps appeared in identification and building of core competence, and after such knowledge were accumulated and built up. The table above could serve as a negative list, where any topics which were not included in the table could be gaps for future studies in terms of category, context or methodology etc.

The table shows in the literature what had been done; what had not been done; and what we can do in future. It also provides an organized and solid base of knowledge about core competence.

The reviewer identified **a significant gap** in the literature under review, which is in the domain of reviewer's interest, the study of core competence of passenger ferry services by Chinese state-owned enterprise in Hong Kong.

II.2. Philosophical considerations

Many researchers may agree that philosophies underpin the study of core competence. **Firstly**, Over the past years, researchers mainly concentrated their studies on **identification** and building of core competence(ontology). **Secondly**, from the axiological perspective, the findings of a study or the new knowledge should be of **significant value** both to the literature as a whole, and practitioners in the private sector. The contribution or significance of such studies should be of a high degree of **utility function** to the research community and the users; otherwise, studies would not be worth to undertake. **Thirdly**, 91% of the studies (22 cases) used **qualitative methods** in research, which should be considered as sensible and adequate. According to the Subjective – Objective Continuum proposed by Morgan, G. and Smircich, L. (1980), it can be interpreted as that researchers holding the view of core competence as insiders (**Emic perspectives**), they took a stance to the left of the continuum of subjective, who favored on the process of human being's interpretation of the reality of social phenomenon. These researchers mainly took qualitative research methods in their studies, which constituted as 91% of this review. Certainly, they were also considered as having the **positivist epistemology**.

II.3. Conclusions

The reviewer found **useful information** and acquired **solid knowledge** in literature under **three categories** relating to the topic: **identification, building, and utilization** of core competence. This literature review provided a solid knowledge base for understanding the theory of core competence and its utilization for futures studies on the topic to **close the gap**, and find solutions to resolve practical problems for practitioners.

III. Discussion on the chosen article

III.1. Format and conventions

The title of the article is *Core competence for sustainable competitive advantage: a structured methodology for identifying core competence* (subject paper) by Hafeez et al (2002).

Title and abstract

The title was considered as appropriate. The title consists two parts: the topic and the controlling idea. The title was well defined with a manageable topic and a clear defined context for developing research questions. This section has been adequately prepared and very straight forward.

Introduction

In the traditional section of introduction, the authors provided the back ground of the research, the objective and methodology of the research, and the relationship with other theories. The authors addressed the reasons of their research leading to the significance of their gaps study. The authors then justified their reasons. They explained the categorizing of corporate core competences and the provision of a framework of identification of core competences; and also explained the relationship between assets, capabilities, competences and core competencies. This section has been adequately prepared and very straight forward. It provided a solid path forward to lead audience to the main body of the paper.

III.1. Format and conventions (continued)

Literature review

In the literature review section, the authors did not use the conventional title, literature review as the title for this section, instead, the authors used four subtitles under this literature section, namely; 1) new waves of strategic management, 2) capability is formed by the integration of resources, 3) firm competencies are special capabilities, and 4) core competencies are flexible. The reviewer considered it as not appropriated.

Methodology

The methodology section came as the next. The power of objectivism of the quantitative analysis lies in its variance analysis which can reduce human's subjective bias. The major problem of this subject paper was the methodology deployed by the authors. From the analysis of this subject paper, the reviewer would consider that there were several major problems which would undermine the credibility of the study, because the instrument was not acceptable and the reporting did not refer to statistics in terms of mean, standard deviations, respondent rates etc. The reviewer consider that other methods like multiple regression or correlation methods may be considered in this case.

III.2. Philosophical considerations

The reviewer considered that the subject paper was logically clear; but the findings were not adequately proved in term of the lack of quantitative support for objectivism. The authors concluded that the core competence of the case company were promotion and customers services, and they took these two as generic core competences for manufacturing and service companies. The reviewer held that the reliability of the findings remains to be seen. The authors conducted the study from the ontological perspective, and applied a historical analysis approach. The authors took a much more subjective stance by just taking the qualitative methodology.

III.3. Conclusion

The subject paper was logically well organized and coherence to the main research issue for the purpose to define some important terms, and establish relationship between resources, core competence and competitive advantage, as well as develop a framework for identification of core competence. However, due to the obvious defects in the application of research approaches and techniques, the reliability and validity of the results and findings remain to be seen.

Acknowledgement

The author of this literature review appreciates and acclaims those diligent researchers for their valuable works; and would express his heartfelt thanks to Dr Millissa Cheung for her excellent lectures on this module.

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