

Raelin, Joseph A.

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WHITHER MANAGEMENT EDUCATION?
Professional Education, Action Learning, and Beyond

A Paper By:

Joseph A. Raelin

Professor
The Wallace E. Carroll School of Management

Boston College
Chestnut Hill, MA 02167
USA

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Abstract

As pedagogical approaches, the professional education model and more recently action learning have each made important contributions to the preparation of experienced students for management practice. Using some carefully chosen domains, these approaches, in particular their advantages and limitations, are reviewed. Some guidelines are then proposed to help develop a future model of management education which goes even beyond a synthesis of the two extant approaches.

WHITHER MANAGEMENT EDUCATION?

Professional Education, Action Learning, and Beyond

The proposition that paradigms are incommensurable has arisen from the view that a synthesis between competing paradigms is not only not possible but undesirable. It is not possible because the users of the respective dominant and alternative revolutionary paradigms speak in different languages (Kuhn, 1970). It is undesirable because it might exclude epistemological contributions unless they develop themselves in reference to the dominant paradigm (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Jackson and Carter, 1991). Yet, as one reviews the history of epistemology and thinks about our great traditions, for example, the Chinese yin and yang and Hegel's grand dialectic, it appears that human thought often evolves out of resolutions of critical dichotomies. Management education seems immersed today in such dichotomies, to wit, order and change, object and subject, and theory and practice.

Management pedagogy is likewise represented by two important yet dichotomous traditions: the professional education model and action learning. The professional education model was largely uncontested as the requisite learning paradigm throughout the bulk of this half-century except for an appreciation of premodern modes evident in such time-honoured practices as trial-and-error or on-the-job training. However, well-publicised critiques of the North-American MBA product, suggesting the helplessness of their so-called "professional" students let alone their recent unmarketability, have dethroned the professional education model from its former lofty position. Action learning has been preferred as a worthy alternative, though rejected as anti-intellectual by the modernist supporters of the professional education approach. It is moreover only applicable and comparable as a management learning alternative among experienced management students.

So management education now has its own duality to contend with as it searches for a resolution of its two extant traditions. This paper takes the view that neither a formal synthesis nor a "winner take all" competition is the way to resolve the current duality in management education. Rather, we need to carefully examine the critical contributions offered by both schools in an effort to develop new pedagogical models. The resolution of the current dichotomy in management

education therefore may transpire no so much as a synthesis as a reformulation which both integrates some prior perspectives and at the same time develops some altogether new domains of practicing thought. Before considering this reformulation, let's review the backgrounds of the two popular models of management education.

The Professional Education Model

Management education in North America, whether full-time or part-time, has taken on a decidedly professional orientation. Guided predominantly by two landmark foundation reports in 1959 (Gordon and Howell, 1959; Pierson, 1959), MBA programmes from that point endeavored to upgrade their intellectual rigor so as to measure up to their counterparts in the other academic disciplines. That would entail, according to these reports, an extension of coursework required of students and a careful screening of instructors whose credentials would have to include a full-scale research programme, one that would hold up under scrutiny by most any accredited academic department.

The pedagogical model that was borrowed in transforming MBA programmes is commonly known as "professional education," a modernist format well-established in preparing students for the learned professions (medicine, law, the ministry, for example). According to this model, professional students, in order to experience total immersion in their field, are segregated from those studying other disciplines (Raelin, 1991). They are bound by the unique concepts and language of their discipline as well as by sheer propinquity. As they face their rites of passage, marked by milestones of examinations, boards, and clinical trials, they naturally band together. As an intact group, they are exposed, through a protracted period of study prior to entering their chosen profession, to the discipline known as management. The conditions of instruction also take on a professional character, to wit, classes tend to be smaller with fewer large sections than what may have been the case in undergraduate school, there are more seminars in place of lectures, and

there tends to be greater personal contact between students and their professors (Abrahamson, 1967).

Not wishing to get into the debate here regarding whether management is or is not a profession (readers may consult my views on this in Raelin, 1990), it is nevertheless fairly self-evident that the professional education model is based on the notion that knowledge in a field can be substantially learned prior to entering that profession. An alternative view, known as "action learning," posits that what is of most significance in management cannot be learned prior to practice, that one "grows" into it as he or she develops a need to manage, that is, an inclination to work with and through others to accomplish objectives formerly worked on as an individual (Livingston, 1986).

As the recent dominant model of management teaching and research, professional management education has had to face a plethora of criticism, especially with regard to its outcome, particularly its graduates. Most of this criticism has been leveled against the prototypical MBA programme. Initially triggered by Hays and Abernathy (1980), the critique of the professional education model in graduate management education starts with the contention that graduates learn analytic detachment over insight. The critique then continues that, though uniformly trained, these students tend to be narrow, short-term-oriented, and overly technical, and that after their training, they actually reduce their commitment to life-long learning (Porter et al., 1989; Raelin, 1990). Back in 1985, Earl Cheit (1985) in a review of more than 200 articles identified 13 major complaints against North American business schools grouped under four headings that are still pertinent today: they have emphasized the wrong model, they have ignored important work, they have failed to meet society's needs, and they have fostered undesirable attitudes. MBA programmes whether full- or part-time suffer the risk of leaving students with the impression that management problems can be nestled into neat technical packages. But, as Robert Reilly (1982) asked, can their graduates think independently, function without sufficient data or extrapolate beyond given data, change their approach in mid-stream, negotiate, and continually reflect and inquire? In a compelling example, he depicts the shock of a fresh MBA-trained manager who finds out that a product line divestment decision has less to do with marginal cost analysis than with personal affinity to the line on the part

of the CEO who began his career with the brand.

Nevertheless, the traditional model which we associate here with professional education offers some distinct advantages particularly to the extent that one values basic theory as it applies to practice. Indeed, theory's role is often to throw light on the assumptions underlying practice. Further, we cannot afford to leave the domain of practice exclusively to the busy practitioner. In a qualitative analysis of managers prior to their enrollment in an MBA course, Viljoen et al. (1980) found that although they had a good grasp of the necessary skills of management attending to their respective organisations, they were unable to develop a cohesive, abstract theory about management. Hence, theory in illuminating and describing action, can provide managers with a common language and wide powers of analysis (Thorpe, 1988). Finally, aside from theory alone, there are some technical subjects, such as financial accounting and control, which are perhaps most effectively taught in a comprehensive and self-contained manner, in other words, using the traditional classroom setting.

The Pedagogical Approach Known as Action Learning

The model known as "action learning," which has become fairly well-established in the U.K. but is practically unknown in North America, is representative of an alternative view that shuns the introduction of theory without almost immediate exposure or application to practice. For those readers unfamiliar with this approach, a discussion, admittedly more extended than that to which we accorded the more familiar professional education model, is given below.

Paraphrasing one of its original exponents, Reg Revans (1971), action learning as a pedagogical format refers to adult educational programmes based upon the idea that managers (as students) learn most effectively with and from other managers and teachers while all are engaged in the solution of actual, real-time problems occurring in their own work settings. It emphasizes learning by doing. Often, the "doing" is preceded by a theoretical modular unit on a given topic or functional area of management. Following the presentation of this conventional component,

programmes typically incorporate a real live project which is sanctioned by organisational sponsors and which has potential value not only to the participant but to the organisational unit to which the project is attached. Projects, then, have recognized clients who take a genuine interest in the assignment, but who at the same time apply normal business pressures to ensure a high quality outcome within a particular period of time (Margerison, 1988). Throughout the programme, managers work through the projects with assistance from other participants as well as from qualified tutors who help the managers make sense of their project experiences in light of relevant theory and managerial competencies.

As might be expected, not all organisational problems are solved. Moreover, proposed solutions may be deemed by management to be too costly in time or money. It is even possible that participants may realise that no quick solution is available. Hence, the experience tends to confront participants with the constraints of organisational realities, leading oftentimes to their discovery of alternative and creative means to accomplish their objectives. In any event, projects almost always require some kind of output which can be evaluated. Often, a lengthy written statement detailing project aims, performance, and recommendations is prepared (Noel and Charan, 1988). This report, however, is not meant to merely describe the "results," as much as detail the learnings and competencies addressed in the experience as well as the real constraints which may have blocked proposed interventions.

The action referred to in action learning cannot be temporary or simulated. Students need to take real positions, make moral judgments, and defend them under pressure. Dealing exclusively with simulated events risks defusing or abstracting their live conflicts. Cooperation typically is obtained where it otherwise may be impossible, and problems of an emotional or political nature get neatly analysed into solutions. What action learning as a form of management education tends to elicit - as opposed to contrived experiential approaches or case analyses - is managerial behaviour not student behaviour. Unfortunately, in most experiential methods, students derive knowledge about management but are most likely lacking in knowledge about their own capacity to take action, or more simply, how to take action.

There is no more powerful learning device in the action learning method than the tutorial group or, as Revans calls it, the "action learning set." Tutorial groups assemble managers working on real problems in their respective organisations. During the tutorial sessions, the managers discuss not only the practical dilemmas arising from actions in their work settings, but the applications or misapplications of theories and concepts to these actions. Further, the tutorial group develops a social culture in its own right which presents participants with lessons regarding group dynamics. Finally, group members provide encouragement to one another. The tutorial discussions in their own right, then, teach the critical managerial lessons of providing and accepting criticism, advice, and support, and testing publicly one's espoused beliefs and values (Argyris, 1982).

As is evident from the foregoing discussion of action learning, theory is not separated, be it temporally or epistemologically, from practice. Action learning disputes the view that management can be learned in an isolated lecture apart from experience. The principles introduced in an instructional module become meaningful only to the extent that they are deliberately introduced into practice. As suggested above, no laboratory or simulated experience can replace the test of real experience to assess the impact of theory.

Nevertheless, action learning detractors feel that most AL programmes privilege practice at the expense of theory. There is much in theory which can inform spontaneous inquiry. Theory releases practitioners to see the problems they confront in new light; further, it might even reveal problems heretofore undiscovered or left fallow for lack of recognizable solutions. There are also concerns whether action learning programmes are truly concerned with management education per se since their methods are more akin to what we commonly think of as management development.

Management education sees management as a discipline that can be learned through classroom and other applied pedagogical techniques normally in degree-granting institutions. Thus, it tends to focus on the delivery of a broad range of conceptual knowledge in the various fields and functional disciplines of management. University-based programmes of this kind are offered typically in two formats: programmes tailored for a company or consortium of companies and formal coursework that employees pursue mostly on their own but under corporate sponsorship. Management

education, then, emphasizes broadening of knowledge through exposure to academic content and networking with fellow programme attendees (Vicere and Freeman, 1990).

Management development, in contrast to management education, is undertaken normally to benefit the organisation as much as the individual by making employees more effective contributors to the corporation's mission. It also typically has a secondary goal beyond skill development of transmitting the norms, values, and culture of the organisation (Lees, 1992). Of course, management development is typically delivered through means other than formal courses, such as skill-practice sessions, job rotation, individual coaching, mentoring, or special assignments (Keys and Wolfe, 1988).

Some of the aforementioned methods have of course made their way into educational programmes. Although distinctly an applied format, action learning can nevertheless be deployed in a formal educational programme which would be concerned with providing a broad range of knowledge which interconnects the functional areas of management. It can also be used in a management development context, for example, by presenting students with prearranged, short theoretical modules and then exposing them to select organisational problems.

Part-Time Graduate Management Education

Action learning exponents would certainly line up besides those who believe that the most appropriate audience with whom to introduce managerial education is experienced students who can deploy the principles of management on-line. They even question whether one should be teaching management to inexperienced students altogether (inexperienced in the sense of not having had managerial experience or responsibility). Moreover, action learning is not really workable in full-time settings since it requires real work experiences. Part-time education, therefore - also referred to as post-experience education - affords the only basis for a relevant comparison to the professional education model.

The part-time option in graduate management education affords management educators a

paradigm, heretofore viewed with suspicion in North America, which views the real world as an appropriate location for learning. Since managers are stakeholders in the problems which they attempt to solve, their real problems can become the focus of study. Hence, an action learning orientation would suggest that management shouldn't be taught in isolation from its organisational culture since that culture is shaped by other managers and organisational groups with whom the manager/student interacts. In fact, it is quite conceivable to consider sponsoring in-company MBAs which, with the proper controls exercised from the academic side, can provide a virtual common laboratory in which to conduct one's experiments - the experiments being nothing more than live projects the impact of which can be assessed by like-minded colleagues.

MBA part-time programmes in North America are not particularly distinctive pedagogically from full-time programmes. The principal difference from the full-time option seems to be that the programmes are run by necessity over a longer period of time. What little research there is examining differences points to distinctions based more on the nature of the client than the programming. Boyatzis and Renio (1989) found in their American MBA sample that part-time students entered the programme with a higher level of skills, presumably a function of age and experience, and thus did not change as much in their abilities relative to the full-time students. Hemmasi et al. (1989) reported that the MBAs which they studied outperformed undergraduate business majors in more generic managerial competencies, such as task involvement, conflict management, and tolerance for independence; yet, 80% of their sample were part-time evening students holding full-time jobs. Their finding supports a conclusion drawn in an early study by Gutteridge (1973) contending that employers are attracted not so much by the educational process of MBA education but by the fact that some are older, more mature, and are more committed to continuing education - no doubt part-time phenomena. But what about the educational process? Is there not pedagogical value to be derived from an MBA beyond its use as a screening tool for prospective employers?

The Contributions of Professional Education and Action Learning According to Six Pedagogical Domains

It is conceivable that both the professional education and action learning models offer distinct pedagogical advantages in preparing our experienced students for management practice. Before considering any alternatives, it might be useful initially to outline their respective contributions, and, in comparison to one another, their limitations. We start by presenting in Table 1 some carefully chosen domains which can illuminate some of the key pedagogical decisions associated with the part-time option in graduate management education, the apt basis for a valid comparison between the professional education model and action learning. For purposes of this exposition, the two sides are presented as end-points along a continuum. In reality, they are closer together, for example, some professional education approaches in their use of experiential methods and skill-practice classes emphasize practice. Likewise, some action learning programmes pay great heed to the exposition of theory in order to introduce particular functional subjects. Yet, the continuum format, though overdrawn, is designed to show substantially different philosophical approaches which might lead to integrative schemas or even reformulations of both the content and process of management education. The discussion to follow briefly considers the six pedagogical domains depicted in Table 1.

Theory vs. Practice: We have already stressed that theory has its place in part-time programmes and may be even more critical than in the full-time option since it is the principal means of challenging the assumptions underlying day-to-day practice. Using theory, the manager/student is able to reflect upon and actively experiment on the outcomes of any meaningful intervention. It further introduces the manager/student to principles which can be applied across new and different problems in different contexts. Hence, theory is virtually necessary in management education if students are to develop the capacity to deal with change and with the future. Most conventional MBA programmes, though somewhat skeptical of presenting theory in isolation,

clearly find it convenient to present theory using traditional lecture and discussion methods. Their challenge seems to be one of introducing it so that its message leaps off the page and into the problems of the workplace.

Action learning has already been cited as privileging practice at the expense of theory. It starts with the assumption that practice must be experienced on-line, using actual live, not simulated, problems attending to one's job with all its accompanying pressures and responsibilities. But, practice and theory must converge so that one may inform the other. Beyond merely engaging them, however, action learning needs to be developed in such a way that instructors as well as students create a theory of practice to assist in making sense out of the confusing situations confronting the manager each day. This latter development, which Donald Schön (1983) refers to as "reflection-in-action," would be characterized by a rethinking process which attempts to discover how what one did contributed to an unexpected or expected outcome, taking into account factors unique to the interplay between the individual manager and his/her local operating context as well as the interplay between theory and practice.

Academic vs. managerial assessment: If theory's role in part-time education is as much to inform practice as to be developed for its own sake, then assessment of theoretical competency using professional education formats, namely through formal, written examination, becomes inherently problematic. It is also commonly known that the best managerial students (gradewise) do not always make the best managers. Furthermore, managerial excellence may emerge at different stages in varying degrees during one's career. Hence, it may not be entirely appropriate to use standard academic criteria as the basis for assessment and even admission to graduate management programmes. However, if a theoretical review of a certain literature is confined to a problem or project, as it tends to be in action learning, and not to an overall presentation of a subject cluster, then how can external examiners of part-time programmes be assured that students know enough about the principal theoretical contributions associated with a given managerial subfield to be regarded as having mastered it?

The problem for action learning in this instance is determining the criteria to be used in assessing project work or papers attached to specific company-based assignments. Perhaps the criteria should be those associated with everyday workplace assessment. The danger of course is that using managerial experience as the sole basis for the curriculum and using managerial performance as the sole basis for the assessment of educational performance might be insufficient indicators of the critical competencies which we would desire our managers to have once certified through our graduate programmes.

Breadth vs. depth of subject coverage: In spite of the occasional call for more specialisation in traditional MBA programmes to distinguish them from undergraduate business degrees (Hunt and Speck, 1986), the essence of professional education is breadth of coverage. The fundamental curricular assumption is that students should obtain a foundation in the core functional subjects, specialize somewhat in their majors or concentrations, and then fill in the gaps in their knowledge on the job. One cannot hope to be effective as a manager without at least some basic grounding in the core disciplines. Yet, reliance on coursework has been called into question. Where courses have made an impact, they have been reported as being interlaced with experience, to have occurred later rather than during the initial phases of one's career, to have dealt with general management issues surfaced through interaction with other managers, and to have offered insight through direct application to current problems (Davies and Easterby-Smith, 1984 ; McCall et al., 1988). So, there is some doubt about the value of presenting an overview of the critical subjects of management without applying some of the existing theory in-depth to current issues.

In action learning formats, the student may pick one area of study using selected theories and probe to a depth which oftentimes exceeds the available resources supplied by a teacher or a tutor. However, this probing, though stimulating search activity as part of the learning process, is oftentimes made at the expense of breadth of coverage.

Technical problem-solving vs. problem-finding: One of the benefits of post-experience,

part-time programmes is the value of applying classroom knowledge almost immediately to problems encountered in the work environment. Since full-time students do not have the luxury of untangling a messy problem as part of their job, they and their professors may find it more comfortable to work on technical problems which almost always afford a clear answer.

Unfortunately, the same lectures prepared for the full-timers, indeed the same classroom methods, are typically recycled in the part-time classes. Yet, the technical analytic approach is limited in what it can offer the general manager. Even the exalted case method often suggests rather neat solutions to what are typically personal, emotional, and political problems.

Action learning presents the student with the need to acquire an aptitude (rather than a skill) to change one's approach in midstream and to often use new information and ideas never before taught. This aptitude complements what Leavitt (1987) referred to as "path-finding," meaning the process of sustaining vision, creativity, and imagination in the face of adversity by relying upon strong values. Yet, can action learning prepare students for problems not confronted in the learning set? Without analytic problem-solving skills, client- or peer-based approaches may deprive the manager of frameworks for interpreting familiar yet conditional phenomena.

Teacher vs. learner-centered focus: Although the full-time teacher can be very creative in forming learning cells which simulate work experiences and present problems to students which they themselves must confront and resolve, the direction of learning typically leads from the teacher to the student. In part-time education, this need not be the case since the day-to-day operating problems of the student may constitute the basis for the lesson. Yet, the tradition in professional education is still to rely upon the teacher to "structure" the lesson.

In action learning the role of the teacher changes. Although teachers introduce new material, once in tutorial session, they become informed observers and reflectors of actual experiences. Tutors serve to facilitate the set group, provide support, and both demonstrate the use of theory in practice as well as bring out theory from practice. Of course, teachers and tutors constitute roles occupied in some programmes by different people. Nevertheless, by relying on student problems as

curricular input, are we not sacrificing the perspective of the academic professional - the teacher - who by initiating a lesson might demonstrate some established methods and ideas for responding to a variety of managerial dilemmas?

Protected Experimentation vs. Real Risk: Academic life provides a safe haven to study organisational life objectively and reflectively. It is critical that experienced managers take time during their careers to question their purposes and intentions with trusted colleagues. In this way, they might be able to narrow the persistent gap in management between one's espoused beliefs and one's practices (Raelin, 1993). Although one can anticipate ethical dilemmas in subsequent experience, novices are often overcome by socialization pressures - to conform, to be loyal, to fit in - once they embark on their careers. It is perhaps more appropriate that experienced managers experience an opportunity to reflect upon their values in practice, but in a protected environment. Yet, in action learning, does the programme afford the necessary security to allow public reflection when one may be discussing sensitive corporate matters with one's immediate peers present? Might there be a threat to academic autonomy and freedom when relations with corporate sponsors become dependent on minimal conformity to corporate standards and compliance with rules governing corporate secrets? As action learning is by definition on-line, there may be a limit as to how much experimentation one is willing to undertake when real risks are at stake. Of course, pressure to conform is not an unfamiliar constraint in the traditional academic environment and thus requires equal surveillance by the academic professional.

Toward a New Approach to Management Education

The foregoing discussion has highlighted the contributions made by the two current dominant traditions in management education, particularly at the part-time, post-experience level, according to six pedagogical domains. It has further suggested that these traditions are in a

dichotomous state and thus ripe for resolution. Although resolutions tend to resort to integrating themes, the approach developed here will also incorporate some altogether new domains of practicing thought. The analysis will continue, then, by reconsidering each of the six domains in turn and offering a resolution which, in some cases, will be a synthesis, in others, a somewhat new formulation. In this presentation, I will relax to some extent the prior comparative constraint that applications be derived only for the part-time option. The resolution is depicted in Table 2.

A Theory of Practice: Although theory and practice each make important contributions to management education, their continued separate treatment can become dysfunctional unless we concurrently develop an epistemology of inquiry that can allow practitioners to contribute to the knowledge base. We are still quite uninformed about the tacit processes and sense-making underlying managers' work and thus have very few cognitive models to consult in order to appreciate their epistemic development. For example, we don't know enough about how experts develop the ability to reframe in action rather than stop and think as novices are inclined to do. Some of the abilities which practice theoreticians need to help us differentiate would be frame analysis, pattern recognition, and reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983; Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986). For example, if a pattern conventionally used to respond to a given situation no longer fits because of changes in the situation, how does a practitioner learn to reframe the situation on-line and perhaps alter the ineffectual pattern? Deeper understanding of reflective practices can be particularly important in these instances to help free practicing managers from habitual and oftentimes inflexible ways of viewing phenomena (Freire, 1970).

Strategic Assessment: Regarding the role of assessment, student evaluation should include academic and managerial components but should incorporate a broader strategic perspective focusing on the student's recognition of the complexity of the environment of business, including an appreciation of the organisation's key markets and constituencies. In this way, management education and development becomes linked to corporate strategy. The strategic process, a form of

future sense-making to enhance the readiness and competitiveness of the organisation and all its systems to respond to unpredictable environmental demands, requires a team effort and thus should be applicable at all levels of management. The development of strategic leadership, defined by Vicere (1992) as the ability of managers to stay the course in an organisation while continually "rocking the boat," should be ongoing so as to insure the full participation by all managers in the strategic process. Strategic assessment casts a wide net around the manager's potential in order to incorporate such orientations as interpersonal relations, development of others, network-building, development of new markets, and even self-worth. Hence, while strategy shapes management education, management education in its own right, in its development of leaders and corporate citizens, becomes a key source of competitive advantage.

Wisdom: Although management phenomena are usefully examined in both breadth and depth, both approaches may be insufficient when preparing to confront novel or even contradictory situations. Each tends to be applied with a supposition that the field of management can be known in advance using systematic, logical inquiry. It's just a matter of correctly compartmentalising the field or applying the right criteria to fit the right problems.

Once managers enter the world of practice, no matter how hard they try to apply universal criteria or use advanced analytic techniques, they confront cultural, moral, and personal idiosyncrasies which defy categorisation. Moreover, probing for the most elegant solution to a heretofore undefinable solution has little value without an understanding of the social construction of the organisational system in question.

Heretofore deemed unteachable in many quarters, we need to revisit the fundamental domain of wisdom, that is, ways to add values back into knowledge (Cunningham, 1990). Wise people go far beyond scientific explanations of puzzling phenomena for they also consider what needs to be explained. They recognise that theories and techniques are themselves value-laden and thus become subject to ethical as well as empirical criticism (Keeley, 1983). Pedagogical approaches which encourage students to explore the personal processes through which they construct reality and

which invite their peers to share their own enactments might serve to accelerate the acquisition of wisdom. Finally, although long proposed by Argyris (1982), we need to create on-line learning environments which permit and encourage managers to test their mental models, especially their inferences and assumptions about others and their own behavior.

Contradiction: Not replacing but supplementing both problem-solving and problem-finding is the notion of contradiction. This domain brings out the stark observation that many of our ideas and analyses of managerial and organisational phenomena are assumptions and only assumptions and that, at times, we really cannot forecast the future let alone understand the present. Learning in this instance may be characterised more by interpretation than by description and analysis.

There is a place, nevertheless, for traditional problem-solving especially when dealing with recursive processes which would be pointless to re-craft. Likewise, problem-finding is called for when the need to sustain a vision becomes primordial to the organisation or unit. Whereas traditional professional education excels at teaching technical problem-solving and analysis, action learning formats do a better job helping students develop problem-finding capacities, such as developing creative responses or questioning current practices.

Action learning typically does not go far enough, however, in exposing students to work contradictions or situations never before conceived. Managers need to learn how to conduct themselves when faced with persistent change and uncertainty. They need to reformulate continuously how to do their job and develop new tools on the spot to address altered work scenarios. What is being called for is a broadening of action learning to make it as much experimental as existential. Hence, action learning project work might address not only existing problems in the field but also novel or even at times mundane issues which, though not classically problematic, could be framed or reframed and then acted upon. For example, a manager might be asked to examine an accounting system that is functioning perfectly well but has neglected the accounting of a social cost, be it environmental degradation or employee malaise, heretofore unborne by the

company.

Learning Environment: There are naturally times when teachers should take responsibility for learning within a group and other times when the responsibility should shift to the student. It is not so much a question of which focus to emphasize but rather one of creating a learning environment where everyone is free to study and to grow. Teachers in a learning environment, then, being as committed to the learning process as their students, would not impose interpretive schemes on the problem field. They might, of course, volunteer their frame of the situation on-line and might propose various inquiry modes. For example, they might contribute their skills in individual creative processes or in group decision making techniques, much as a tutor does in an action learning set.

The learning environment values diversity, not so much of preconceived demographic categories, but of perspectives. It benefits from the full contribution of various stakeholders, who view the content of the problem field from personalized dimensions, as well as thinkers, who contribute various modes in which to consider the process of the activity. A learning environment thus seeks to establish a functional interdependence among diverse perspectives in order to account for changing circumstances, values, and needs.

Collaborative Forum: Rather than choose untested experimentation in the superficial academic environment or real problems constrained by organisational conformity, the educational setting might be configured as a collaborative forum wherein academic programmes and their far-sighted corporate sponsors might mutually engage to develop new ideas and approaches. Using the aforementioned concept of learning environment, the collaborative forum assembles not only a diverse set of stakeholders but an unbounded set of perspectives so as to receive the input of a wide range of opinions and values in the inquiry process. The structural principle represented here is often referred to as a heterarchy wherein responsibility for learning becomes everyone's responsibility (Morgan and Ramirez, 1983; Maccoby, 1991). The structure is fluid and open and

is purposely not meant to settle into a fixed hierarchical mode. Indeed, leadership of the forum might shift according to the capacities of those who are able to contribute. Finally, although these democratic procedures receive a good deal of attention, the collaborative forum would nevertheless focus ultimately on the consequences of democratic action. The consequences refer to change and transformation at the institutional level and learning and growth at the individual level.

The six domains just depicted represent ideas which together may form the cornerstone of a new model of management education and development. It has evolved as a resolution of our two current traditions and is not so much a unique model as a proposed improvement of professional education and action learning. Whereas some of the new domains are syntheses of current dichotomies, for example, a learning environment inter-connects and expands upon the contributions of teacher and student-centered modalities, others offer somewhat new and experimental formulations. For example, wisdom, heretofore considered largely unteachable, goes far beyond the coverage of breadth and depth of subject matter to the questioning of underlying values and mindsets. It is hoped that the resolution proposed here represents a mere one among many anticipated reformulations by both readers and writers of *Selections* to extend the boundaries of management education and development.

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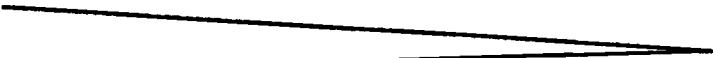

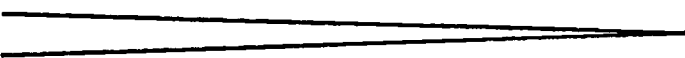
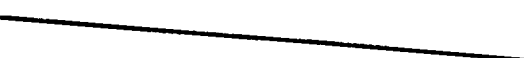
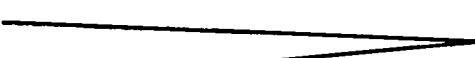

Table 1

Professional Education vs. Action Learning:
The Domains of Part-Time Graduate Management Education

Professional Education	↔	Action Learning
Theory		Practice
Academic Assessment		Managerial Assessment
Breadth		Depth
Technical Problem-solving		Problem-finding
Teacher-centered Focus		Learner-centered Focus
Protected Experimentation		Real Risks

Table 2

Resolution of Professional Education and Action Learning Domains:
Toward a New Model of Management Education

<u>From</u>		<u>To</u>
Theory		Theory of Practice
Practice		
Academic Assessment		Strategic Assessment
Managerial Assessment		
Breadth		Wisdom
Depth		
Technical Problem-solving		Contradiction
Problem-finding		
Teacher-centered Focus		Learning Environment
Learner-centered Focus		
Protected Experimentation		Collaborative Forum
Real Risks		