TOWARD COMPETENCY-BASED MANAGEMENT EDUCATION:
THE INTERPERSONAL/COMMUNICATIONS CLUSTER

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ABSTRACT

This is the second in a series of panel discussions within ABSEL on the emerging issue of competency-based management education.

The first panel, in Orlando in February 1980, presented a 'troika' model of management education and presented findings of Phase I research by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). (6).

Following the 1980 ABSEL meeting, this author chaired a panel at the Eastern Academy of Management (May 1980, Bingamton, NY) which reported on research conducted by the American Management Associations (AMA), parallel to that of the AACSB. (7). The AMA had initiated a competency-based, graduate management program in its New York City facility in Fall 1980.

This paper and panel will focus on eight inter-personal competencies designated as an "integrative" cluster of non-cognitive attributes.

One of these inter-personal competencies, USE OF ORAL PRESENTATION, is discussed in more detail. Issues of structure and process are raised with regard to two questions:

- How can such a competency be taught! learned? (The issue of technology
  and pedagogy)

- How can behavioral change with regard to that competency be measured? (The
  issue of measurement)

THE AACSB RESEARCH

In reacting to increasing practitioner and academic concern about the structure and process of undergraduate business and MBA programs within the process of accreditation and reaccredidation, the AACSB has undertaken research in the area of competency-based programs. The underlying research question is to what degree can the current, quantitative bases (number of terminally qualified Ph.D's or M.B.A.'s on faculty) be adapted to include qualitative bases (competencies gained by graduates)?

In Phase I of the research, completed in 1980, six clusters and nineteen separate "non-cognitive attributes" were identified and defined (1, p. 23). Phase II of the research, begun in early 1981, is to conduct prototype testing of competencies in at least four diverse Eastern seaboard colleges and universities.

THE AMA RESEARCH AND PROGRAM

At the same time as the AACSB investigations were taking place, the ANA was digging in the same research terrain. Commenting on the work of David McClelland and his associates at McBer and Company, Coleman (3) observed that a competency-based approach to any type of education, training and development generates fear and great resistance from teachers, principles and B-school deans.

In the Fall of 1980, the ANA began a competency-based graduate management program which focused on four clusters and eighteen competencies (5, Attachment 3).

For purposes of identification and contrast Figure 1 lists the competency clusters and attributes derived from the AACSB and AMA research.

THE CONCEPT OF COMPETENCY

In its Phase I accreditation research, the AACSB stated that its goal was to

> improve the evaluation of quality in business programs... it is planned first to identify a set of output criteria which describe the educational process. These output criteria... take the form of a classification scheme for cognitive knowledge (subject matter principles) as well as a scheme for non-cognitive attributes (skills, attitudes and personal characteristics) desired of bachelors and masters graduates of schools and colleges of business administration and management. (1)

Thus the "output" criteria being currently examined by the AACSB consist of cognitive knowledge and non-cognitive attributes. Further, the role of the non-cognitive attributes appears to be even more important to effective business/management education then had been previously thought. Research by McBer and Company states that

> Our most consistent - though unexpected -finding is that the amount of knowledge one acquires of a content area is generally unrelated to superior performance in an occupation and is often unrelated even to marginally acceptable performance. (p. 103)

But, just what is a competency Klemp (4) defines one as "a generic knowledge, skills, trait, self-schema or motive of a person that is casually related to effective behavior referenced to external performance criteria." Thus, the attributes listed in Figure 1 for both the AACSB and the ANA fall within this definition.

The assertion that competencies are casually related to effective behavior brings them within the purview of ABSEL and the quest for simulations, experiential techniques and other pedagogies relating to human behavior within organizations. Finally, the statement that effective behavior is referenced to external performance criteria ultimately links the gaining of these competencies to the outcomes of organizations stated by Cohen et al (2) as: productivity, satisfaction, and (individual) growth and development.

For purposes of this panel discussion, the focus will be narrowed to the ANA model of competency-based education, training and development. Further, as seen in Figure 2, the framework for discussion targets in on the "integrative" cluster of eight inter-personal attri-

butes or competencies.

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

The AMA, in attempting to operationalize the definitions of the eight competencies in the inter-personal cluster, has indicated key "behavioral indicators" for each. Like bright beacons on a dark night, they allow illumination of how people would behave as they utilize such competencies. Figure 3 shows several key indicators for the integrative cluster.

The ANA program, in focusing on the Base Clusters shown in Figure 2, conducts individual audits at the beginning and end of the program. Figure 4 presents the "program flow" of the competency- based, graduate management program.

AN EXAMPLE: USE OF ORAL PRESENTATION

In order to examine some of the issues and problems with regard to the delivery and measurement of the competencies, "use of oral presentation" is presented as an example.

As mentioned above, there appear to be two questions of import. Question number one deals with the technology and pedagogy of teaching and having the individual learn the competency of "use of oral presentation." An examination of the key behavioral indicators connected to this competency will give clues as to what type of technology! pedagogy might be effective.

Non-verbal ("body language") and symbolic communication, the use of visual aids and the effectiveness of two-way questioning could be most effectively taught by color videotaping with capacity for various types of analytic modes such as used by the National Football League (e.g. instant replay, split screen, slow motion and the like.

The second question, that dealing with measurement, is more difficult to deal with. Symbolic communication, in an oral presentation, refers to mode of dress, presence and type of facial hair in men, length of hair of men or women, nature and type of female makeup and the like.

Facial expressions - a smile or frown -, eye contact, and nature, pitch, range and pacing of voice also have a bearing.

Many of these aspects of oral communications are addressed in the PONS test (profile of non-verbal skills) developed by Rosenthal (10) and his colleagues. The videotape of the PONS test is, essentially, content-filtered speech. In it, words cannot be heard distinctly but intonations can. Thus, people scoring high on the PONS are able to tune into the feelings of others.

There is one problem, though, the PONS test is the receiving of "body language" (voice, hands, face, body posture) cues. The development of the competency of oral presentation would have to focus on both the receiving and sending of such cues.

Additional aspects of the oral presentation competency might be speaking too slowly or fast, maintaining eye contact, number of "ums", "you knows"
or other distracting and empty vocals.

FIGURE 1

COMPETENCY-BASED BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS
AACSB AND AMA CLUSTERS AND NON-COGNITIVE ATTRIBUTES

AACSB	AMA
1. ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS	1. GOAL AND ACTION MANAGEMENT
1.1 Organizing and Planning	1.1 Efficiency Orientation
1.2 Decision-making	1.2 Proactivity
1.3 Creativity	1.3 Concern with Impact
	1.4 Diagnostic Use of Concepts
2. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	2. DIRECTING SUBORDINATES
2.1 Leadership	2.1 Use of Unilateral Power
2.2 Oral Communication	2.2 Developing Others
2.3 Behavioral Flexibility	2.3 Spontaneity
2.4 Personal Impact	
2.5 Social Objectivity	
2.6 Perception of Threshold Social Cues	
3. INTELLECTUAL ABILITY	3. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
3.1 Range of Interests	3.1 Use of Socialized Power
3.2 General Mental Ability	3.2 Managing Group Process
3.3 Written Communications Skills	3.3 Positive Regard
	3.4 Perceptual Objectivity
	3.5 Accurate Self-assessment
	3.6 Self-control
	3.7 Stamina and Adaptability
4. STABILITY OF PERFORMANCE	4. LEADERSHIP
4.1 Tolerance of Uncertainty	4.1 Self-confidence
4.2 Resistence to Stress	4.2 Conceptualization
	4.3 Logical Thought
	4.4 Use of Oral Presentation
5. WORK MOTIVATION	
5.1 Primacy of Work	
5.2 Inner Work Standards	
5.3 Energy	
5.4 Self-objectivity	
5.5 Career Orientation	
6. VALUES OF BUSINESS	

Note: Clusters are shown in bold type; attributes are shown in small type.

FIGURE 2

AMA GRADUATE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
MATRIX COMPETENCY CLUSTERS AND ATTRIBUTES

(as of January 1981)

Source: AMA Competency-Based Graduate Management Program

FIGURE 3

EIGHT INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES
SELECTED KEY BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

Interpersonal Competency	Key Behavioral Indicators
1. Concern with Impact	1.1 Need to Persuade Others 1.2 Concern with Image of Self 1.3 Concern with Image of Company
2. Use of Unilateral Power	2.1 Gives Orders Based on Rules 2.2 Gives Orders without Soliciting Feedback
3. Developing Others	3.1 Gives Performance Feedback 3.2 Provides Information to Help Task Accomplishment 3.3 Discusses Problems with Subordinates
4. Use of Socialized Power	4.1 Builds Political Coalitions 4.2 Models Desirable Behavior
5. Managing Group Process	5.1 Communicates Need for Cooperation 5.2 Creates Symbols of Group Identity 5.3 Promotes Commitment to Team
6. Positive Regard	6.1 Conveys Belief that Individual Can Be Effective 6.2 Expresses Belief that Individual Can Change/Improve Performance
7. Self Confidence	7.1 Presents Self in Forceful, Impressive Manner 7.2 Shows Low Ambivalence About Decisions Made
8. Use of Oral Presentation	8.1 Speaks Clearly 8.2 Uses Symbolic and Non-verbal Cues 8.3 Uses Visual Aids Effectively 8.4 Uses Two-way Questioning to ensure Understanding

FIGURE 4

A SAMPLE COMPETENCY PROTOCOL

Competency: Use of Oral Presentation
Base Cluster: Leadership
Definition with Behavioral Indicators:

Use of Oral Presentations is indicated by a person' making effective oral presentations to others. A person demonstrating this competency in a specific situation, event, or assessment unit:

BOTH:

a) Speaks clearly and convincingly to others,

AND ALSO:

b) Uses symbolic and nonverbal cues in order to reinforce or interpret the meaning of a verbal message; and/or

c) Presents diagrams, exhibits, or visual aids to an audience in order to illustrate and reinforce the message; and/or

d) Uses questioning of the audience and his or her response to questions from the audience to insure that individuals understand the message.

Format: Three or five minute oral presentations on the same topic over a four week period (two week spacing).

Technology/Pedagogy to be used:

a) Color videotape capability with instant or delayed playback;

b) Four cameras: three on presenter (left side, right side, front) and one scanning audience;

c) Analytic capabilities: split screen, zoom, slow motion, instant replay.

Event Measurement:

a) Counts of words spoken per minute

b) Count of distracting totals ("ums", "you knows", "ahs")

c) Count of number of non-verbal distractions (e.g. scratching nose)

d) Notation of number and type visual aids used

e) Use of prompting devices (note cards)

f) Use and nature of questions aimed at audience

g) Nature of fielding of questions from audience

From all this one might well develop a protocol for the delivery and measurement of a particular competency.

CONCLUSION

Moving to a large degree from teacher inculcation of knowledge to the student acquisition of skills (competencies) will be a painful process for educators in any field. McClelland succinctly stated this point over eight years ago (9).

The identification of clusters of and discrete individual competencies together with behavioral indicators provides a large step toward the goals of competency- based business/management education.

Many practitioner organizations, by their development of in-house competency-based courses, seminars and programs, are, in effect, flashing orange warning lights ac we educators.

The AMA competency-based, graduate management program is being watched most closely by training and development managers in many organizations. Is the ANA program the "wave of the future' in business and management education.

This paper has isolated out an "interpersonal" cluster of eight competencies seen as being valuable for future investigation. As a specific example, one of the competencies - use of oral presentation - has been used to "brainstorm" the issues of technology/pedagogy and measurement.

The challenge is thus clear to those of us in ABSEL who have an interest in developing new simulations and experiential methods which would aid in the development and delivery of competency based undergraduate business and MBA programs. If we don't move rapidly in the direction indicated, how long will it be before our function is rendered increasingly obsolete by programs such as that of the AMA?

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The following overviews represent differing perceptions of the concept of competency-based programs by panel participants.

George R. Craig, Jr., Bell Laboratories

The development of interpersonal skills, like any other skill, requires practice, practice, practice. We may never have enough time to practice our tennis skills, but time is not a problem in scheduling interpersonal skill practice. Interpersonal skill "practice" is going on whenever we are in the company of another person. For managers, this situation occurs frequently.

So, finding the time to practice, practice, practice interpersonal skills to develop them isn't the issue. The issue is, in my view, finding the opportunity to learn from the impact of our interpersonal "practice" sessions.

All of life presents opportunities to learns If most of the time spent by people in business organizations was in an environment where the object was to learn or understand then simulations, (and maybe even schools of business!) would not be necessary. However, most of the time spent by people in business is in an environment of doing, with learning viewed as, at best, a good side <u>benefit</u>.

When learning about the level of our interpersonal abilities becomes the major focus, as in appropriate simulations and experiential learning activities, then these activities can become a powerful tool in the development of our non-cognitive abilities.