Personal, Professional and Career Development

Course Orientation

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Introduction: 'Original Thinking Applied'

Welcome to your Course Orientation for *Personal, Professional and Career Development*.

A number of aspects distinguish the MBA from other Masters programmes. At MBS, one of them is the emphasis given to the subject of this course: personal, professional and career development (or PPCD for short). However, rather narrowly, PPCD is often equated with 'employability'. In fact, PPCD is much broader than that, it is concerned with the study of enabling creativity between people and organisations. If we link creativity and innovation with critical thinking then we can regard this course as the application of original thinking.

How does this work? It is worth unpacking the slogan of MBS, 'Original Thinking Applied':

Original – an association with creativity and innovation
Thinking – not just about ourselves, but as part of teams; it is also about organisational learning and how this is shaped by culture, place, context and ethics, thinking as a process of reflection
Applied – Leadership (*Global Events and Leadership*), Team Work, Organisational Change and Development, Managing across Cultures, (*People, Management and Organisations*), Career Building, Managing Ethics[2]

PPCD is concerned with equipping you with the knowledge and skills to apply original thinking.

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[2] Italics denote complementary MBA courses to PPCD

Course Delivery

How is this course delivered? Much of the learning on this course is self-directed: of course, much of it will be through reading the relevant academic literature, but there are other aspects to self-directed learning including psychometric tests, exercises and case studies. In each international centre, you will be organised into action learning sets, as much of the learning will be dependent on your interaction with your fellow classmates. Action learning involves teams engaged in a practical, organisational-based project – 'the emphasis is on learning by doing with advice and support from tutors and other course members' (Mullins 2007: 801). PPCD is one subject you cannot effectively study and apply in splendid isolation.

You will be allocated a MBS e-tutor who will not only provide support for your action-learning sets but will be there to guide you through the learning throughout the course.

Finally, this is an on-line course: the core of the learning is facilitated through Blackboard and the various tools associated with it.

Careers

The course is integrated with the MBS Global Careers Service. It is worth familiarising yourself with their web-site early in the course, which is also linked to your Blackboard page.

Indicative Course Content

Part 1: The Team

Creativity I – the group – problem solving – team work

Your Belbin team role report
Understanding Group Dynamics
Action Learning Sets[3]

Reflection

Part 2: The Individual

Course Orientation – models of reflection (self directed)
     Assessing your General Factor of Creativity

Creativity II – the individual – based on your General Factor of Creativity report

Professional Development
The Business Case for Creativity
Management Learning
Learning Styles and Personal Development

Part 3: The Organisation and Careers

Creativity III – organisation cultures/organisational environments

The importance of culture
Organisational Learning
Power in Organisations
Corporate Ethics

Careers (separate work book)

Career Development and Management

Conclusion

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[3] Your Action Learning Set is the same group that you were allocated to in your GEL assignment

Introduction – Models of Reflection

It is possible that you are 'living' this course already. If you work for an organisation with progressive human resource management policies, your appraisal process may involve an assessment of your developmental needs and career aspirations. In the UK, professional institutions such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development may require you to keep your 'Continuing Professional Development' up to date. Other organisations require a diary or some form of written record related to professional development. Underlining these approaches is the importance of reflection.

Reflection is important as you need to consider what you need to improve, and how. In addition, what is important now may change in the future. This course considers how you measure your personal qualities in relationship to your work performance. According to Boud *et al.* (1985: 19), reflection

> Is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important to learning.

In short, reflection allows you to benefit more fully from your experiences, including that of learning. Starting a learning journal is **highly recommended** (see the box below). We go on to discuss experiential learning later, which also involves an on-line exercise. Before we do, the following sections outline key conceptual debates in professional development for executives and its relationship with management learning.

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Reflection through Learning Journals

You may want to start a learning journal – not just for this course, although it may be advantageous, but also for your MBA programme as a whole. It is up to you what format you choose, but at a minimum, it should provide:

- a record of daily/weekly learning
- a description of learning events
- a reflection of what happened/your response
- any thoughts on what you have learnt

If you do wish to start a learning journal, see:

Moon, J (2006) *Learning Journals: A Handbook for Reflective Practice and Professional Development*, 2nd ed. Routledge

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In this section, we introduce the concept of professional development. We then introduce a major theme on this course linked to that of professional development, creativity. We explain how the business case for creativity has underpinned how organisations approach professional development. Development is also concerned with how people learn and later in this part of the course, we examine management learning and analyse how learning styles are related to professional development.

Professional Development

Although they use the term 'employee development', Gibb and Megginson (2001: 129) define the purpose of professional development as 'developing human potential to assist organisations and individuals to achieve their objectives'. According to Armstrong, (2001: 580) professional development from a human resource management perspective should aim to:

- Ensure that managers understand what is expected of them, agree objectives with them against which their performance will be measured and agreeing the level of competence required in their roles

- Identify managers with potential, encouraging them to prepare and implement personal development plans and ensuring that they receive the required development, training and experience to equip them for more demanding responsibilities within their locations and elsewhere in the organisation

- Provide for management succession, creating a system to keep this under review

Thus, approaches to PPCD have varied widely and there is much variation in the literature between the terms 'education', 'development' and 'training'. As you are studying for a MBA qualification, then it is clear that your development is being addressed through the education system, principally the university sector. However, we take the view on this course that learning on the MBA programme also takes into account the generic skills and competences that international managers require and the opportunity is given for them to be applied.

While keeping the focus on the individual level, PPCD is linked strongly with organisational performance, with development ideally linked to the appraisal process. Performance appraisal should uncover the skills and behaviours required for the organisation to meet its objectives. Mole (2000) argues that *360-degree feedback* and *assessment centres* are useful for identifying individual development needs. *Mentoring* is also another useful method as individuals can benefit from someone established within the organisation and knows its 'inner secrets'.

In addition, Doyle (2001) suggests *projects* and *secondments,* which help managers to face new situations and challenging environments. For instance, Singapore's government has a well-established programme of sending its civil servants on secondments to multi-national corporations (MNCs). Outdoor management development, management team development and *business simulations* are also utilised by a range of organisations. All of these activities and functions are often brought under the label of 'human resource development' and it is McLagan (1989) who provides us with the most useful definition, which is:

> 'The integrated use of training and development, organisation development, and career development to improve individual, group, and organisational effectiveness'

> **Reading:** Before reading on, you should now read <u>Part One</u> of your course textbook by Andriopoulos and Dawson.

Part 1 – The Team

Reading: Chapter 6 in Andriopoulos and Dawson

1. Introduction – The Importance of Teams

Your first on-line exercise in PPCD is your *Belbin* team role report. Based on your self-assessment and those of the 'observers' you invite to assess you, you will be designated a type, be it 'implementer', 'co-ordinator', etc. (there are nine altogether). Belbin and his team had discovered that teams supposedly composed of the 'best business brains' were far less successful than teams of a much more mixed composition. There is plenty of material on the Belbin web-site and different combinations of types bring out varying strengths, weakness and characteristics (Belbin, 2010).

Why are teams important? 'Finding and keeping a good team' is highly valued by chief executives and are regarded as the key to organisational success (Taylor and Humphrey, 2002). However, western culture tends to emphasise individual achievement not only in business but also in sport and the creative arts. Even where teams are important, say for example in popular music or football, individuals make decisions to leave teams or groups to enhance personal careers. However, usually it is the team or group that has provided the context on which individual careers and achievement are built. Below, we consider 'team working' beginning by providing some guidelines at length on the dynamics involved. In terms of your learning on the course, it is at this stage you are expected to become involved in team learning, otherwise known as 'action learning sets'.

You will notice that the terms 'team' and 'group' are used interchangeably. However,

> A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Katzenbach and Smith 1993).

Teams can cut across departmental boundaries, unlike formal groups. Membership of a work-based team is thought to engender commitment and improve performance, rather than being simply a member of a group organised around a particular work task. We begin by looking at the dynamics within groups.

The next section takes a closer look at group dynamics and closes with a final section on action learning sets, which you are organised into for PPCD, both to support learning and to form the basis of your first assignment.

2. Understanding group dynamics: some practical guidelines

The following section offers some practical guidelines to aid understanding of group dynamics. The material is split into two sections: group development and practical guidelines for task accomplishment.

Much managerial activity is undertaken in working groups. As a part of the MBA programme, project work offers opportunities for working with others as a group, and getting the best out of a group. On this course, you will shortly be organised into an 'action learning set'. PPCD only has applied value through your interactions with others.

Although the life of each group is unique and its development in some respects can be unpredictable, experience has demonstrated that groups' work can be facilitated appreciably where groups are able to follow the guidelines set out here.

These notes are set out in two subsections. The first subsection reviews phases and aspects of a group's development. The second section sets out some advice and practical guidelines towards task accomplishment.

Group development

1. Three stages of project group activity
2. Two dimensions of activity: task and process
3. The process dimension and its phases
4. Process and task: an aid to recognition

Guidelines towards task achievement

5. Integrating process and task

1: Group development

1. Three stages of project group activity

Work in groups can be richly rewarding, with members of successful groups identifying strongly with one another. Work in groups also can be challenging and time-consuming: the price of success often can be continuing attention, especially to detail.

For instance, the MBA project groups typically are required to complete a task usually of some complexity within a prescribed time frame. Overall, a group's work must progress through three stages of activity:

1. Planning and preparation
2. Data generation and analysis
3. Resolution and writing up

Groups also must undertake a number of internal management activities, which will involve planning, decision-making and organising. While it is necessary for a group's activities to be managed and monitored by members throughout, this is true especially of the initial phases of a group's life, for decisions taken (or avoided) then can have profound effects on a group's subsequent work. They can also be difficult to retrieve later.

2. Two dimensions of activity: task and process

Typically, groups operate simultaneously on two dimensions: **task** and **process**.

Task is often represented as the manifest requirements of the assigned task a group has been set, and is grounded in legal rationality. **Process** encompasses the individual relationships, which group members engender in seeking to fulfil the group's tasks. Process is dynamic and volatile; sometimes it is referred to as 'group dynamics'.

In practice, process and task tend to be bound up with one another. Here, however, we have distinguished between them in order to clarify phases through which the work of a project group normally must pass in order for it to develop successfully. Although we begin with the process dimension, the thrust of this paper is concerned with guidelines towards successful **task** accomplishment.

3. The process dimension and its phases

At the outset, a project group's organisation is unformed. Its resources include an assortment of individuals, each with different interests, skills, priorities, and degrees of understanding and commitment to the groups' undertaking. The success of the project will depend on the extent to which these individuals are able to forge themselves into a team, co-operating effectively, flexibly and consistently towards the achievement of thoughtfully defined and agreed goals throughout all phases of a group's work. Establishing and maintaining secure, reliable and continuing patterns of organisation and authority are essential elements for a group's success. To achieve them, a group typically moves through four processual phases of development. These are described below.

3.1 Characteristics of four key phases in the development of project group process

Phase Process dimension
(interpersonal relations)

Task dimension
(operational activities)
1. 'Form' Dependence
(seeking guidance, leadership, seeking to remove uncertainty)
Seeking orientation

2. 'Storm' Contention

(determining best ways forward)
Forging effective work group organisation

3. 'Norm' Cohesion
(coming together as an effective working group)
Implementing agreed operational ground rules and roles

4. 'Perform' Co-operation
(working effectively as a mutually supportive trusting team)
Operating interdependently in problem-solving and task accomplishment

(Adapted from: Tuckman, B. & Jensen, M. (1977) 'Stages of small group development revisited', *Group and Organization Studies*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 419-27, and Huczynski, A. & Buchanan, D. (2007) (6th ed) *Organisational Behaviour,* pp. 297-300)

Characteristic behaviours during each of these phases are described in the passages, which follow.

Phase 1: Form

Initial group behaviour tends to be characterised by **uncertainty**. In particular, uncertainty about how members feel about one another, how they expect one another to behave, the sort of assumptions they will make about one another, the commitment group members will have to one another, the kind of problems they may have in joining forces with one another to progress the work of the group, and so on. Uncertainty is uncomfortable, and often produces a swift hunt for 'leadership' in the form of someone upon whom to depend to produce structure, establish ground rules, and set the agendas for the group to follow.

Phase 2: Storm

As the group's work begins to develop from its initial, formative stage, it is not unusual for original agendas, rushed during phase I of the group's life, to begin to unravel. Similarly, awkward underlying issues (perhaps concerning authority and how best to proceed), which have been suppressed in phase I ('we haven't time to deal with that now'), re-emerge. Among these are likely to be personal agenda issues who is to lead, who is responsible for what, who is perceived as an ally, who as a potential threat. Such issues will require discussion and working through to a satisfactory resolution to enable the group to proceed to phase 3.

Phase 3: Norm

During the third phase of group development members can find themselves working well together. There is a sense of having resolved earlier conflicts because the group has created an effective operational agenda. Members begin to share ideas and information,

with emerging openness. This is often regenerative. Feeling that they are achieving something worthwhile, members tend to reinforce positive behaviours with further actions that generate commitment, friendship and trust.

<u>Phase 4: Perform</u>

Phase 4 is characterised by group members' interdependent co-operation, as individuals or as sub-group members. The group has moved from the insecurity in its interpersonal relations which often characterises phases 1 & 2 to a state of relative security. At its most effective, this extends to members soliciting and offering feedback, with commitment to common activity, to problem solving and to one another. There can be a strong sense of interpersonal achievement; morale is high, activity is high, with a corresponding reluctance to consider the eventual ending of the group and its activities.
More recent developments of this model have included a fifth phase – **Adjourn** – that addresses the issue of managing the disbanding of a group once the task has been completed.

For a discussion of the phases of group formation, see Huczynski & Buchanan (2007: 297-300).

4. Process and task: an aid to recognition

Group process concerns the nature (or 'dynamics') of interactions between members of a group. These notes indicate some examples of processes that may be experienced in a group at various times. The notes do not attempt to match the potential variety of dynamics within groups nor do they represent formal analytical schema. Fundamentally, they provide a brief repertory of some typical group processes. They are designed to help group members who wish to recognise signs and potential implications of some process issues within groups.

Indications of some processes within groups

The remainder of this section focuses on the following five themes:

1. Interpreting group process
2. Leadership and followership
3. Interactions and contributions
4. Influence and decision taking
5. Norms, codes and group performance

1. Interpreting group process

Group process often can be subtle and complex. It can be mobilised to take a group's activities forward constructively. Alternatively, while ostensibly acting in support of a group's formal task, it may cause group activities to be diverted towards other, less productive ends.

Interpreting complex processes – and making effective use of interpretations – normally requires training and skill. On the other hand, many people in the course of their everyday lives become adept at reading the implications of commonplace processes, including body language; for example, who is inviting contact; who is closing others out; who chooses to interact with whom; and so on. Most people also swiftly come to recognise in others commonplace signs of, say, affection, anger, boredom, defensiveness, excitement, frustration, and so on. Nevertheless, some people (perhaps members of a project group) may appear quite oblivious to patterns of behaviour around them; despite these being obvious to others, they remain below some members' level of awareness.

However, it can be prudent to remember that members of different cultures may bring with them conventions and expectations (for example, concerning silence, or group harmony) which may differ from your own. Similarly, when considering the evaluations and interpretations, which follow, you may also find it helpful at times to reflect on the bases you yourself use to form your judgements.

The task/work group

Wilfred Bion developed a theory of group psychology suggesting that groups/teams become entities that exhibit group processes and these processes take a number of forms. Firstly, the group attends to task - **task group processes** and secondly groups attend to unconscious basic assumptions – **basic assumption group processes**.

These group processes operate **simultaneously**.

The task group operate as one entity towards completing the set task. This group is in work mode. Its psychological activities are directed towards achieving a collective rational task. This mode maintains close contact with an external sense of reality. This group modality might best be conceptualised as an ideal case rather than the actual state of affairs as **basic assumptions** are discernible beneath its apparent rationality. Equally, work activities are present even in the most disturbed basic assumption modes.

There are three main basic assumptions: **dependency, fight-flight** and **pairing.**

Basic assumption 1 Dependency

Basic assumption – dependency – occurs when the group assumes it is unable to complete the task. The group behaves and experiences itself as being entirely dependent on the protective power of the leader. In this mode, groups become unable to act or think independently. The group becomes unable to solve problems relating to the task, even when the group is made up of highly trained and competent people functioning perfectly well in other areas.

The group shows features of indecisiveness, lack of confidence and anxiety. The group is overly dependent on the leader to make decisions, think, and reflect upon what is happening and to solve problems

Basic assumption 2 Fight-flight

Basic assumption – fight-flight – occurs when the group assumes it is in danger of attack from outside or within. The group behaves and experiences itself as being in danger and works towards protecting itself by either attacking (fight) or escaping (flight) the source of anxiety. In this mode, the group may either attack (scapegoat) or avoid group members or leaders. The group may feel persecuted or mistreated.

The group shows features of defensiveness, anger and anxiety. The group either avoids or attacks the leader and become unable to solve problems or reflect upon what is happening.

Basic assumption 3 Pairing

Basic assumption – pairing – occurs when the group assumes that a saviour may be found to rescue the group from the anxiety it is experiencing. The group behaves and experiences itself as being about to be saved. In this mode, there can be manic rushes of energy, collective optimism and expectancy about new beginnings.

The group may shows features of over activity, over excitement and lack of attention to the task. The group may form factions (pairs or larger sub-groups) or identify the leader (or others) as a potential saviour.

2. Leadership and followership

Different people can exercise leadership in different ways at different times in the life of a group. However, in the initial phases of a project group's formation, members often experience uncertainty relating to leadership and followership positions. Fundamentally, both leader and follower activities should enable members to get the best out of the group. Try to evaluate whether they are doing so. For example:

Domination as leadership: does one member seek to dominate, or impose his or her ideas irrespective of others' views? How does his/her assertiveness influence the group's behaviour?

Does there appear to be rivalry for group leadership, or a struggle for power?

Followership and domination. Who supports or is openly deferential to the dominant member? Does anyone repeatedly avoid negative or dissenting views, or seek to prevent alternative or conflicting opinions from being expressed? Are some members silent? Are they withdrawn? Excluded? Do they appear to follow the dominant leader, but in fact express minimal commitment one way or another?

Group centred activity as leadership. Do some members push for tasks or responsibilities to be assigned to all members of the group, rather than certain individuals? Is there insistence that everyone must be included in group decisions and activities, irrespective of what these may be? What is being avoided?

Followership and group centeredness. Are some members seeking to avoid individual responsibility (or conflict, or commitment, or expression of views) by repeatedly pushing for a collective 'we' response to all issues that are raised?
Are some seeking to block power bids by others?

Task-centred leadership. Does anyone attempt to focus on the group's tasks and resources in an objective way? How is this received? Does anyone express (rather than assert) leadership by seeking others' ideas and opinions and drawing them into constructive discussion? How? Are opinions and ideas sought (and expressed) freely, without destructive criticism?

Task-centred followership. Who among group members seeks to contribute constructively to a task-related agenda? Is conflict dealt with objectively, in problem-solving ways? By whom? Which members appear to be open to ideas and feedback, and wish to push the work of the group forward? Does anyone appear uninvolved, perhaps responding mechanically only when prompted by others? How are policies recorded? How is time used, or managed?

3. Interactions and contributions

Much as an individual's status may not correspond with others' esteem of him or her as a person, so the frequency of individuals' contributions to a group may not correspond with the influence they are able to assert on group processes. Some may speak a lot but to little effect, while others who say little may engage group members' attention immediately. The patterning of interaction and individual contribution can offer useful indications of a group's modes of working and the extent to which it has developed. It may be helpful to note:

Who interacts with whom? Supportively? Negatively? Who makes frequent contributions? Who makes few? To what effect? Do initial patterns of contribution change? Do infrequent contributors begin to speak more; do formerly voluble contributors become silent?

How is silence interpreted? How are silent members treated?

Whose contributions are directed towards task fulfilment? Whose interactions influence the group's orientation (towards, say, work, play, interest, task avoidance, conflict, or co-operation)? How? Who helps others to contribute (for example, by prompting, supporting, helping them explain or clarify ideas)? Who cuts down or attempts to close out others?

4. Influence and decision taking

The manifest task of a project group (and the one upon which the project members ultimately will be assessed) normally involves the production of a written report and other outputs which satisfactorily fulfil externally defined criteria. Effective investigation and allocation of a group's resources (including resources of time) normally are instrumental to its success, and constructive processes of decision-taking usually are crucial. Hence, it may be useful to consider some of the questions below.

Influence patterns and decision process. Do certain group members without reference to others make decisions? Who appears to be most effective in influencing other members of the group? Who appears least? Has this pattern changed?
How are ideas accepted or rejected within the group? Does anyone offer contributions that repeatedly fail to elicit a response?
Do group members seek to reach consensual decisions, enlisting the positive support of all? How? Are decisions taken by vote? Why? Does a majority seek to override the views of a minority? How are decisions recorded? How are they conveyed to group members?

Decision taking and task facilitation. Who most effectively helps the group to focus on tasks at hand? How? Who seeks (or volunteers) suggestions concerning the best way to tackle tasks ahead?

Does the group **engage** or **avoid** requests for feedback, opinions and ideas? Does it solicit or avoid discussion of alternative ways ahead?

Is progress periodically reviewed? Does anyone attempt to interpret or summarise what the group has been doing? How is time used or managed?

5. Norms, codes and group performance

As time elapses, patterns or norms of behaviour tend to become established in a group. Effective operational procedures for allocating tasks, integrating outputs and optimising the use of a group's resources (which may involve undertaking some tasks as individual or in sub-groups) can be critical influences on group performance. As far as possible, behavioural norms and values should enable a group to function as an effective entity.

While some norms are likely to have been agreed explicitly, others (for example concerning matters which appear to be regarded as out of place in the group and, as a result, are avoided) may be unstated but become established by tacit consent.

Some explicit norms become established as **rules and procedures**, while others take the form of **tacit behavioural codes**, fundamentally expressing the sense of 'the way we do things here'. The questions below concern some norms and codes and their implications for group performance.

Does the group at times operate in sub-groups? How do sub-groups (or individuals) relate back to other members in the group? Are sub-groups primarily task-centred, or do they fulfil other purposes (such as exporting difficult or uncongenial members, or masking disagreements or antipathy between particular group members)?

Are group members able to **exchange feedback and feelings**? About the task?

About one another? Is feedback offered and used constructively, or otherwise?

How is **performance** kept track of? Evaluated? Who are principal (and effective) contributors to task performance? Are any ineffectual in their contributions? Do they fail to contribute? Why?

How is **deviance** managed? By whom? When?

Is there effort to keep all members **informed and up-to-date**? Is this consensual?

Does anyone avoid involvement? How is information-sharing managed? By whom? With what effect?

Guidelines towards task achievement

Integrating process and task

While the phases set out in C1 typify the process development of the successful group, progress towards stage 4 is neither automatic nor necessarily easy.

Fundamentally, achieving success requires effort and commitment by members throughout, and especially in the group's formative phases, 1 and 2. With such commitment, however, the process of achievements of phase 4 potentially is within the grasp of all groups. Indeed, some apparently unpromising initial groupings have gone on to perform outstandingly well. In doing so, they have found some of the advice set out in the following guidelines helpful.

The guidelines are not exhaustive but summarise some fundamental matters project groups will need to take into account in developing their work.

Essentially, they concern issues of **authority** and **organisation**. In some respects, the guidelines inevitably place an artificial rationality upon dynamic and unstable forces and it should be recognised that groups at times might find themselves unable to follow such orderly procedures.

Nevertheless, experience has shown that groups have found this advice not only a very useful agenda to address but also a vital lifeline to return to in cases of difficulty.

Inventory crucial resources: people, time organisation

Usually, work undertaken in a group's opening phases 1 and 2 is likely to be crucial to its subsequent progress. Vital resources are **people** and **time**.

The initial thrust of a group's activities necessarily must be **inventorial**: as a group's principal resources are its members, it needs to discover how best to go about mobilising their skills and talents.

All groups also have a further crucial resource (and one that is often overlooked); namely **time**. **Managing time** (A concept which embraces all, and which is neutral and depersonalised) can be an effective way of initially managing people and personalities within a group.

A truism repeatedly demonstrated is that most successful groups are **those that organise their operations and time management most effectively.**

Agree an initial agenda

It is useful to begin by agreeing:
- An adequate time span for the group's initial work (a pattern of one or two-hour working slots can be helpful).
- That the group's initial work is **inventorial** and **exploratory**
- That **outcomes** are to include some written plans and preparations

Establish an overall time frame

As soon as possible, establish an overall time frame for the project group's work ahead. Your time frame should span all of the project's three operational stages (preparation, data generation, resolution), working backwards from the group's report submission date. (Gantt charts or written time lines are useful for sequencing events and activities. They can also be useful for sharing ideas and establishing consensus about **time boundaries**, where these are located, and what the group will need to do in order to meet them). In doing so, it can also be useful to scan your timetables for events **outside** your project which potentially may have an impact upon it, your time, and your working arrangements.

Establish goals: what the group is to do

One of the advantages of the time frame approach is that it encompasses all and provides an externalised arena into which members can place their ideas about the nature of the

project and the work they are able to undertake. This must be explored in order to generate common understanding of what they are organising to do.

Hence, group members need to discuss their initial perceptions of the tasks ahead and the issues these are likely to involve. Although groups need to **establish** and **understand** goals, but also how these goals are going to be achieved. By focusing discussion initially on an overall time frame, the group is likely to be able to progress towards consensual agreement on tasks ahead: on **what** needs to be done. Subsequent important issues concern **how** it is to be done and **who** is to do it.

Chairpersonship: managing boundaries

While different people in relation to different activities can exercise leadership in different ways at different times in the life of a group, normally there is a premium upon good **leadership** throughout. The function of the chair is to manage an arena for group discussion, for planning, for sharing ideas, for reviewing progress. The chair's task is to enable time to be managed effectively, to enable members to be heard, and points to be recorded.

Secretaryship: recording and progressing the group's work

Normally, it is helpful to record decisions, remits, time spans for task completion, and so on. Moreover, a summary should also be agreed for circulation to group members in order that they know as clearly as possible
- what is expected of them
- by whom, by when and how they have agreed to deliver it.

If this appears time consuming, it is as nothing when compared to the time, progress and effort, which can be wasted in subsequent argument where such matters have been misunderstood. Time management and recording are essential functions. **The palest ink can be better than the best memory.**

Establish a time-based activity plan

You already should have established an overall time frame for the group's work ahead. In addition, you should create a time frame for planning and organising **roles** and **resources**.

If a group of six members has (say) 40 hours timetabled for its work, this should be represented within your overall time frame as 240 working hours available to the group. Setting this out as a timetable and filling in the blanks can be a good way of prioritising tasks, allocating roles and addressing essential questions of **how** tasks are to be approached and **who** is to undertake them. Fundamentally, the group must agree and establish its effort-reward ground rules, along with privileges and obligations of membership.

Should any member be unwilling to devote time as scheduled to project group activity (instead absenting him or herself or spending time in other ways), and if the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily within the group it should be reported promptly to the project tutor. It should **not** be left by default.

Allocate roles and responsibilities.

If a board of directors fails to assign specific responsibilities (say, for marketing, finance, manufacturing, HR and so on) instead explaining "we just leave everything to everybody" justifiably it would inspire little confidence. Similarly, it is **essential** for group members to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for **specific activities and outputs** within the agreed overall time span, especially as the group moves towards phases 3 and 4 of its process activities.

Progress review

In phases 3 and 4, it is likely to be necessary for the group to operate in subgroups, in order to make best use of time and resources available. The operating procedures and ground rules established during phases 1 and 2 should be maintained, in particular for **progress review** purposes, in order that all members understand where the group is up to, what remains to be done, and sight is not lost of the group's overall strategy and purpose.

Anticipate the report

In the course of often, heady, scrambles of fieldwork, it can be easy to lose sight of the project's resolution phase – **how** the group's work is to be written up and **by whom**. Yet it is upon such issues that much of the success of a group's work will be judged. It is prudent to begin to draw together initial drafts for the report well in advance of a project's resolution phase. This can be useful for highlighting potential shortcomings while time remains to take steps towards remedial action.

A premise underlying project group activity at MBS has been that each member of a group brings to its work broadly similar levels of skill, accomplishment and competence. Hence, for example, all members should be able to contribute comparably (albeit perhaps in different ways) to the production of a group's final report. Nevertheless, it can be desirable for one or two editorially skilled members to place a final overall style upon it.

3. Action Learning Sets

You will have been organised into groups for your first course, *Global Events and Leadership*. These groups will become your action learning set for the rest of PPCD. An action learning set is different from a project group. For instance, while project group members represent the group's crucial resources, groups normally have further resources on which to draw, including a briefing, usually detailing the framework, expectations and required outputs of their work, and a tutor.

Please note that the role of your tutor normally is not to act as a group leader or resolver of conflicts, but rather to be available from time to time to offer specialist advice. At any stage on the MBA programme, it is prudent for groups to keep in touch with their tutor and keep the tutor fully informed about their progress.

For the remainder of the course, you will work in your action learning sets. The dynamics of team formation described to you above will be directly relevant (a process that you may have encountered in *Global Events and Leadership*). In reality, action learning sets are a particular type of team: 'they are semi-formal groups which offer opportunities to gain input and alternatives from others and receive structured support' (Cottrell 2010: 144). Thus, they provide the link between individual and group learning.

Finally, you will be required to reflect on the group dynamics in your assessments. Your experience of your action learning sets will also be reflected in your learning journal. We will encourage you to reflect on your Belbin team role reports as one of your first activities. A large section of Part 1 was devoted to team working and by extension, the effective management of individuals within teams. The on-line session will consider creative processes within teams as well as briefly mentioning some of the creativity enhancing techniques on offer. All these ideas should be put into practice inside your action learning sets.

<u>On-Line Workshop:</u>

Creativity I – Teams

The nature of teams will form the basis of **Creativity I**, the first on-line workshop on the course, and will form the basis of the first assessment.

Separate materials will be provided for this on-line session.

PART 2: The Individual

Reading: Before starting Part 2, read Chapter 5 of your course text by Andriopoulos and Dawson.

The Business Case for Creativity

One of the conceptual underpinnings of this course is creativity. In an IBM Global Survey of CEOs conducted in 2010, creativity was identified as the most important leadership trait in addition to being the top strategic priority. In addition, creativity is key to business survival in the harsh economic climate. Irrespective of economic conditions, creativity and innovation vitalise both product and service improvement. According to the CEOs in the IBM survey, creative leadership rests on:

- Making continuous change to business models to realise strategy
- Inviting 'disruptive' innovation to encourage risk taking
- Drastic changes in the enterprise to invite effective engagement
- Being comfortable with ambiguity to create new business models
- Scoring highly on innovation
- Encouraging teams to be sufficiently courageous and visionary to alter the status quo
- The invention of new business models based on entirely different assumptions

As you will have discovered on the *Global Events and Leadership* course, this type of creative leadership is not confined to senior management or certain individuals, it goes to the heart of management practice. The IBM survey concludes that:

> More than rigor, management discipline, integrity or even vision – successfully navigating an increasingly complex world will require creativity

During this course, as part of our wider approach to Personal, Professional and Career Development, you will be provided with the tools and knowledge for assessing and developing creativity. Your second on-line test on the course will be to complete the General Factor of Creativity report, which will form the basis of your on-line interactions with your e-tutor.

Management Learning

Another key concept in PPCD is that of 'management learning'. For this course, it should be recognised that you learn in different ways in addition to learning within your own organisations. This is important as the way in which you learn has important consequences for all aspects of your development.

The motivation to learn – behaviourism vs. the humanistic school

For the 'theorists' among you, you might enjoy this section. You will discover if you are a 'theorist' or something else later… To understand learning, we need to consider behaviour. For behaviourists, the basis of learning is the 'conditioning' or 'shaping' of behaviour, words coined by B. F. Skinner, considered the founder of modern behaviourism. Skinner's initial work studied animal behaviour, in which specific (positive or negative) inducements by the researcher lead to predictable behavioural outcomes. Skinner (1993) then extended his theories to human behaviour and now many approaches to development draw on his ideas of positive reinforcement. For example, behaviourism has influenced job design, performance management and approaches to organisational change. Positive reinforcement takes the form of praise, gifts, money or attention as an immediate 'reward' for the appropriate response. Over time, positive reinforcement becomes a determinant of whether or not an individual incorporates new behavioural patterns into his or her work life, including applying new knowledge and skills acquired through development.

The significance of the theory is the controlling influence of the manager (or someone in authority) as the provider of reinforcement. Of course, a potential negative outcome is that this influence can inhibit individual responsibility in recognising and acting upon learning needs, which are essential in a world of increasing complexity. At worst, learner dependency could result. Too much influence or control may also undermine appropriate feedback mechanisms in the workplace that allow individuals and groups to take responsibility for their own improvement processes. In other words, it may inhibit people from recognising and defining problems and seeking solutions themselves.

Counteracting the behaviourist approach is the humanistic school, associated with Maslow and Rogers, who emphasise the need and desire for individuals to achieve potential as the 'fully functioning person' (Rogers) or 'self actualising person' (Maslow). This requires learning but it also means that it is a complex process involving more than the specification of measurable results. Only broader directions of growth can be indicated, which emphasise process as much as 'end condition'.

Rogers conceptualises learning as a natural, life long process, which is controlled by the individual as an independent being. The ability to achieve potential depends on how the learner interacts with her or his environment. He suggests that learning is best achieved when it is based on:

- Recognition by the person that what is learnt is significant in the maintenance/enhancement of their structure of self

- A learning environment free from threat

- Ability to access the perceptions of others as a way of broadening one's own insight

The views of the behaviourists and humanists can be seen as opposite poles in how to regard learning and learners, and thereby in the choice of learning strategies. For humanists, the 'locus of control' rests with the individual, in terms of content, direction and feedback. The locus of control is a measure of how much an individual perceives her or his behaviour has an effect on the outcomes of that behaviour, for instance, hard work is 'rewarded'. We assume that learners should have full empowerment in a rapidly changing and complex business environment, but the reality is that it is difficult to accommodate within organisations. The behavioural approach, on the other hand, sits more comfortably with systematic 'training', which encourages reinforcement ('doing the thing right').

The Process of Learning – Cognitive and Experiential Theories

Cognitive theory views learning as a process of developing capacity. It suggests that individuals can solve problems by trial and error, by deductive reasoning, by seeking information and help, or by a combination of all three. Drawing on this approach, typically MBA programmes require students to conceptualise and internalise a problem faced at work and then to work through it, assisted by tutors if necessary. The experience of doing this builds understanding of how to approach similar situations in the future, a process aided by the stock of experience built up over time. This then suggests that an experiential approach should be incorporated into MBA education directed at solving organisational issues.

M. Knowles was an important contributor to theories about the development of managers. He suggests that adult learning (Andragogy) is different from child learning (Pedagogy – although this term is the one that is used in Universities!). This distinction was based on his research that as people mature, they have a greater need and capacity to be self directing, to draw on their experience as learners in facing situations, and to focus learning on 'real life' issues (the plea of the MBA student!) Four features help to distinguish Andragogy as a learning process from pedagogy and traditional teaching. These features also connect learning with the motivation to learn:

- The learner is self-directing and, in the case of this course, the role of the tutor is to bring this self direction to fulfilment

- Because experience and reflecting on experience are so fundamental for adult learners, experiential methods for learning are necessary rather than didactic methods

- Learning events require a design with specific individual needs in mind rather than imposing a system

- Adult learners want to acquire competences that address real-life situations and contribute toward the achievement of personal potential.

While there is some controversy about Knowles' separation of the learning processes between adults and children, his approach is influential and relevant to PPCD.

The Kolb Learning Cycle

An important and highly influential experiential theory is the Kolb Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1974).

Kolb suggests that to be fully effective in his or her own environment, a person requires the four different but connected qualities shown in the diagram above. However:

> As a result of our hereditary equipment, our particular life experience, and the demands of our present environment, most people develop learning styles that emphasise some learning abilities over others (Kolb, 1974)

In practice, most people are better at one or two of the four stages in the diagram, rather than in all of them.

Honey and Mumford (1992) took Kolb's work further in terms of a self-diagnostic instrument for individuals to test their own preferred learning style. They distinguish four categories of learning style: activist, reflector, theorist (remember this from earlier?) and pragmatist. These categories correspond to the four stages of Kolb's Cycle, each of which has implications for choosing learning methods.

Thus, learning theories underlie practices in the design and implementation of management education and training, whether explicitly or implicitly.

On-Line Exercise 1: Self Diagnosis of Kolb Learning Styles

The exercise will identify your preferred learning style, which Honey and Mumford divide into four categories based on Kolb's cycle above – activists, reflectors, theorists and pragmatists.

Activists

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here-and-now and are happy with immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. Their philosophy is: 'I'll try anything once'. They tend to act first and consider the consequences afterwards. Their days are filled with activity. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer-term consolidation. They are gregarious people constantly involving themselves with others, but in doing so they seek to centre all activities on themselves.

Activists **learn best** from activities where

- They can immerse themselves in short 'here and now' activities
- There is excitement/drama/crisis
- There is a range of diverse activities to tackle
- They have a lot of the 'limelight'

Reflectors

Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data about experiences and events is what satisfies them, so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They are thoughtful people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They listen to others and read the drift of the discussion before making their own points. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant unruffled air. When they act, it is part of a wider picture. This includes the past as well as the present and others' observations as well as their own.

Reflectors **learn best** from activities where

- They are allowed or encouraged to observe and reflect on activities
- They can carry out some painstaking research

- They have the opportunity to review what has happened
- They can reach a decision in their own time without pressure and tight deadlines

Theorists

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, systematic way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. They tend to be perfectionists who will not rest easy until things are tidy and fit into a rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesise. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and systems thinking. Theorists enjoy the conceptual debates and the academic analyses presented on the MBA course. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. 'If it's logical, it's good'. Questions they frequently ask are: 'Does it make sense?' 'How does this fit with that?' 'What are the basic assumptions?' They tend to be detached and analytical as well as being dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. Their approach to problems is consistently logical. This is their 'mental set' and they rigidly reject anything that does not fit with it. They prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, lateral thinking and anything that seems to lack seriousness.

Theorists **learn best** from activities where

- What is being offered is a model, concept, or theory
- They have the chance to question and probe the basic methodology, assumptions or logic behind something
- They can analyse and then generalise the reasons for success or failure
- They are offered interesting ideas and concepts, even if they are not immediately relevant

Pragmatists

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sort of people who return from MBA courses brimming with new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. They tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down-to-earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities 'as a challenge'. Their philosophy is, 'There is always a better way' and 'if it *works*, it's good'.

Pragmatists **learn best** from activities where

- There is an obvious link between the subject matter and an opportunity to solve a problem
- They are shown techniques for doing things of obvious practical advantage

- They have a chance to try out and practice techniques
- They are given immediate opportunities to implement what they have learned

On-Line Exercise 2: VAK Learning Style

Understanding your learning style helps you to communicate more effectively aiding both your networking conversations and interviews. We do not all hear or communicate information in the same way so understanding your style and recognising others can be helpful when getting your important message across to others.

- Whilst we are all capable of learning under any style, no matter what our preference is, it makes sense to know if we learn more quickly and effectively in any particular way.

- Having a clearer understanding of our preferred styles may help us to make choices in the way we approach our conversations.

- The VAK learning Style is derived from the accelerated learning world and is a popular model today. It uses the three main sensory receivers: - Vision, Auditory and Kinaesthetic (movement) to determine the dominant learning style. Its main strength is that it is quite simple which appeals to many people. Most people have a dominant preferred style but some have a mix and evenly balanced blend of all three styles:

  Visual (seeing and reading)

  Auditory (listening and speaking)

  Kinaesthetic (touching and doing)

- The area in which you have the highest score represents your preferred learning style. However, note that you learn in ALL three styles even if you learn best using one predominant style.

Learning Styles and Personal Development

Honey and Mumford hold the view that it is possible, even desirable, for an individual to strengthen any of the learning styles over time. After all, while people have a genetic inheritance producing varying personality traits, they are also influenced by upbringing, education and organisational experience in terms of the learning styles they predominantly utilise. The assumption is that individuals can overcome inhibitions that

prevent a particular learning style coming to the fore by a determined effort to expand behavioural responses. Honey and Mumford offer a rich agenda of style enhancers that can be taken up by individuals if they so wish. The stimulus to do this may rest on the need to demonstrate new capabilities in the organisation. For instance, to enhance career development may require a more activist learning style when compared to one's *preferred* learning style. Alternatively, placement in a new work team may require the adoption of a style that complements those of other team members. Honey and Mumford suggest a range of development activities for learning styles, and this is something you can discuss with your e-tutor. However, the development activities reflect a range of behaviour that may be culturally more appropriate to North American and Western European contexts. The key point is that what is appropriate development depends on how an individual perceives his/her weakness/need in respect of new personal demands and on what is culturally acceptable in his/her context.

Many learning opportunities for personal development do not have to be manufactured, as many may already exist in your environment. However, they need to be recognised if you wish to increase your influence at work. To confine yourself to your 'preferred' learning style (s) may restrict your capabilities and development, and you will need to strengthen styles that seem less 'natural' for you.

Incompatibility of learning styles may become significant at work if individuals have different strategies for organising joint learning. In a team, this can cause irritation amongst colleagues and even lead to a breakdown of the team. While an understanding of different learning styles is not enough to solve such problems, the acceptance of individual differences in a team can at least generate a dialogue on how to handle them. More positively, addressing different learning styles constructively within a team can help it move through the Kolb cycle more effectively.

The Kolb Cycle in the above diagram is not a process in which all learning for an individual moves at a standard pace to complete the cycle. It is a fluid model, with some cycles lasting minutes and others taking years. Successive cycles also proceed into spirals, where learning is continuously refined and becomes more effective over time. Suggested development in relation to the Kolb cycle and Honey and Mumford's learning styles is illustrated below. You may want to reflect on how your own company environment may afford the opportunities to strengthen your weaker styles.

Active Experience – 'Activist'

The key to learning at this stage is how much opportunity you have to be involved directly with practical experience. Tasks, problem solving, action learning sets, exercises, role plays, games, field visits and case studies all offer opportunities for you to be involved in real or simulated direct experience. This stage also often marks out your MBA studies from other post-graduate programmes.

Reflective Observation – 'Reflector'

This is the information sorting stage, in which the generation of data is encouraged in useful ways. You are should analyse and review evidence of direct experiences. Profiles from self-report instruments, video playback, participant's own and others' observations, written notes or reflections, listening to feedback, are all activities for developing data. This aspect is emphasised on the PPCD course.

Abstract Conceptualisation – 'Theorists'

There may be a definite 'break' in learning or a separation of Stages 1 and 2 of the Kolb cycle – for example, between the end of a structured exercise and the start of its review. However, the shift from detailed analysis of experience in Stage 2 (reflective observation) to your broader consideration (abstract conceptualisation) can be imperceptible. However, with assistance, you can assimilate past experience and build theories of how things work. The more you can generalise, the more you can build your stock of knowledge of possible future behaviours. On this MBA programme, we provide the conceptual input to aid this process of assimilation and generalisation.

Active Experimentation – 'Activist'

This is the stage where what you learn is 'applied', and not just in your work situation. On MBA courses, students may signal readiness for this stage by remarking, 'If I were in that situation, I would…' Role plays and skill sessions provide opportunities for you to try out new behaviours, in addition to the possibilities offered by attachments and secondments to other organisations, where you practice guided by others.

Reflection

At the beginning of this course orientation, we urged you to make use of a learning journal. For much of this part of the course, the intention is for you to analyse any ways that currently limit your capacity to think and learn. In addition, we have helped you to identify anything that may help you achieve your full potential as a creative person. What is reflection? It is a process of deep thought aimed at better understanding and includes making sense of experience, 'standing back', repetition, deeper honesty, 'weighing up', clarity, understanding and making judgements (Cottrell, 2010).

We introduced Kolb's cycle above in relation to learning styles, and you did an exercise to reveal your preferred learning style. Kolb's cycle is also a model of reflection in relation to experiential learning. When writing your first assignment, you may want to consider how useful Kolb's cycle was in relation to your own developmental needs. This theme will be developed in relation to the concept of organisational learning in the final part of the course. On the other hand, you may want to develop your own model for reflection. Cottrell (2010) suggests that any model should contain the following elements:

1. Evaluate significance: is the experience worth reflection?
2. Reconstructing the experience: what happened?
3. Analysis: why did it happen that way?
4. Distil: what lessons can be learnt?
5. Apply: prepare for future situations

Conclusion to Part 2

The focus has now shifted to the individual in this part of the course. Reflecting on how we learn is an important step in personal and professional development. For instance, culture is also learnt when we enter new work or corporate settings. Many organisations espouse continuous learning for their companies, and this provides the settings in which creativity can flourish. Therefore, it is important on this course not only to provide you with knowledge, but to enhance your thinking skills.

In the final part, we take a wider view of our roles within organisations. As an international manager, the importance of the cultural contexts within which you work and operate are explored, both at the organisational and societal or national level. Another aspect of organisations considered in part 3 is power and conflict within organisations. Understanding culture and the politics of organisations can also help us make important choices in relation to careers management. Career development then concludes the course.

Creativity II – the individual

Separate materials will accompany this second on-line session.

Part 3: THE ORGANISATION

Reading: Before completing this part, read Chapters 9 and 10 of your course text book by Andriopoulos and Dawson

Further Reading: The Core Text book for the OB section of *People, Management and Organisations* is/will be D. Buchanan and A. Huczynski's *Organizational Behaviour.* Chapter 4 provides the recommended reading for culture on that course. Please also note that many of the other chapters in that volume are also highly relevant to this course as well. The Core Text book for the HRM section of *People, Management and Organisations* is/will be M. Marchington and A. Wilkinson's *Human Resource Management at Work.* Chapter 1 of that book also looks at the role of national culture.

In this part of the course, four main concepts will be explored:

- Organisational Learning
- Negotiation and Power in Organisations
- Corporate ethics
- Careers

To reiterate from the beginning of the study guide: the MBS slogan is 'Original Thinking Applied' and it has a close association with this course:

Original – an association with creativity and innovation
Thinking – not just about ourselves, but as part of teams; it is also about organisational learning and how this is shaped by culture, place, context and ethics, thinking as a process of reflection. Thinking can also refer to the processes we adopt for solving problems.
Applied – Leadership (*Global Events and Leadership*), Team Work, Organisational Change and Development, Managing across Cultures (*People, Management and Organisations*), Career Building, Managing Ethics

PPCD is concerned with equipping you with the knowledge and skills to apply original thinking.

1. The Importance of Culture

Depending on what stage you are at in the programme, you may have encountered some discussion of culture on the *People, Management and Organization* course. Here, culture is considered from the perspective of personal development and encouraging creativity and innovation. Chapter 9 of Andriopoulos and Dawson clearly articulates this approach. As they argue, 'the components of organizational culture (shared values, beliefs and behavioural norms) are key in promoting the generation and implementation of novel and useful ideas' (2009, p. 257).

As we have seen, or you will see, on the *People, Management and Organization* course, organisations and business systems are also embedded within particular national or societal cultures. This, in turn, has an enormous influence on management and perceptions about personal, professional and career development. You will also see, or have seen, that belief and value systems based on societal culture are more difficult to change.

Another reason why we have turned to the concept of culture at this stage of the course is that it has a considerable influence on other main concepts explored on this course:

- *Organisational learning* – from the perspective of development, the cultural environment should encourage and enable learning

- The exercise of *power* in organisations is rooted in culture

- *Corporate ethics* are shaped by cultural considerations

- *Career Development* also depends on the cultural context of organisations and wider societal cultures

2. Organisational Learning

Over the last two decades or so, the management literature has emphasised the value of 'organisational learning' as a strategic tool to improve organisational performance. Organisational learning can be taken as the ability to learn collectively by applying new knowledge to the practice of management. As Olsen and Peters (1996: 4) explain, organisational learning implies 'the development of structures and procedures that improve the problem-solving capacity of an organisation and make it better prepared for the future'. The centrality of the concept to management theory in general is that an emphasis on learning and then managing the knowledge derived from it is the result of increasingly unpredictable environments that have necessitated continuous improvement in both people and organisations.

Organisational learning requires that organisations develop the ability to act effectively on information assimilated from both inside and outside the organisation. In particular, they need to be able to apply 'double-loop' rather than 'single-loop' learning, as advocated by Argyris and Schon (1978).

> *Single-loop learning* refers to learning based on correcting problems, which usually results in tighter management control. In organisations, this results in 'fine tuning' or incremental change. This is a consequence of trying to achieve individual and organisational goals, but not the purpose and validity of the goals themselves (Senior and Fleming, 2006: 347). The question associated with single-loop learning is 'are we doing things right?' This type of learning is associated with segmented and defensive cultures.

> On the other hand, *double-loop learning* involves questioning and challenging established management assumptions. Thus, changes associated with double loop learning are more profound, asking the question 'are we doing the right thing?' Here, the purpose and validity of overall goals is under scrutiny. This type of learning is associated with integrative and supportive cultures (Senior and Fleming 2006: 347).

Thus, because organisational learning often demands cultural change or the questioning of values or changes in operating procedures, organisations need to be resilient to the kind of 'double loop' learning discussed above. As Olsen and Peters (1996: 6) observe, organisational learning has only occurred when 'observations and influences from experience create fairly enduring changes in organizational structures and standard operating procedures'.

In terms of personal development, understanding learning theory in organisations relates to self-development, developing others, or developing a learning culture. However, a key problem with double-loop learning is resistance. Although this is revisited in the *People, Management and Organisations* course, Argyris and Schon believe that people are afraid to challenge the fundamental assumptions or shared beliefs that double-loop learning

uncovers; they are unwilling to 'break the mould' and thus engage in defensive routines to avoid challenges to their own view of their world. Thus, by understanding organisational learning, a step change can be made in personal development and then choices can be made about how learning can be managed.

The Learning Organisation

The management science literature often appears to vacillate between *organisational learning* and the *learning organisation*. To avoid conceptual confusion, the learning organisation can be considered as an 'ideal type' (like Weber's bureaucracy), or something that organisational learning is directed to and thus has 'an action orientation' (Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 1999: 3). The normative theory behind the learning organisation is usually attributed to Senge (1990, 1994) who proposed five 'disciplines' for organisational learning.

The Five Learning Disciplines

Learning Discipline	Explanation
1. Personal Mastery	**Aspiration**, concerning what you as an individual want to achieve
2. Mental Models	**Reflection and inquiry**, concerning the constant refinement of thinking and development of awareness
3. Shared Vision	**Collective commitment** to a common sense of purpose and actions to achieve that purpose
4. Team Learning	**Group interaction**, concerning collective thinking and action to achieve common goals
5. Systems Thinking	**Understanding interdependency** and complexity and the role of feedback in system development

This concept appears to offer a route for change that demands attention to organisational structure, culture and leadership. It also involves experimentation and problem-solving in a rapidly changing environment.

> *Stop and think:*
>
> All organizations are learning, most of the time. The question is, to what extent is this learning repetitive and unconscious, or co-ordinated and channelled in a synergistic and progressive manner?

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- Consider this question in the light of how your organisation learns.

- What do you consider the blocks to learning in organisations might be?

The realisation of a learning organisation is far from straightforward. For instance, research conducted in UK local government by Vince and Broussine (2000: 40) highlights some of the difficulties in applying the concept, in particular disengaging individual from organisational learning. They found:

- An overemphasis on the development of individuals; which compromise a holistic approach to organisational learning, as suggested by normative models

- Learning is defended against as well as desired; where learning is used to resist change and is used in organisational politics

- Organisational approaches to learning are self-limiting; related to the first point where the over-emphasis on personal development limits organisational learning

- Organisational learning is often impaired by a 'blame culture'; this occurs where the culture encourages defensive posturing.

Although Senge popularised the concept, Pedler et al. (1997) probably outline the clearest statement of what a learning organisation is, which they labelled the 'learning company':

Characteristics of organizational practices of learning

1. a learning approach to strategy
2. a high level of participation in policy making by organizational members and stakeholders
3. use of information technology for sharing knowledge and mutual awareness
4. accounting and control processes which give feedback helpful to understanding the effects of action to learning and decision-making
5. internal 'customer/client' relationships feeding mutual adjustment and adaptation
6. reward systems consistent with employment philosophy which include the incentivisation of learning
7. forms of structure which both enable learning and could shift, adapt and accommodate change resulting from it
8. boundary workers – people working at the formal boundaries of the organization, collecting and passing on 'environmental' information
9. willingness and ability to learn with and from other organizations and companies
10. a culture and climate which encourages responsible experimentation and shared learning from successes and failures
11. mechanisms and employee relationships which encourage and support self-development

Relationship to Professional Development

In the second part of the course, we looked at how we learn as individuals but the concepts here considers how organisations 'learn', yet as Senge identifies above, there is a strong link between the two. As Pedler *et al.* (1997: 3) suggest, 'A Learning Company is an organisation that facilitates the learning of all its members and consciously transforms itself and its context'. Thus, professional development becomes central to the strategic direction of the organisation, as it helps the organisation to react quickly in a rapidly changing environment. Professional development considers interventions to facilitate both individual and organisational learning. In organisations, development is thus concerned with facilitating learning, teamwork and participation.

3. Power in Organisations

Many MBA programmes will educate managers in personal development issues related to power in organisations. Negotiation, assertiveness and self-marketing, and so forth, all stem from an understanding of the exercise of power within organisations. Organisational politics is a term that is often applied to the exercise of power. Citing the work of Pfeffer (1981), Connor et al. (2003: 131) point out that a political strategy becomes necessary in situations where 'there is uncertainty or dissensus about choices'. However, Burnes (2004: 185), a professor at Manchester Business School, thinks it is important to begin by drawing a distinction between power and *authority*, citing the work of Robbins (1987):

> *Authority* is: the right to act, or command others to act, toward the attainment of organizational goals, authority goes with the job…

> *Power* is: an individual's capacity to influence decisions…but one does not require authority to have such influence.

Organisational politics becomes the process of exerting influence over decisions whereas power is the capacity to influence decisions. Burnes (2004: 186), again citing Robbins (1987) regards politics as the exercise of power in any organisational setting. The exercise of power can tale a multitude of forms, both formal and informal, and with various degrees of legitimacy.

How to View Politics: Unitarist and Pluralist Perspectives

A behaviour that one person labels as 'organisational politics' can be regarded by another as 'effective management'. A person's reference point determines what they classify as organisational politics. Look at the labels below used to describe the same phenomenon – how they are interpreted depends on one's personal view.

'Political Behaviour'	'Effective Management'
Blaming others	Identifying accountabilities
Grovelling to the boss	Demonstrating loyalty

Passing the buck	Delegating authority
Protecting yourself with a memo	Documenting decisions
Creating conflict	'Unfreezing', encouraging change
Forming coalitions	Facilitating teamwork
Scheming	Planning ahead
Overachieving	Competent and capable
Ambitious	Career minded
Opportunistic	Astute
Cunning	Practically minded
Arrogant	Confident
Perfectionist	Attentive to detail

Source: summarised and adapted from Robbins (1998: 413)

In management theory, the view of organisational politics likewise depends on one's perspective. Senior and Fleming (2006: 194) note that for some management theorists, 'the concepts of power, politics and conflict…frequently appear in the role of the more undesirable aspects of organisational life'. The alternative view is that while organisational politics can limit organisational effectiveness, they can also be the source of innovation and positive organisational change. From this perspective, politics are a normal – and inevitable – part of organisational life, which managers need to address consciously and continuously.

These two views are often called the unitarist and pluralist perspectives on power and politics. They are summarised below from Morgan (1997), along with the critical or radical perspective for completeness.

<u>Unitary, Pluralist and Radical Views of Organisation</u>

	Unitarist	*Pluralist*	*Radical*
Interests	Places emphasis on the achievement of common objectives; the organisation is viewed as being united under the umbrella of common goals and striving towards their achievement in the manner of a well-integrated team.	Places emphasis on the diversity of individual and group interests; the organisation is regarded as a loose coalition, which has just a passing interest in the formal goals of the organisation.	Places emphasis on the oppositional nature of contradictory interests; organisations are viewed as a battleground where rival forces strive for the achievement of largely incompatible ends.
Conflict	Regarded as a rare and transient phenomenon that can be removed through appropriate managerial action. Where conflict does arise it is usually attributed to the activities of deviants and troublemakers.	Regards conflict as an inherent and ineradicable characteristic of organisational affairs and stresses its potentially positive or functional aspects.	Regards organisational conflict as inevitable and as symptomatic of wider society; it is recognised that conflict may be suppressed and thus often exists as a latent rather than manifest characteristic of both organisations

			and society.
Power	Largely ignores the role of power in organisational life. Concepts such as authority, leadership and control tend to be preferred means of describing the managerial prerogative of guiding the organisation towards the achievement of common interests.	Regards power as a crucial variable. Power is the medium through which conflicts of interest are alleviated and resolved. The organisation is viewed as a plurality of power holders drawing their power from a variety of sources.	Regards power as a key feature of organisation, but a phenomenon that is unequally distributed. Power relations in organisations are viewed as reflections of power relations in society at large and as closely linked to wider processes of social control.

Morgan (1997) also provides another service by identifying fourteen sources of power in organisations. See if you can explain and/or give examples of each of these sources of power, and then compare your answers with ours. We have provided answers for some of the less obvious ones for you in advance to get you started.

Source of Power in Organisations	*Explanation/illustration*
1. Formal authority	This is what Morgan calls (after Weber) *bureaucratic* authority although he argues that formal authority can also derive from *charismatic*, or *traditional* authority (as in a family business)
2. Control of scarce resources	
3. Use of organisational structure, rules and regulations	
4. Control of decision processes	
5. Control of knowledge and information	
6. Control of boundaries	Control of the interface between different groups – for example, who is in important meetings or project teams, who is out, who gets access to key people (e.g. the CEO) and who does not; control of the interface between the organisation and the outside world – for example, public relations
7. Ability to cope with uncertainty	
8. Control of technology	
9. Interpersonal alliances, networks and control of 'informal organisation'	
10. Control of counter-organisations	
11. Symbolism and the management of meaning	
12. Gender and the management of gender relations	One's gender in relation to the extent to which the organisation operates on formally and/or informally gendered lines – for example, crucial decisions can be made informally in arenas from which women are excluded – increasing the power of men vis a vis women, the extent to which archetypal 'male' patterns of behaviour are successful; promotion processes are deliberately or implicitly sexist
13. Structural factors that define the stage of action	
14. The power one already has	

Power, Conflict and Negotiation

For a number of observers, conflict is an important component of organisational politics, along with power. In the unitarist perspective above, conflict is inevitably harmful and to be avoided. However, from a pluralist perspective, conflict is an unavoidable part of organisational life, which can lead to positive outcomes. A further distinction to be made is between *functional* (constructive) and *dysfunctional* (destructive) conflict, although in practice it may be hard to distinguish between the two; 'winners' and 'losers' appear in the course of conflict.

Nelson and Quick (1994: 391) suggest that the following questions will help managers diagnose whether conflict is likely to be functional or dysfunctional:

- Are parties approaching the conflict from a hostile standpoint?
- Is the outcome likely to be a negative one for the organisation?
- Do the potential losses of the parties exceed any potential gains?
- Does goal accomplishment divert energy?

According to Nelson and Quick, where 'yes' is the dominant answer to these questions, the conflict is likely to be dysfunctional, in which case managers should seek to resolve it rapidly.

In relation to personal development, the exercise of power raises considerable challenges. It is well known, for instance, that access to training and development is often a function of power relations within organisations, where opportunities to attend courses, conferences, etc. are regarded as 'perks' for those in favour and there is a tacit expectation that no knowledge will be transferred to the organisation following such events. Rather, the purpose of this section is to demonstrate how the organisational context shapes the scope for development and creativity. A team, for instance, has more bargaining power, than an individual. The core text authors, Andriopoulos and Dawson see communication as part of the politics of change (see the OB section of *People, Management and Organisations*) and relate the study of power and change to helping our understanding of the processes of creativity and innovation (p.280).

4. Corporate ethics

Ethics are strongly related to personal values. Although not explicitly referred to in relation to your first assignment – the position paper – how you view your development is related to your personal ethics. At the organisational level, an organisation's core values become its corporate ethics. In the previous section for instance, there is an ethical dimension to how power is wielded in organisations. When persuading others, the concept of 'ethos' (or ethical appeal) is important. Ethos or 'ethical appeal' is 'enhanced by the reputation of the speaker/writer' and they are able to demonstrate 'valid reasoning,

good judgement, scrupulous tactics, integrity' and reflect 'a sincere interest in the audience's welfare, and a willingness for self-sacrifice' (Hamilton 2003: 701).

In the last on-line session (Creativity III), we present (-ed) a set of ethical standards from Whetten and Cameron (2011), that can be used as a series of tests for personal ethical decision making. Whetten and Cameron's series of tests were based on a concern that managers in the US felt under pressure to compromise personal ethics in pursuit of organisational goals, while public perceptions of executives have been under fire following the recent banking crisis.

From a theoretical perspective, there is an argument that organisations should only exist to maximise shareholder wealth within legal constraints and the 'rules of the game'. This is often known as the 'agency' perspective – managers act as the agents of shareholders. On the other hand there is the view that organisations have a set of social responsibilities to a variety of 'stakeholders'. These stakeholders may include clients, employees, managers, local communities, interest groups, elected politicians, public sector organisations, and so forth.

Implementing Corporate Ethics

Armstrong (2001) highlights the role of value statements and codes of conducts in promoting corporate ethics. However, as Whetten and Cameron (2011: 94) point out, although the vast majority of organisations have written codes of ethics, the public perception is that these documents 'are not influential in assuring high moral conduct'. Armstrong (2001) also considers the role managers can play in terms of ethical standards including the development and communication of an ethics policy, ensuring mission and values are part of strategy formulation and setting an example through professional conduct.

> *Stop and Think: Does your organisation publish ethical guidelines or a Code of Conduct? Is it effective?*

Ethics also becomes a more complex issue in a multi-national corporate setting. Many ethical judgements are made by managers on the basis of their cultural context. Schneider and Barsoux (2003: 300) ask the question: are ethics culture-free? To answer this question, they examine what is shared (or is regarded as universal) or what is culture-specific. They also reject the idea that Western developed countries should impose their standards across the globe. Taking corruption as an example, they pointed to the similarities and differences in managerial attitudes across countries. While there was general agreement that corruption was an important matter, differences between managers emerged in terms of resolving ethical dilemmas. For instance, often in East Asian countries it was felt that social control and interpersonal relationships removed the need for regulation. Non-cultural factors also shaped attitudes to corruption including the role of government, media, stakeholders and the legal system. In addition, Western assumptions that 'insist on ethical practices or to install ethics programs in foreign

subsidiaries may be taken as another sign of cultural imperialism' (Schneider and Barsoux 2003: 309).

The point is that ethics and corporate values shape personal development and creativity within the organisation. This was a key aspect of the final on-line session. If we draw upon the course text by Andriopoulos and Dawson, we see in Chapter 9 that values will drive an organisation's capacity to create and innovate. However, little is said about the ethical dimension in much of the literature related to personal, professional and career development.

Creativity III – the organisation

Separate materials will accompany this third on-line session.

5. Career Development and Management

The final section of the course relates to your own career development.   It is no accident that the course has been developed with assistance by the MBS Global Careers Service, whose portal has hosted many of the on-line exercises associated with the course (I am sure you have noticed by now). In the previous section, we discussed ethical decision-making and its relationship with personal and corporate values.   There is also a relationship with career development. Career counselling is generally aimed at matching an individual's characteristics (including values) with occupations.   With regard to creativity, then there is a need to think how to diversify how we view careers:

- Portfolio careers (multiple part-time jobs)
- Protean workers (multiple income streams, lifelong education, etc.)
- Global careers
- Boundaryless careers (lateral movements across organisations)
  (Pryor and Bright, 2011)

NOW PLEASE TURN TO THE CAREER WORK BOOK – THIS IS A SEPARATE BLACKBOARD ITEM AND FORMS THE BASIS OF THE THIRD ASSIGNMENT

Conclusion

We conclude with a reminder of the learning outcomes for the course, which also formed the basis for the assessments:

Intended Learning Outcomes

Category of outcome	Student Outcome:
Knowledge and understanding	• To critically appreciate the role of professional development and career development in relation to managerial excellence and career
Intellectual skills	• To critically evaluate the effectiveness of diagnostic tools • To apply theoretical and conceptual developments to ones' own personal development and to those around in an organisational context • To be aware of the diversity of career choice and how evaluation of self is the key driver of successful career management
Practical skills	• To engage with e-learning approaches, tools and interaction with team members • To analyse self and others
Transferable skills and personal qualities	• Identify values, skills, interests, motivations and preferences for yourself and ideal work environment, • Understand the elements to articulate your vision, purpose, values and priorities in follow-on conversations with ALS, • Understand the relative priorities between what you hold important for you now and in the future.

To critically appreciate the role of professional development and career development in relation to managerial excellence and career

The course has provided you with the theories, concepts and tools to help you attain excellence and latterly, to get the most out of your career. One of the key concepts underpinning the course was that of creativity, and this has been reflected in the material presented on the course and in this study guide.

To critically evaluate the effectiveness of diagnostic tools

Starting with your me2 creativity test, diagnostic tools have been used throughout the course to assist you with your development. It is how you apply what you have learnt from the tools that will help you to judge their effectiveness.

To apply theoretical and conceptual developments to ones' own personal development and to those around in an organisational context

Hopefully, the course has introduced you to a number of key developments, particularly in relation to the organisations in which you work, and those with which you are familiar. Organisational learning, the role of national cultures, etc. all contribute in shaping our personal development.

To be aware of the diversity of career choice and how evaluation of self is the key driver of successful career management

The separate Careers Workbook was designed to help you to manage your career successfully.

To engage with e-learning approaches, tools and interaction with team members

As this was an on-line course, you are now familiar with this form of engagement, primarily through the vehicle of your on-line action learning sets.

To analyse self and others

The various on-line exercises and the dynamics of the action learning sets are intended to help you with this analysis.

...and finally

However, the 'transferable skills and personal qualities' learning outcomes can only be judged by you, or those around you. Alternatively, your learning journal should reveal much about the skills and qualities you have acquired, not just on this course, but on the global MBA programme. Another key thing to remember about the course is the important synergy it has with other courses on the MBA programme, primarily *Global*

Events and Leadership and *People, Management and Organisations*, but we hope it helps an understanding of how we learn and develop in general. I will leave the closing remark to Cottrell (2010: 268):

> Our personal development is a dynamic process as we choose to make it. If we use a reflective approach on a regular basis, we will know ourselves more fully, be more aware of our needs and wants, and more able to achieve what we really desire.

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[4] Please note that most, but not all, of these references appear on your e-reading list. Some references pertain to the study guide only.

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