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MANAGEMENT COMPETENCY MODELS AND THE LIFE-LONG LEARNING PROJECT: WHAT ROLE FOR ABSEL?

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ABSTRACT

Over the past seven years or so two models have been developed pertaining to a competency-based approach to business/management education, training and development. Some of the foundations to this approach resulted from a three year joint task force project by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) [17; 18; 19]. The two models, those of the American Management Associations (AMA) and the AACSB, provide a list of specific competencies which are thought to be relevant to above-average managerial performance. Early research by McBer and Company has led to the development of a validated competency model which has been used by the AMA. Several competencies in the McBer model are performance-relevant at the entry (supervisory) level of management. These and additional competencies from the AACSB model provide a rich area for future ABSEL research endeavors.

The AACSB Model

The first model arose out of efforts of the Accreditation Research Committee of the AACSB to develop an alternative "track" to accreditation/reaccreditation. The traditional track, labeled "research," is input oriented, sets standards as to number of terminally qualified faculty, volumes in the library, etc., and is costly for accreditation. The alternative and emerging track may be labeled "teaching" and is output based—that is, documented skills and competencies of graduates determine the quality and credibility of the program.

The competencies of the AACSB model are classified as being either "cognitive" (the knowledge areas of Accounting, Finance, Marketing and ten other areas) or "non-cognitive" or "behavioral." The behavioral competencies are shown in Exhibit 1* as a ladder of six categories. Those indicated at Levels 1 and 2 can be more readily taught. Those at higher levels (e.g. the values of business at Level 6) can be more effectively learned by the creation of conducive classroom environments via experiential exercises and simulations of various types. Such exercises and simulations can be aimed at a specific single competency or a cluster of competencies. Exhibit 2 lists, by cluster and on a preliminary basis, defines the twenty-one competencies of the AACSB model.

The AMA Model

Based on research by McBer and Company and later commentary by Boyatzis [1] and Winter, McClelland and Stewart [15], the American Management Associations began the delivery of a graduate level, competency-based management program in the fall of 1980. More recently, Powers [12] has viewed the model within the developmental process as related to people and organizations.

Exhibit 3 shows the competencies of the AMA model using the analogy of a tree. The trunk of the tree represents the competencies of the Individual and the three secondary roots are goals, values, and beliefs. The taproot of values is the

central concept, is linked to the AACSB competency of "values of business," and lends itself most directly to ABSEL endeavors.

The Life-Long Learning Project

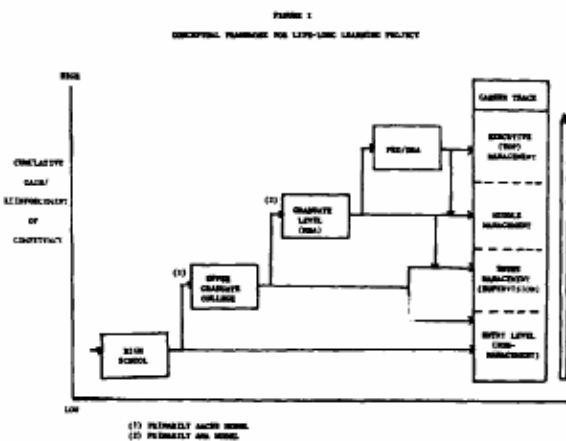
In 1982 the Wingspread Conference, as reported by Walton [13], re-iterated the need for business/ management programs to increase the emphasis on those competencies labeled "interactive, interpersonal, integrative, inspirational, intuitive or intra-organizational (13, p. 3)." By February 1984 the AACAB Board of Directors had approved a fifteen month, \$400,000 research project concerned with life-long learning for the professional manager [21]. In August of 1985, at the annual Academy of Management Meeting in San Diego, a symposium was held entitled "A Century XXI Corporate Megatrend: Life-Long Learning for the Professional Manager" (8).

The "Life-Long Learning" project seeks answers to such questions as: Which competencies can be taught (learned) at which point in time. In the total educational process of the manager, which institutions should teach these competencies (high school, undergraduate college, graduate school, of business organization) and what methods should be used (lecture, computer-aided instruction or simulation, experiential exercise)?

Model

Research conducted by McBer and Company as reported by Boyatzis [1] provides a solid basis for targeting specific

Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework for posing such questions.



competencies for ABSEL research endeavors.

* All Exhibits will be presented at the Conference and can also be obtained by contacting the author directly.

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Figure II shows the "job competence assessment method" as developed by McBer. The process used was the reanalysis of prior gathered raw data from twelve organizations, forty-one management jobs and over 2,000 people [1, Chapter 3]. The five sequential steps used were: identification of criterion measures, job element analysis, behavioral event interviews, tests and measures, and the development of the competency model. ABSEL can play a research role at any point in the five-step sequence with regard to any designated list of competencies.

FIGURE II
The Job Competence Assessment Method

Steps	Activities	Results
Identification of criterion measures	Choose an appropriate measure of job performance Collect data on managers	Job performance data on managers
Job element analysis	Generate list of characteristics perceived to lead to effective and/or superior job performance Obtain item rating by managers Construct weighted list of characteristics Analyze clusters of characteristics	A weighted list of characteristics perceived by managers to relate to superior performance A list of the clusters into which these characteristics can be grouped
Behavioral Event Interviews	Conduct Behavioral Event Interviews Code interviews for characteristics or develop the code and then code the interviews Relate the coding to job performance data	A list of characteristics hypothesized to distinguish effective and/or superior from poor or less effective job performance A list of validated characteristics, or competencies
Tests and measures	Choose tests and measures to assess competencies identified in prior two steps as relevant to job performance Administer tests and measures and score them Relate scores to job performance data	A list of validated characteristics, or competencies, as assessed by these tests and measures
Competency model	Integrate results from prior three steps Statistically and theoretically determine and document causal relationships among the competencies and between the competencies and job performance	A validated competency model

Source: [1, p. 42.]

Based on the statistical method of cluster analysis, performance-relevant competencies were determined for three levels of management: entry (supervisory), middle and executive. Those for the entry level are shown in Figure III, in the left-hand column labeled "AMA". It is to be noted that the listed competencies are performance-relevant at the entry level. It is also to be noted that students in the AMA competency program are both graduate students and practicing entry level and middle managers.

The right-hand column in Figure III shows competencies of the AACSB model which "closely" approximate those of the AMA model. The listed competencies in the right-hand column would appear, to a degree, to be relevant at the undergraduate college level. Further, those AMA competencies in the Goal and Action Management cluster might well be relevant at the high school level. Thus, Figure III points the way to competencies about which ABSEL could conduct research using the framework of McBer and Company.

In addition to the AMA and AACSB competencies listed in Figure III, eight additional ones may be added from the AACSB list. These eight do not appear to be closely linked to the McBer model. However, they would appear as basic to any person aspiring to a management career. Figure IV shows this additional list. With regard to future ABSEL research, competencies such as "perception of threshold social cues" and "personal impact" might require modified research designs using behavioral event interviewing and item ranking by practicing managers.

FIGURE III
AMA AND AACSB COMPETENCY MODELS
SELECTED COMPETENCIES AS BASIS FOR ABSEL RESEARCH

AMERICAN MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS (AMA)		AMERICAN ASSEMBLY OF COLLEGIATE SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS (AACSB)	
Cluster	Competency	Cluster	Competency
Goal and Action Management	Diagnostic Use of Concepts	Intellectual Ability	Analytic Thinking
Goal and Action Management	Efficiency Orientation	Work Motivation	Inner Work Standards
		Administrative Skills	Organizing and Planning
		Administrative Skills	Creativity
Goal and Action Management	Proactivity		
Directing Subordinates	Developing Others	Interpersonal Skills	Leadership (1)
Directing Subordinates	Spontaneity	Administrative Skills	Decision-Making (1)
Directing Subordinates	Use of Unilateral Power		
Human Resources Management	Accurate Self-Assessment	Work Motivation	Self-Objectivity
Human Resources Management	Use of Socialized Power		
Human Resources Management	Self-Control		
Human Resources Management	Stamina and Adaptability	Work Motivation	Energy
		Stability of Performance	Resistance to Stress
		Interpersonal Skills	Behavior Flexibility
		Stability of Performance	Tolerance of Uncertainty

(1) Competency appears to be much broader than indicated in AMA model.

FIGURE IV
AACSB MODEL
ADDITIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR ABSEL RESEARCH

Level (1)	Competency	Cluster (2)
2	Oral Communication Skills	IS
6	Personal Impact	IS
5	Social Objectivity	IS
5	Perception of Threshold Social Cues	IS
4	General Mental Ability	IA
2	Written Communication Skills	IA
3	Primacy of Work	WM
3	Leadership Orientation	WM
6	Values of Business	VB

(1) From Exhibit 1

(2) From AACSB Model. IS = Interpersonal Skills
IA = Intellectual Ability
WM = Work Motivation
VB = Values of Business

Future Roles of ABSEL in the Life-Long Learning Project

In Exhibit 1, competencies above Level 1 lend themselves to ABSEL activity and the development-implementation of experiential exercises and simulations. Two competencies in particular stand out---personal impact and business values. With regard to the former, such topics as mood therapy [2] and avoidance of external

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control of one's life [3] are but two examples of the nature and diversity of background material which needs to be researched prior to the development/implementation of specific exercises and simulations. With regard to values, Graves [5] has developed a powerful theory of "levels of existence" which has been adopted for corporate use by Flowers [6] and Flowers and Hughes [7] at the Center for Values Research.

Conclusion

If the competency models of the AACSB and the AMA prove to be of value in the process of business/management education, training and development, and if the AACSB's life-long learning project is able to answer such questions as to who (high school, undergraduate college, graduate school, corporate trainers) can most effectively develop which competencies for present managers and managers-to-be at what point in time, then it is apparent that ABSEL could (if it wished to) play a central role in this evolutionary educational process.

An exercise has been developed, for example, to create a learning environment within which both the competencies of "resistance to stress" and "accurate self-assessment" can be gained [9]. Ohio University has begun the process of applying the AMA model to both its undergraduate and graduate business programs [23]. However, if various emerging indictments of American business education [20] are valid, and business schools do not change their curriculum and pedagogy to reflect the shifting needs of corporate employers with regard to managerial competencies, corporate training and development programs will continue to grow relative to spending in business schools [4] and will even replace formal university business education.

One major contribution by Whetten and Cameron [14] points the direction in which all business educators might think of traveling. ABSEL can, if the will is present, play a not-so-small role in changing the way that professional managers for the 21st Century are educated, trained and developed.

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