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Original Citation

Yeadon-Lee, Annie and Hall, Roger (2013) Developing transferable management skills through Action Learning. Industry and Higher Education, 27 (1). pp. 67-75. ISSN 0950-4222

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/14237/

Developing transferable management skills through Action Learning

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Abstract

There has been increasing criticism of the relevance of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) in developing skills and competencies. Action learning, devised to address problem-solving in the workplace, offers a potential response to such criticism. This paper offers an insight into one university's attempt to integrate action learning into the curriculum. Sixty-five part-time students were questioned at two points in their final year about their action learning experience and the enhancement of relevant skills and competencies. Results showed a mixed picture. Strong confirmation of the importance of selected skills and competencies contrasted with weaker agreement about the extent to which these were developed by action learning. There was, nonetheless, a firm belief in the positive impact on the learning process. The paper concludes that action learning is not a panacea but has an important role in a repertoire of educational approaches to develop relevant skills and competencies.

Key words: Action Learning, Skills Development, Mixed Methods.

Introduction

This paper discusses issues of managerial education and the development of skills and competencies in the context of Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees. In particular it offers an insight into one university's attempt to integrate action learning as a way of addressing the growing concerns about the role of academic programmes in the development of skills and competencies, which are transferable to the workplace. The authors' interests were in ascertaining whether the action learning approach developed on one MBA module helped to develop those skills and competencies.

The paper gives a very brief overview of the MBA and the outlines some of the current dissatisfactions with it. It also explores models of skills and competency and considers the role of action learning as one approach to developing such skills in managers. The authors then present a case study to illustrate the development of skills and competencies within an academic module; research methodology, delivered on a part time MBA with an action learning approach to develop both transferable skills and competencies. The research findings are analysed and contextualised within O'Hara *et al's* (1996:21) model of the benefits of action learning. The authors viewed this model as a useful way to link skills and competencies with the use of action learning. Conclusions are then drawn about the value of action learning and its subsequent impact on the development of skills and competencies.

The MBA

The MBA differs from many Masters degree's insofar as it provides a broadening of perspective to encompass a wider range of knowledge, skills and competencies rather than a narrowing of focus to concentrate on specialist areas (Carswell, 1999). However, there are growing concerns about both the content of the delivery and the impact of the MBA on managerial ability. In an article in the Harvard Business School Bulletin on the future of the MBA, Thompson (2008) considers some of the criticisms from academics: *Bennis and O'Toole (2005:96) argue that they are "institutionalizing their own irrelevance" by becoming too focused on scientific research that has little connection to business reality. Mintzberg (2004:6) contended that "conventional MBA programs train the wrong people in the wrong ways with the wrong consequences."* The article concludes with a suggestion as to what Harvard Business School may need to do, based on a survey of Business School Deans, academic critics and recruiters carried out by Datar et al (2011): Deans and recruiters reported that MBAs in general need more soft skills, such as self-awareness and the capacity for introspection and empathy. They also found MBAs lacking in critical and creative thinking, as well as communication skills. "These skills lie much more on the 'doing' side of the scale than the 'knowing' side," say Datar et al (2011:2). The development of such soft-skills involves labour intensive small groups and is often outside the experience of academic members of staff. In their article on the future of the MBA, Schlegelmilch and Thomas (2011) conclude that they felt the MBA would survive over the next ten years, but it would have to undergo several changes in the way it was delivered and in the syllabus. These changes would

relate specifically to the style and mode of delivery, with emphasis placed upon inclusion and flexibility of delivery to cope with the changing patterns and demands of students.

Action Learning

Action learning has been recognised as amongst the most effective means of delivering professional education and training and, according to some writers, action learning and professional education are inextricably linked in that action learning brings the workplace into the classroom by using participants own real life experiences (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002; Miller, 2003 and Hicks, 1996). Smith (2001:36) writes of the difficulties in learning from experience. O'Hara et al (1996:16) describe action learning as being 'less straightforward and more demanding than a traditional taught program' but speak of the potential for it to achieve a wide range of learning outcomes, a view that is supported by Johnson and Spicer (2006:40). However, Revans (1982), credited with being the founder of action learning, never defined what he understood by the term 'action learning', preferring to suggest it was about 'teaching a little and learning a lot' (Revans, 1982). As Weinstein (1995:32) states, 'it means different things to different people' perhaps suggesting that there is no real universal understanding and consensus of the term, therefore leaving room for differing interpretations. Rimanoczy (2007:247) describes the essence of the process as 'learning through experience, by asking questions of each other'. McGill & Brockbank (2004: 185) offer an all-embracing definition:

Action learning is a continuous process of learning and reflection that happens with the support of a group or 'set' of colleagues, working on real issues, with the intention of getting things done. The voluntary participants in the group or 'set' learn with and from each other and take forward an important issue with support of the other members of the set. The collaborative process, which recognises set members' social context, helps people to take an active stance towards life, helps overcome the tendency to be passive towards the pressures of life and work, and aims to benefit both the organisation and the individual.

Action learning is, in its simplest form, an experience-based approach to learning that utilises Revans' (1982) premise that managers learn most effectively with, and from, other managers whilst dealing with the real world complexity of organisational life. Action learning is carried out in what are known as 'action learning sets', These are groups of between 6-8 people, referred to by Revans as 'comrades in adversity' (1982) or by Mumford (1996) as 'fellows in opportunity'. These sets are the integral strand of this learning framework and are the vehicle for bringing about change in the individual. Weinstein (2006) writing in Johnson and Spicer, 2006:41 states:

The philosophy of action learning is not solely about acquiring knowledge or a skill by reading a book or listening to a lecture.

Learning is about doing something differently, or behaving differently, about applying and making use of a skill or new knowledge, about thinking differently, or having a new set of values and beliefs.

Skills and competencies

Skills and competency development have emerged as major issues in management education, particularly in areas of management practice such as Human Resource Management (HRM) and more recently both entrepreneurship and innovation (Kuratko, 2009), with competency-based approaches beginning to have considerable impact in the way in which educational programmes are designed and delivered. Boyatzis (1982), who is usually credited with generating the debate about competencies, defines competency as 'the underlying characteristic of a person', which focuses on desirable inputs rather than required outputs. This definition is reflected in the work of other writers such as Sudsakorn and Swierczek, 2009; Young and Dulewicz, 2009; Bucker and Poutsma, 2010. These competencies focus on characteristics like 'efficiency orientation', 'proactivity' and 'use of socialised power' (Boyatzis, 1982). These skills, behaviours and competencies are different from the concepts and techniques taught on traditional management courses within functional modules such as Marketing or Finance. If they are to be addressed by educational providers, then different methods of teaching and learning may need to be employed.

Skills and competencies: Action Learning

In relation to skills specifically developed or enhanced by action learning. Pedler (1996: 65) suggests that action learning provides the opportunity to develop a variety of differing skills; these skills are a feature of the action learning itself, in that people work collaboratively on individual problems. Pedler's model focussed on the roles of the participants in the set and within that dynamic process is the opportunity for both skills development and enhancement within that set process, either by being a set member where the participant presents their particular problem or by helping others presenting their problem through the process of challenge and support, and lastly, through the role of facilitation. However, he does not identify precisely how action learning does this or how it compares with other approaches to management development.

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was employed in the research, not to provide triangulation of method, but to ensure that the authors would gain a better understanding of student experiences, skills and competency development (Mason, 2006) by questioning them at different points in their experience of action learning. We wanted to discover student responses to the experience at an emotional level and a more reflective consideration of the contribution of action learning to the development of relevant skills and competencies once their dissertations were submitted.

The two data sets from which the findings are drawn comprised a convenience sample from one cohort of sixty-five part-time MBA students at two crucial points in their final year studies: first, at a research methodology

residential in March 2010 where action learning was employed; secondly, at the completion of their studies in January 2011 after experiencing action learning in dissertation learning sets. The research sample comprised participants who were mainly middle managers from both the public and private sectors. The sample was slightly skewed towards the public sector. Females dominated the sample and the mean average age was approximately thirty two.

The March 2010 survey was entirely qualitative, and took the form of an anonymous semi structured questionnaire which was distributed at the end of the residential to all students. Forty-two responses were returned. We were interested in how the students had experienced their first time in formal action learning sets on the MBA. Questions revolved around different aspects of that experience, and included; what it had been like in the set, how useful they found the experience and what did they find difficult about the approach.

The January 2011 survey used both qualitative and quantitative approaches and took the form of a postal questionnaire. Sixty-five questionnaires were sent to the students' home addresses and eighteen were returned. The postal questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part; the quantitative element, comprised thirty-one questions relating to the importance of skills and competencies to the student's role, and the extent to which they were developed through the action learning set. The structure was derived from a questionnaire for employers of graduates on generic skills, devised by Tuning (www.unideusto.org) as part of a process of quality enhancement in higher education to comply with the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy. It is an established methodology, and we have substituted "*Level to which developed*

by learning sets" for "L*evel to which developed by university degree"* in the original. Students were asked to score these using a Likert scale: one being not important and four being very important. We followed the Tuning example and avoided a 5 point or 7 point scale for two reasons: we wished to avoid the indecision of a middle score and; we did not want to create spurious accuracy. The list of thirty-one skills and competencies (Table1) was derived from three main elements:

- Generic management competencies

- Requirements of Professional Bodies and employers

- Action learning literature

The quantitative element of the postal questionnaire was designed both to verify those skills and competences deemed important to students in their job roles, and to discover how the action learning process contributed to the development of those skills and competencies. The second element in the postal questionnaire, the qualitative element, focused on the students' experience in their action learning sets and their emotional response to that experience. Topics included what it had been like in the set, how useful they found the experience and what did they find difficult about the approach. After a month a follow up letter was sent to encourage further response.

The data from both the March questionnaire and the January postal questionnaire were then coded in accordance with O'Hara *et al's* (1996:21) model of the benefits of action learning, categorised into the following development groupings: learning to learn; self management of learning; self-awareness and; learning with and through others. O'Hara's model was

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chosen over that of other models such as Pedler (1996) or Beaty, Bourner and Frost (1993). Pedler, briefly outlined in the previous section on skills and competencies for action learning also included the underpinning skills of facilitation, which was not applicable in the context of this research. Beaty et al (1993), on the other hand, described how to be an effective set member, outlining helpful behaviours rather than specific skills. These behaviours included such elements as learning not to interrupt and conveying empathy. Clearly these have underlying skills as part of their make-up; however they were presented in such a way that the skills were not identified and not, therefore, within the remit of this research.

There was a response rate of just over 50% from the questionnaire issued at the residential and just under 28% from the postal questionnaire at the end of the MBA. The difference is understandable. There was a captive audience at the residential whilst we were out of contact with students in January 2011. As with many questionnaires a possibility of non-response bias arises (Oppenheim, 1992:106). There could be a tendency for respondents to be those with strong feelings or opinions one way or the other. Neutral respondents may be less likely to respond. In those questionnaires which were returned there were very few respondents who were strongly antagonistic to action learning or who believed it had not enhanced relevant skills. The two responses received as a result of a follow-up letter took the response rate up to over 30%. They arrived after the analysis had been carried out but did not differ in any substantial way from those received

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earlier. It is possible; however, that the responses we did receive may have slightly over-estimated the positive impact of the initiative.

In order to ensure informed consent, both questionnaires were issued with an explanation of their purpose and how responses would be used to inform the future delivery of modules on the MBA. Responses were anonymous unless respondents indicated their willingness to participate in a possible focus group. An assurance was given that responses were confidential to this research. The research fully complied with the University Ethics Policy.

Findings

The responses to the Likert scale questions were tabulated and average responses calculated using a simple arithmetic mean. (Table 1) Standard deviations were not calculated. Respondents rated all the skills and competencies listed as important to their role, concurring with Boyatzis' (1982) general competencies. Only two of the thirty-one skills and competencies received an average score of less than 3.0. Respondents were also asked to score the extent to which the skills and competencies had been developed by the learning sets. The following received an average score of 3.0 or more:

Research skills

Capacity to adapt to new situations

Teamwork

Interpersonal skills

Ability to work in a diverse team

Ability to communicate with non-experts in the field

Will to succeed

Communication

Ability to support others

Ability to encourage yourself and others to think outside the box

These confirmed the development of skills and competencies specific to the dissertation module, which had been redesigned to focus on successful management of the dissertation module from the production of a viable proposal to on-time completion of the dissertation itself. These findings provided an explanation of how the redesign of the module had contributed to a substantial increase in on-time completions and an improvement in quality of both proposals and dissertations recorded by the external examiners for the MBA.

Other skills and competencies were developed but to a lesser extent. There were some anomalies: for example, emotional intelligence received an average score of 2.4, which does not lie easily with other substantially developed team-working skills.

Action learning had been more important than not in developing twenty-six of the thirty-one listed skills and competencies. The overall average score for development of skills and competencies through learning sets was 2.8. An analysis of scores using O'Hara et al's model shows that only 'learning with and through others' scored higher than this with a score of 2.9.

In summary the quantitative data confirm the importance of previously identified management competencies and suggest that action learning

enhances these in most cases and substantially in module-specific areas.

The qualitative data have been separated into the four groups of development in accordance with O'Hara's et al (1996) work and reproduced within each section of analysis.

Learning to learn

This focuses on the capacity of participants to be life-time learners who are able to adapt to a changing environment. Learning to learn emphasises the learning process as an outcome in its own right:

Qualitative feedback from students indicted that most of the respondents reported that they had found the action learning process helpful and that it had in some instances challenged the way in which they learned. Asked about prior understanding of the action learning process, one respondent commented:

> *I read the information sent to students prior to the residential but only understood how they worked 'in theory'. After having participated in the process I realised that I used them in during the DMS (Diploma in Management Studies) and have found them useful.*

In this instance the student demonstrated an existing skill of reflection and how that is embedded in the action learning process. Understanding the nature of experience and reflecting on that experience is a transferable skill that assists in making sense of current situations. Reflecting on the usefulness of the approach, one respondent remarked that: '*the different perspectives it brings out makes you question your own approach and revalidates your original thinking'* In learning to learn, the skill is to be able to recognise previous behaviours and understand the individual's learning processes, as evidenced by the student who found action learning to be: 'v*ery useful as it showed me that my opinion was narrow and I was blinkered'.* However, this has to be tempered with the skill of self belief and perseverance with an idea that is felt to be valid.

Revans (1982) discussed the ability to reframe the focus on the individual issue and consider the nature of individual assumptions that underpin the student's ideas. This was illustrated by one student who said: '*the questions/suggestions from members of the group about every proposal made me think about my proposal in more depth and question some of the assumptions I had made'.* Schon and Rein (1994) refer to the concept of the individual's world view or 'frame' which is a lens through which an individual views their particular issue. Returning to a previous quote from a student, who found action learning: *'very useful as it showed me that my opinion was narrow and I was blinkered'* also demonstrates the skill of being able to both listen and hear what is been said, then reflect upon the points given by other members in the set. Weinstein (2006:110) discuses the importance of

individual airspace in the set, stating that this allowed set members to hear their own stories and start to recognise the inconsistencies and illogicalities within their own discourse, understanding that the skill is to be able to do it for oneself outside the action learning set and develop the skill of self analysis and the capacity to learn. This is supported by another student who wanted to: *'reduce the risk of personal bias'* by understanding that people do inevitably have personal biases and see the world through their unique view. Through challenge within the set (Mumford and Gold, 2004) individuals are encouraged to use Revans' (1984) concept of re-framing, understanding that this can generate a new meaning and, therefore, a new focus for the dissertation. One student concluded that this process had: '*helped to refine ideas and process and reassure me about the feasibility of the intended project which was valuable'*. A recurring theme was about learning to listen to others' points of view and to learn from the differing perspectives, illustrating by the student who said they had learned: '*to embrace other people's opinions and not disregard them'* achieving this by using credulous listening which often happens with managers who are 'action-orientated' and as such, will often only listen to their own opinions.

Self-management of learning

This has the aim of creating the autonomous learner. An action learning approach ensures that learning becomes the essence of the individual, ensuring that the ability to learn carries on after the programme has ended. To achieve this, the programme works with the idea of self management, in which learners have control over what and how they learn, which includes

focussing on problem solving skills. If the action learning experience had impacted on people's learning how to learn, then it had an even greater impact on the way in which they were better able to manage their own learning and utilize differing learning opportunities. This is reflected in the thoughts of the student who said that:

> A*ction learning has been a source of study during the MBA course. My understanding is action learning provides the opportunity to learn from others experiences and support them by providing examples of our own experience.*

It can be inferred from this comment that self management of learning occurs in differing forms; learning through collaborative learning and vicarious learning has significance for post graduate students. It also calls upon individuals to exercise the skill of empathy in being able to support other members, if their situation is one that resonates with other members of the set. One student added: '*I believe in any situation where people have issues in workplaces, and the solution is not apparent, to share and learn from others is useful and appropriate'.* Part of that learning process is to unpack what actually happens in the set and what skills are developed. Students understand that this form of learning is useful, most likely the utility comes from the types of questions that are being asked of one another. Revans (1982) described action learning as a combination of $P + Q = L$, where P is programmed knowledge, Q is questioning insight and together they helped

the individual to learn. Revans' emphasis was always placed upon Q and the power of questioning insight and the ability to be able to find the right question to ask that uncovers what the individual is actually dealing with. This student refers to thought-provoking questions and the utility of such, he or she said:

> *We implemented an action learning set approach to developing our individual dissertation proposals and this was an extremely useful process with thought provoking questions from my student colleagues that helped me get clarity of thought on my proposal.*

Another added to this theme by saying that:

> *The questions/suggestions from members of the group about every proposal made me think about my proposal in more depth and question some of the assumptions I had made.*

A small minority of respondents believed that the action learning process did not fit with their preferred learning style. Asked about the usefulness of the experience, one candidate remarked:

> *Yes, but in context – peers are not necessarily skilled or experienced enough to guide/judge the viability of a*

dissertation. A one-to-one would have better suited my

learning style.

Self-awareness

This is achieved through group interaction and reflection in set meetings. Self-awareness is an important management skill. Revans' premise was that managers learn better from interaction with other managers whilst dealing with real life issues, seeking solutions as part of a group.

Feedback from the qualitative data indicated that there was an increased sense of self awareness. One student commented that: '*I found that I had to control my impatience and intolerance to allow others to express their issues and concerns',* demonstrating a frustration at having to control emotions and learn to wait before one's own opinions are aired. Another stated that they had had to learn to: '*to embrace other people's opinions and not disregard them'.* Communicating in terms of listening was a skill that was referred to. One student commented that she had learned a lot about herself, in particular she had: '*discovered different ways of working, having to compromise and listen'* which wasn't an easy exercise for everyone, demonstrated by one student who said: '*it was to some extent draining and put pressure on me to listen properly and ensure that for each member of the group I was able to give positive and constructive feedback'.* Allied to the concept of communication is listening and hearing, in particular the notion of hearing and internalising feedback. This challenged some students; one in particular illustrated this by acknowledging that he found difficulty in: '*taking constructive criticism i.e. not being too defensive'.* Learning to question posed a problem

for some, one student reported that he had found listening difficult and had to resist: *'not giving my opinion and trying to pose questions as it's important to try not to influence others'*. This reflects the difficulty that some set members inevitably encounter when learning the skill of credulous listening and the difficulty of suspending personal opinion, often falling into the trap of taking ownership of the problem and offering the presenter with direct advice, illustrated by the student who also found this challenging by saying: *'making sure you didn't give answers/opinions rather than asking questions that would get individuals to think for themselves'*.

Learning with and through others

This reinforces the social aspects of the learning process, emphasising learning with and through others. Teamwork and differing facets of team work, such as the ability to work in a team and challenge one another positively is a skill that seems to have emerged as being important, one student cited that: *'the power of five minds bouncing ideas and challenging views and opinions was great'* another added: '*the set was very useful in helping to define parameters at the start of a research project'*. The synergy that seems to exist in some sets gave rise to creativity and the opportunity to experiment with thinking outside the box, with one student commenting favorably that it was: 'g*ood to discuss my idea for the dissertation and get approval from the group and new ideas on how to focus my dissertation proposal'.* Communication appeared to be positive in the respect of both honesty with one student saying: '*I appreciated the honesty of the set in challenging my proposal robustly which helped to focus my mind'* whilst, demonstrating the ability to

communicate effectively illustrated by the student who said: *'it was interesting to listen and embrace other opinions on an issue and the clarity they provided was great'* and another who brought in the dimension of diversity in the set. Citing individual set members' organizations and the inevitable differences that would bring to the set, the student stated that: *'you are able to identify the problems by sharing your thoughts and comments with people who are not in the same organisation'.* The unique nature of the individual was illustrated by the student who said that:

> *People have different perceptions and understanding of what you are delivering as a problem. Reason for this is of the vast areas of public and private sector and individual thoughts. They may not understand the context of your question. It is challenging in how you deliver the question but you have to work hard and look deep into presenting your case forward.*

Emotional intelligence was another aspect that emerged as being important to understand. One student commented that the process was:

> *Quite intense and hard work. More time consuming than expected, everyone in the group worked really well together and demonstrated advanced emotional intelligence evidenced by mutual respect, negotiation and a real willingness to manage differences of opinion in a*

> *way that ensured that there was no animosity in the*
> *group.*

Another said:

> *Interesting to consider other people's perspectives. I find*
> *it difficult to engage with people who are reticent to speak*
> *forthrightly and am focusing on ensuring involvement of*
> *all members of any set I work in. I accept that there are*
> *times when democracy has to rule; I struggle to accept*
> *that a vote should be taken before all persuasive*
> *arguments are exhausted.*

Conclusions

Both authors have been passionate believers in and keen advocates of the use of action learning. They viewed the introduction of action learning sets on the MBA dissertation module as an opportunity to both experiment and innovate, with an intended specific outcome of further developing key managerial skills and competencies among MBA students. In concluding on the outcome of that exercise it is useful to return to the research aim, which was to ascertain the extent to which the action learning approach developed on one MBA module helped to develop those skills and competencies.

The quantitative data showed that a range of skills was important to the students; however, the results showed that these skills were not all substantially enhanced by the introduction of action learning into the residential. Qualitative data revealed that action learning had largely met with favourable responses. Skills and their development were seen as being important, but these skills are generic in many respects and are not specific to action learning per se. They were identified as being relevant to the residential task, but are also equally relevant within organisational life. Some skills were identified as being both further considered and advanced by the experience in the sets. The benefit derived was largely from exposing students to differing members of the action learning set who were employees of differing organisations. In some instances, this brought about a process of reframing and questioning of individual assumptions that set members held. This is not often challenged in organisational contexts as there is a tendency, through acculturation processes, to develop a common cultural understanding within the organisational setting. Certainly this skill presents itself as being transferable to organisations, offering the opportunity to introduce double loop thinking in environments that often encourage single loop solutions.

We conclude that there is a need to both innovate and experiment in the area of management development and the use of action learning presents itself as a useful approach, having received a positive response from management students. However, combining action learning with

other approaches such as experiential learning, coaching and mentoring could prove to be beneficial.

Limitations of the paper largely revolve around the methodology. The data collection method was influenced by the constraints of time and the opportunity to collect data at the end of the residential. Ideally face-to-face interviews offer in-depth insights and an opportunity for further probing. Alternatively, focus groups offer breadth of data capture. Either of these approaches would have added to the richness of the data.

Questionnaires certainly can be problematic, but, by guaranteeing anonymity, they offer the respondent the opportunity to be both frank and honest, therefore ensuring quality of response, which should add credibility to the research findings. The second stage of the data collection could have been carried out in a different manner as postal questionnaires can be problematic in terms of response rates. Questionnaires administered in the final learning sets may have generated a higher response rate.

However, the paper does present an opportunity for future research in the comparative benefits of action learning in relation to the development of skills and competencies that match the need identified in organisational contexts. Initially, a reworking of this study with other MBA and post graduate students would be useful: first, from the perspective of capturing richer data, giving insights into skills that may not have occurred to the researchers; secondly, for comparative purposes, for example public and private sector comparisons and the desired skills within each sector. Additionally, a refinement of the original

methodology, which would draw on aspects of grounded theory and use

face to face interviews as it presents as an opportunity to collect richer

data and present new avenues for exploration

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Table 1
<u>Working in an Action Learning Set: Development of Skills</u>

1 = Not important   4 = Very important

Average scores (n =18)

Skill/Competency	Importance to your role	Level to which developed by Learning Sets
1. Capacity for analysis and synthesis	**3.5**	**2.4**
2. Capacity for applying knowledge in practice	**3.4**	**2.7**
3. Planning and time management	**3.5**	**2.8**
4. Research skills	**2.9**	**3.1**
5. Capacity to learn	**3.4**	**2.8**
6. Information management skills (ability to retrieve and analyse information from different sources)	**3.6**	**2.7**
7. Critical and self-critical abilities	**3.2**	**2.9**
8. Capacity to adapt to new situations	**3.4**	**3.3**
9. Capacity for generating new ideas (creativity)	**3.2**	**2.5**
10. Problem solving	**3.3**	**2.6**
11. Decision-making	**3.4**	**2.6**
12. Teamwork	**3.5**	**3.2**
13. Interpersonal skills	**3.6**	**3.2**
14. Leadership	**3.4**	**2.4**
Skill/Competency	**Importance to your role**	**Level to which developed by Learning Sets**
15. Ability to work in a diverse team	**3.4**	**3.4**
16. Ability to communicate with non-experts (in the field)	**3.6**	**3.2**
17. Ability to work autonomously	**3.2**	**2.3**
18. Initiative and intrapreneurial spirit	**2.9**	**2.3**
19. Ethical commitment	**3.3**	**2.6**

20. Will to succeed	**3.5**	**3.2**
21. Communication	**3.8**	**3.0**
22. Ability to negotiate	**3.5**	**2.5**
23. Emotional intelligence	**3.3**	**2.4**
24. Emotional resilience	**3.1**	**2.5**
25. See the 'big picture'	**3.6**	**2.7**
26. Ability to challenge others ideas	**3.5**	**2.7**
27. Ability to reframe a problem	**3.4**	**2.9**
28. Ability to respond to criticism	**3.3**	**2.8**
29. Ability to support others	**3.8**	**3.4**
30. Ability to encourage yourself and others to think outside the box	**3.4**	**3.1**
31. Able to simplify complex issues	**3.3**	**2.9**
Overall average score	**3.2**	**2.8**