A SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR MARKETING AND ADVERTISING PROGRAMMES

Angela Burge, Manukau Institute of Technology, Private Bag 94006, Manukau, Auckland, New Zealand. Telephone: 64-9-274-6009. Email: aburge@manukau.ac.nz

ABSTRACT

Programmes designed for students aiming for the marketing and advertising fields are well grounded in content needs and pedagogy. There are constant calls from employers that graduates need other skills; that they are unprepared for their careers. As well as looking at the learning hierarchies that education accepts, this paper suggests that a focus can be placed on developing professional identity and work and personal skills to ensure that graduates are prepared for their places in the "outside world".

INTRODUCTION

There are times when we are given the opportunity to revisit the structure and requirements of our academic programmes. Often, as educators we concentrate on what should be taught and at that stages within our programmes and courses. In marketing and advertising programmes we are often preparing students who have recently graduated from school or college for their chosen careers. Often these students are adolescents in the process of transition into an adult world.

We are also confronted by the needs of the industries where our graduates hope to find employment. In New Zealand, discussions with industry resulted in the comment that graduates are not prepared in interpersonal skills (e.g. listening, presentation and communication skills, time management and other personal skills) that are necessary to function in career positions.

This paper proposes that programmes should be designed which are based not only on content and learning hierarchies, but which also take into account that young students are developing roles in their personal and professional lives. One important area of role development, which we are all inherently involved in, is the development of professional identity or the development of a career role.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

McMorland's professional identity development

McMorland (1990) has suggested six stages of development through which new professional roles are acquired. These are:

1. aspirant
2. student
3. novice
4. licensed professional
5. mature practitioner
6. retired person

The role tasks of the aspirant include preparing the self through identification. For the aspiring marketing or advertising graduate this would entail making the initial approach to a training institution, being selected on grounds of suitability and educational qualifications, and finally, joining the programme.

Emphasis for the student is on cognitive and theoretical development within a chosen field of study. The student has a content orientation, and may not yet have developed a commitment to practice. Students are initiated into the language/thinking domain, but feeling and action domains develop later. They seldom question the legitimacy of specialist knowledge and it is only in smaller group situations that students can be encouraged to be more participative and active learners.

Part of the preparation for practising in an adult world is to know that unlike textbooks, the world is not a perfect place and that things can go wrong. The student must also recognise that there are ethical challenges in practice. Students are rewarded for their demonstration of expertise and cognition skills, seldom for their humility and capacity to say they do not know. At the formal level, we reinforce the value of what they know, at the expense of helping students identify the boundaries and limitations of their own knowledge. Yet this quality is crucial for the next stage of
professional development - and is a primary task of the novice as it is an essential step in becoming a self-directing learner.

As the graduate moves into practice and becomes the novice, there is a further shift from idealism to realism: theory has to be translated into practice. They have to learn to discriminate between 'useful' and 'redundant' knowledge, and to sustain faith in the value of theory when its relevance is not easily recognised.

The characteristics of the professional include the capacity to master theoretical knowledge, to solve problems, to use practical knowledge, and a willingness to develop the self.

The final two stages of McMorland's model, the mature professional and the retired professional are not discussed as part of the current paper.

The first three stages constitute the phase of career formation, the last three that of career fulfilment. One question here may be: at what point in this continuum does formal education relinquish, and industry take up, these responsibilities?

Our experience in New Zealand is, and this is also evident in the US (Ducoff and Ducoff, 1990), that employers are loathe to provide formal training programmes for new recruits. On the other hand "industry preparedness" gives graduates an edge in the employment market.

So what is "industry preparedness"? The CNAA (1990) has put forward a definition of competence, "the individual's demonstrated capacity to perform i.e. the possession of knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics needed to satisfy the special demands or requirement of a particular situation." The mention of personal characteristics suggests preparedness is more than merely content knowledge.

Smith, Wolstencroft and Southern's "work related" skills.

In an endeavour to develop assessment procedures for work-based placements, Smith et al (1989) focused on two areas of "work related" skills. The first of these, general skills incorporates such facets as problem solving, communication, and working with people. The second area, vocational skills encompasses managing activities, dealing with people at work, the business environment, and information technology.

These two areas could valuably be incorporated into any skills development model. However Smith et al have omitted the issue of professional identity. McMorland (1990) suggests that "learning professionally appropriate behaviour is a long process of formal and informal socialisation distinct from the acquisition of knowledge and technical expertise. Professional development requires the individual also to learn how to work within a matrix of social relationships, both with clients and with colleagues". There is thus a third area of learning which can be incorporated into a skills development model.

King, Wood and Mines' Learning Hierarchy
A learning hierarchy (King, Wood and Mines, 1990) has been used which correlates well with the other skill development domains so far identified. The hierarchy has three stages.

Stage 1
Reflects the assumption that knowledge is either gained by direct personal observation or transmitted from an authority figure. Such knowledge is assumed to be absolutely correct and certain.

Stage 2
Reflects the assumption that knowledge is gained through evaluating the available evidence and that, although judgements may involve some personal and often idiosyncratic evaluation of data, certain concepts aid the decision makers in their evaluations.

Stage 3
This stage reflects the assumption that in facing ill structured problems interpretations must be grounded in data and, more importantly, that the interpretations themselves must be evaluated to determine the truth-value of a knowledge claim, using such criteria as conceptual soundness, degree of fit with the data, and parsimony.
### TABLE 1: THE SKILLS BASED STUDENT DEVELOPMENT MODEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage/Year</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Three</strong></td>
<td>Business meetings, briefings, presentations written and oral. Analysing client needs, organisational politics and representing an organisation. Creation of databases for client requirements, development of and recommendations for client use. Full literacy in word processing, presentation software and statistical programmes.</td>
<td>Creativity, putting ideas into practice, knowing what you don't know, self evaluation, critical thinking, prioritising projects, tying theory to real world problems, discovery by self, written and oral presentations to clients and industry, learning to listen to verbal briefs, leadership, negotiation, resolution of conflict, motivation of others.</td>
<td>Shift from idealism to realism, questioning of other's expertise, discriminate between 'useful' and 'redundant' knowledge, belief in theory base even when value is not easily recognised in the real life context.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Two</strong></td>
<td>Managing project activities, under supervision. Cooperating with group members in a project and presenting to peers. Use of specific industry software and databases.</td>
<td>Prioritising tasks, peer evaluation, learning from experience, directed discovery, written and oral communication, teamwork, cooperation, allocation of tasks.</td>
<td>Non questioning of specialists, understanding that things can go wrong, initial superficial evaluation of members of industry.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>One</strong></td>
<td>Personal time management. Communication competency. Computer competency.</td>
<td>Self organisation, learning to learn, basics of report writing and business communication.</td>
<td>Decision on career path, knowledge gained through observation and through authority figure.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational Skills</td>
<td>General Skills</td>
<td>Professional Identity</td>
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A SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The following model has been devised to structure student experiences in an effort to enhance their development towards entry into their chosen industry.

Table 1 illustrates a progression of development throughout an undergraduate degree programme using the terminology and concepts developed by Smith et al., King et al., and McMorland. It starts with the new entrant, the school leaver and culminates in the "outcome" of the programme, the graduate.

The diagram should be read from the base up. Skills developed in lower stages are assumed to be retained in higher levels.

Stage/Year One is a transition year for students. Often students are straight from college and thus must make alterations to their working and study methods. However, other, more mature students who enrol for retraining purposes approach many of the same challenges.

This stage essentially allows the students time to familiarise themselves with their chosen vocational field and identify where this field fits within the greater business arena. It is here also that they begin to accumulate competencies such as time management, communication, and computer literacy. At this stage the student will probably interact with the lecturer as an authority figure and is unlikely to question the lecturer’s expertise to any large degree.

Stage/Year Two is a stage of greater vocational specialisation. Students should be certain of their career path at this stage. Generally the majority of courses studied will be in their chosen specialist area.

At this stage, students will begin to spend more time working with peers or colleagues on project work, thus experiencing the need for cooperation, the need for planning and prioritisation in conjunction with others, and clearly the need for interpersonal communication. Instead of being taught, an emphasis is now placed on learning from experience.

It is at this stage that students can be introduced to industry practitioners, and can begin to identify with role models, for their future vocation. They will begin to evaluate these role models.

Stage/Year Three should emphasise working to client and/or organisational needs. This stage requires the student to develop a confidence in their own ability, but also to know what they don’t know, and the confidence to ask for help.

A distinct change in faculty/student relationship is required at this stage, in that faculty must work with the student.

Perhaps two of the most important skills to be attained at this stage are presenting confidently and appropriately and listening and interpretation. The student will learn to listen to instructions or briefings, and be able to interpret the speaker’s needs, accepting that the speaker might have difficulty articulating these needs.

The student at this stage must develop self evaluatory and motivation skills that reflect the environment around them, and their future working environment.

CONCLUSION

None of this would be possible without a committed, energetic and hardworking faculty, and student body. However, we are certain that developing skills outside the normal classroom mode can only enhance our students’ opportunities in the highly competitive fields of marketing and advertising.

Our first graduates are only now entering the industry. Their achievements will be a reflection of the degree of success our programme attains.

REFERENCES


