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CHAPTER 3

THE COMPETENCIES REQUIRED AT WORK AND IN SOCIETY

In an attempt to find out whether the teachers', pupils', parents', and ex-pupils' opinions on the goals of education that were discussed in the last chapter were correct we reviewed the available literature on the competencies required at work and in society[3.1]. This chapter briefly summarizes some of the results.

The Qualities Required at Work

Klemp, Munger and Spencer[3.2] and I[3.3] have shown (Table 3.1) that more effective managers are distinguished from their less effective peers by their greater tendency to do such things as think about and develop the talents of their subordinates, move their subordinates into positions in which they can capitalize on their talents and have their contributions recognized by their organizations, listen to what lies behind what people say and do something about it, reflect on the workings of their organizations and intervene effectively in them, analyse the workings of the wider social system around their organizations and orchestrate effective inter-organizational activity to influence such wider constraints. Our work also shows that the willingness and the ability to do the things which have just been mentioned is rare among American and British managers but is much more common in Singapore and Japan[3.4].

TABLE 3.1

Competencies of More Effective Officers

- Takes initiative: initiates new activities, communication, proposals; exhibits resourcefulness, persistence in the face of obstacles.
- Sets goals and reconsiders and redefines them.
- Coaches, by setting example and sharing information, feelings, and thought processes.
- Influences: by persuasion, mustering arguments, building political coalitions, making others feel strong.
- Conceptualizes, analyzes, and finds new ways of thinking about things.
- Builds teams, acts to promote cooperation and team work.
- Provides feedback to enable others to monitor their own performance. Helps them analyze problems and develop strategies for tackling them.
- Provides rewards and official recognition for contributions.
- Controls impulses, especially annoyance. Avoids snap decisions based on incomplete evidence.
- Plans and organizes, including "Domain Planning."
- Delegates.
- Optimizes: analyzes the capacity of individuals and resources and requirements of a job, matches the two and fully utilizes the resources available.
- Monitors own behavior and that of others.
- Resolves conflicts.
- Listens actively and initiates opportunities to give others a chance to talk.
- Has accurate empathy; makes explicit unexpressed thoughts and feelings of others.
- Helps.

Managerial competence is by no means the only area of competence which has been analysed. Thus Raven and Dolphin[3.5] studied a cross-section of employees in a wide variety of organizations ranging from the civil service, through banks and offices, to large factories. The qualities required to deal with the problems which plagued these organizations were the qualities which were emphasized by the parents, teachers, and pupils whose views were reported in the previous chapter. However, although employers were often anxious to do so, they frequently failed to develop and utilize the wide variety of values, talents, and competencies which were available in their workforce. This was largely because they lacked constructs for thinking about the relevant talents and abilities, how to develop them, and how to utilize them. In particular, they lacked means of assessing them.

Research has also been carried out among construction site workers[3.6], bus drivers[3.7], nurses[3.8], small businessmen[3.9], social workers[3.10], architects[3.11], pharmacists[3.12], town planners[3.13], civil servants[3.14], doctors[3.15], scientists[3.16], engineers[3.17], and politicians[3.18]. Only one or two further examples can be discussed here. Table 3.2 shows the competencies which Flanagan and Burns[3.19] found to distinguish more from less effective machine operatives. Their results have been confirmed more recently in a study conducted by the Industrial Training Research Unit in Great Britain[3.20]. We ourselves[3.21] found that what 20 year olds who had been "drop-outs" from school at 15 years of age liked about their job was the variety, the opportunity to take initiative, the opportunity to make the most of themselves, and the opportunity to develop and use their talents in ways which had not been possible at school. They also liked the fact that they did not, at work, have to do the same thing all the time and do things they could not do. It emerges that work - even for this early-leaving group - is anything but the soul destroying activity which many teachers take it to be. Grannis[3.22] and Bachman *et al.*[3.23] obtained confirmatory results in the US.

TABLE 3.2

Competencies Distinguishing between More and Less Effective Machine Operatives.

- Dependability.
- Accuracy of Reporting.
- Tendency to respond to the needs of the situation without having to be given instructions.
- Ability to get on with others.
- Responsibility

Finally, it is, perhaps, particularly appropriate in a book like this to list (in Table 3.3) some of the qualities which have been found to distinguish more from less effective school teachers[3.24].

Taken as a whole, these data convincingly demonstrate that parents, teachers, pupils and employers are right to say that the educational system should be primarily concerned with fostering such qualities as initiative, the ability to make one's own observations, the competencies required to identify and solve problems, the ability to work with others, leadership, and the ability to understand and influence the workings of society.

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│                    TABLE 3.3                          │
│     Competencies Distinguishing between More and Less │
│              Effective School Teachers.               │
│                                                       │
│  • The ability to work with parents to establish      │
│    community support networks which allow parents     │
│    to create developmental environments for their     │
│    children.                                          │
│  • The capacity to convince community members of the  │
│    desirability of individualized, competence-        │
│    oriented educational programs of growth in         │
│    schools.                                           │
│  • The willingness and the ability to analyze the     │
│    role which sociological forces play in             │
│    determining what happens in schools, and the       │
│    ability to harness these sociological forces to    │
│    push them in the direction in which they wish to   │
│    go.                                                 │
│  • The ability to handle the political problems which │
│    arise when pupils are encouraged to develop the    │
│    capacities required to tackle pressing social      │
│    problems such as pollution.                        │
│  • The ability to identify the talents of all their   │
│    pupils and to create group and individual          │
│    educational processes which enable all children to │
│    develop their unique patterns of competence.       │
│  • The ability to evolve, in cooperation with other   │
│    teachers, their own understanding of how growth is │
│    to be promoted and how to gain control over the    │
│    wider constraints on education—instead of waiting  │
│    for authority to tell them what to do.             │
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Civic Competence

But these are not the most important insights into the competencies to be fostered by the educational system which have emerged from our work.

Some 20 years ago, I was offered an opportunity to study "values, attitudes and institutional structures associated with economic and social development" in the Republic of Ireland. I approached my task, as a psychologist would, with the idea of finding out how important such qualities as "*need* achievement", "leadership", and "creativity" might be. I thought I might get a feel for how important such qualities were by speaking to people who had a range of different sorts of job and asking them to tell me something about their jobs and their lives. When they started to get excited about some problem they had, I would ask them what they could do about it.

To my surprise they, one after another, said "There's nothing I can do about it; the Government must do it". My first reaction to this was one of shock. I thought "What has happened to their initiative, leadership, and ability to persuade others to help them to do something about their problems?" At first I did not realise that what people were actually saying related directly to my interest in competence and that it would lead to a re-interpretation of concepts like leadership. However, what they were saying did seem important - even if I did not quite know why - and it therefore seemed relevant to document their views more systematically. For this reason, and because we were in the fortunate position of not having to explain precisely why we were collecting particular data before we did so, we were able to undertake a number of studies of civic and political culture and political socialization[3.25].

While this work was in hand, two things happened.

Firstly, I realised that what I had discovered was that people's behavior is not *mainly* determined by such qualities as "initiative", *need* Achievement, or *need* Power, but by their beliefs about society, how it works, and their place in it. Or, rather, that whether people will take a leadership role or display initiative is markedly influenced by these beliefs and perceptions. Appropriate social and political beliefs are therefore key psychological components in the cluster of activities that we refer to when we use terms like initiative and leadership.

Secondly, I, once again, discovered that cumulated public opinion is a good guide to the truth. An economist introduced me to some statistics which showed that 45% of GNP is, in all the countries of the European Community, spent directly by their governments. It turns out that even this does not include the spending of the nationalized industries or local government. When these are added on the figure rises to 65%. And this still does not include the effects of grant and levy schemes, planning legislation, health and safety legislation, or requirements that firms provide pensions - which are all designed to lead people to spend much more of their "own" money in ways determined by government. Including these brings the total to some 75%. So it *was* necessary - as my informants said - for the government to tackle *their* problems. Their task then became to influence the government ... but they jibbed at that - and for rational - but inadequate - reasons which do not need to be discussed here[3.26].

I finally realised the true import of these observations nearly 15 years later, when I was working on the text of *Competence in Modern Society*. What I then found myself saying was that competence in modern society has almost more than anything else to do with the willingness and the ability to gain control over the wider social and political forces which come from outside one's job, but which primarily determine what one *can* do in it. So beliefs about the meaning and implications of such terms as "democracy", "participation", "management" and "citizenship" turn out to be central to competence.

It may be thought that these observations do not apply to the United States where Government, it is often said, plays a less significant role. However, when visiting the United States, I have repeatedly found that what look like independent organizations have either been brought into being by governmental legislation (like much insurance and medical schemes and much psychological assessment) or are somehow or other dependent on government money - like the research units which are dependent on defence or education contracts and the interventions in agricultural prices and production. I suspect that, if a careful study were made, the results would be not too different from those we have obtained in Europe. Of course, it is always possible to argue about such things as how much control governments really have over such things as how transfer payments - money supposedly taken from the rich and given to the poor - are actually spent. But, whatever the room for argument, the conclusion that Governments play a major role in the management of modern societies is indisputable.

Actually, the importance of finding better ways of managing modern society is more serious than even these observations suggest.

In another attempt to try to decide which competencies it is most important for schools to foster, we modified and replicated a study which had previously been carried out by Flanagan and Russ-Eft[3.27] in the United States. We first undertook a quality-of-life survey to identify the problems which people had in leading their lives as they would have liked. Then we studied what competencies and understandings they would need if they were to to tackle these problems effectively.

What we found was that people <u>are</u> dissatisfied with the quality of their consumer goods. They are still more dissatisfied with the quality of the environments in which they live and work. But they are <u>most</u> dissatisfied with their *relationships* with politicians and public servants. It turns out that this is because these politicians and public servants govern the quality of people's lives by controlling health services, welfare services, education services, manpower policy, income distributions, prices, and international trade (including trade with the Third World). But it is not the policies themselves that are the <u>main</u> problem (important though they are). The most important problem is that citizens are unable to influence the policies which are implemented, to obtain diversified treatment suited to their own priorities from the bureaucracy, to provide adequate and effective feedback to policy makers, or to avoid demeaning, de-skilling, and de-humanising treatment from bureaucrats. One of the main problems facing our society is therefore to find ways of making public policy more open, diversified, and responsive. To do this we will have to develop new ways of providing accountability and variety in the public sector[3.28].

A large proportion of the problems which remain to be tackled by our society are in the public domain. They have to do with the management of the world economic system and the relationships which are established between national economic systems and the international system - and especially trade between rich and poor countries. They have to do with health services - which need, for example, to establish much more effective community support networks to care for the isolated, the disturbed, the infirm, and the elderly. They have to do with the educational system - which needs to provide much more effective community development networks to promote the growth of competence and, in

particular, to promote the development of the civic competencies which are required to operate modern political systems effectively. They have to do with staff placement and development within the public service. They have to do with the quality of the environment, including the built environment. And they have to do with broad ecological issues: pollution control, destruction of the soil, the seas, the air, and the biosphere, and the management of irreplaceable human, physical, and biological resources. They have therefore to do with the very future of our planet, never mind the sustainability of our so-called "civilisation" or economy.

This is an appropriate point at which to emphasize that, because activities in all these areas are so central to the quality of life in, and the effectiveness of, modern society, it is necessary to change the way we view them. If public servants are mainly responsible for the quality of our environments, our education, our health; if the agricultural policies they generate have a much greater effect on the amount and quality of food available than anything an individual farmer can do no matter how hard he works, our public servants *create* wealth. Unfortunately these essential, wealth-creating, tasks are not being carried out as effectively as they might be - we have, for example, already said that some two thirds of the money spent on "education" is wasted so far as the development of human resources is concerned. It will gradually emerge that, to handle this problem, we need a great deal of fundamental, policy-relevant, R&D; to explicitly set out to generate a variety of programs suited to a cross section of the population and information on the personal and social consequences of each - and to feed that information *outward to the public* instead of upward, through a bureaucratic hierarchy, to an assembly of elected representatives. In other words, if our society is to function effectively, we will need new concepts of wealth, wealth-creation, policy evaluation, bureaucracy, and democracy. We will need new tools to administer and evaluate public policy - including the management of the so-called "private" sector ... because that sector is all too prone to foist huge burdens (such as dealing with the pollution and illness it creates) onto the public sector or future generations - and to find ways of holding public servants accountable for acting on information in the public interest.

What these observations imply for the educational system is that it has a major responsibility to nurture the development of the abilities *required to evolve* new civic and economic understandings, the motivation and the capacity to act on insights so gained, and the willingness and the ability to support others who strive to do all of these things.

The Competencies Required in Modern Society: Summary Statement

We may now summarize what we have learned about the qualities required to behave competently in modern society. Competent behavior is, it seems, dependent on:
- The motivation, the beliefs, and the abilities required to engage in high-level, value-laden, activities like taking initiative, exercising responsibility, and analysing and influencing the operation of organizations and political systems.
- The willingness and the ability to contribute to a climate of support and encouragement for others who are trying to innovate, find better ways of doing things, or take a stand against unethical practices in both the public and private sectors.
- The ability to evolve accurate understandings of how the organization and society in which one lives and works operate and how they are to be influenced - together with appropriate perceptions of one's own role, and that of others, in those organizations.
- Appropriate understandings of a number of concepts which relate to the running of organizations. These include such things as risk-taking, efficiency, leadership, responsibility, accountability, communication, equality, participation, wealth and democracy.

The Need for Variety

Having emphasized the need for high-level competencies in all occupational groups and in all walks of life, we must now emphasize both that pupils have the potential to develop a wide variety of very different concerns and talents and that a wide variety of different patterns of competence are required in society.

Looking first at occupational needs, any occupational group requires a wide range of people who do very different things. Thus Taylor and his colleagues[3.29] have shown that there are 20 different types of outstanding physician and 12 different types of outstandingly creative scientist. Further, that effective

teams of scientists, for example, need to be composed of a wide variety of different sorts of people: an ideas man, a fund-raiser, an organizer, a publicist, and so on.

We may generalise these observations. To create the cultures of innovation and development to which the pupils whose views were summarized in Chapter 2 seemed to wish to learn how to contribute, it would be necessary to have a wide variety of people doing very different things: it would be necessary to have some people who were good at organising others, some who were good at generating better ways of thinking about things, some who were good at finding out how to translate those ideas into effect, some who were good at pouring oil on troubled waters and so on. Put simply: A diversity of high level talents would be essential.

Reverting to the other side of the coin, we may first note that no one person could possibly develop all the concerns and patterns of competence of which we have spoken in this chapter. Furthermore, in the course of our research, we have not only shown that different pupils want very different things from their education and very different satisfactions from their jobs and their lives, but also that there is marked variation in the values and aspirations of pupils who come from similar backgrounds and that this variation is related to the occupational destinations for which they are bound. There is a great deal more inter-generational social mobility - both upward and downward - than many people would have us believe. Payne[3.30] showed that 72% of adults in Scotland had been upwardly or downwardly mobile by at least l category, and 20% of those who held the highest positions had come from the very lowest group. Hope[3.31] has shown that the same is true of the United States. The maintenance of our social structure is therefore a great deal more complex than many have suggested. The evidence therefore points very strongly toward the need to respect and build on the variance in pupils' values, priorities, and patterns of competence (instead of trying to inculcate middle class values into working class children). The spectre of teachers perpetuating socio-economic divisions, reproducing the social order, and creating a caste society if they respect the variation in pupils' values, concerns, and talents therefore seems to be ill-founded[3.32].

Summary

Pupils, parents, teachers, and employers are correct: a wide variety of high-level competencies is required for the effective operation of modern society. Unexpectedly, these talents consist of value-laden motivational dispositions which are centrally dependent on beliefs about how society works and one's own role within it. Fears of teachers perpetuating the social order if they respected, and sought to nurture, the diversity of pupils' concerns and talents are probably exaggerated.

Notes

3.1. This material is presented in detail in *Competence in Modern Society* (Raven 1984).
3.2. Klemp *et al.* (1977); Klemp and McClelland (1986); see also Jaques (1976); McClelland and Burnham (1976); Winter (1979).
3.3. Raven and Dolphin (1978)
3.4. Graham, Raven and Smith (1987)
3.5. Raven and Dolphin (1978)
3.6. Sykes (1969)
3.7. Van Beinum (1965)
3.8. Fivars and Gosnell (1966)
3.9. See McClelland (1961); Burgess and Pratt (1970); Schwartz (1987).
3.10. McClelland and Dailey (1973, 1974)
3.11. MacKinnon (1962); Schon (1987)
3.12. Dunn and Hamilton (1985)
3.13. Schon (1987)
3.14. McClelland and Dailey (1973, 1974); Raven (1984). Also, what is most interesting about Schwartz's (1987) study is that, although he was nominally studying businessmen's responsiveness to changes in their environment, their ultimate success in reaching the objectives the country (ie civil servants) had set for them was dependent on the quality of the civil servants' judgments both in establishing the objectives and on their correct understanding of how to manipulate prices and

grants in order to get "independent entrepreneurs" to achieve these objectives. Their job is, it seems, to manage both businessmen and the economy.

3.15. Price *et al.* (1971)

3.16. Taylor and Barron (1963); McClelland (1962)

3.17. Beuret and Webb (1983); Fores and Pratt (1980)

3.18. Raven (1984)

3.19. Flanagan and Burns (1955)

3.20. ITRU (1979)

3.21. Morton-Williams *et al.* (1968)

3.22. Grannis (1983)

3.23. Bachman *et al.* (1971, 1978). Employment in *large* factories and offices are the only general exceptions to the statement that work is, in general, better and more developmental than being at school. But far fewer people are employed in these organizations than is commonly assumed and such organizations are, in any case, rapidly being automated.

3.24. Huff *et al.* (1982); Klemp *et al.* (1980); Schneider *et al.* (1981); Raven *et al.* (1985)

3.25. Raven (1973); Raven and Litton (1976); Litton and Raven (1977/82); Raven and Whelan (1976). It is pertinent to the argument of this book to note the role of feelings and hunches in "intellectual" activity: we collected these data - and indeed much of the data on pupils' values and teachers' perceptions of them that are reported elsewhere in this book - because we somehow *felt* that they were important. It was only many years later that we were able to articulate *why* the data were important - why they should have been collected and what they really told us about the way to conceptualise the determinants of behavior and the functioning of the educational system. This is not only contrary to widely held beliefs about how research should proceed but also to the current emphasis on cognitive activity as a basis for action.

3.26. See Raven and Whelan (1976); Raven and Litton (1976); Litton and Raven (1977/82).

3.27. Flanagan and Russ-Eft (1975). Our own replication of it is published in Raven (1980).

3.28. I have discussed this set of issues much more fully in Raven (1984, 1987).

3.29. Price *et al.* (1971); Taylor *et al.* (1963)

3.30. Payne *et al.* (1979)

3.31. Hope (1985)

3.32. This is not to imply that it is not important for there to be some shared concerns and values. Our data and that collected by McCelland's team (1961) shows that a shared concern with finding better ways of doing things and important new things to do has a dramatic effect on economic and social development, and, conversely, that divisiveness and an arrogant attachment to one's own point of view result in endemic conflict. All of these issues need to be surfaced and resolved if we are to develop an effective educational policy. The point here is to underline that we need a *variety* of goals in education and that we need to collect good data before we set about imposing our values on others.