Social Skills and Cooperative Education: A Conceptual Framework[1]

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Abstract
The success of a cooperative education work term typically requires students to exhibit adequate levels of social skill. Unfortunately, since social skills are not ordinarily emphasized as part of the formal college curriculum, preparation may be less than optimal. The purpose of this article is to address this issue by presenting a conceptual framework that can used to develop a social skills training workshop within the operational parameters of a cooperative education program. The paper concludes with a proposed program for the application, monitoring and evaluation of a social skills training program.

> If you're the only game in town, manners don't matter. But none of us are the only game in town anymore." *Barbara Lewis (as quoted in Clark 1998)*

Central to the success of a cooperative education internship is the ability of the student to exhibit high levels of technical and social skills. Technical skills are important because they provide the foundation for the effective and efficient completion of the work task (e.g., engineering tasks, accounting tasks, information systems tasks). By exhibiting such skills, the student intern increases the chances of being retained by the sponsoring firm. Additionally, since evidence of technical skill preparation is almost always a prerequisite for employment consideration, having a record of successful work experience and/or an educational credential increases potential job opportunities later on down the line.

With regard to social skills, internship success is enhanced when the student is able to communicate effectively in an interpersonal work environment. In other words, student interns who understand and are able to exhibit appropriate social behavior will find that their chances for career success will be considerably improved.

Ironically, while higher education could provide formal preparatory training in both areas, this is seldom done. Instead, college and university curricula have historically focused on providing technical preparation. To the credit of cooperative education programs, however, proactive steps have been taken to foster selected social skills. For example, student interns are typically offered assistance in the development of effective resumes. By doing so, cooperative education programs provide students with the social skills that allow them to effectively communicate, *in writing*, how their competencies can benefit the organization. Many cooperative education programs also provide training in the area of "interview skills." As a result, interns are more likely to effectively communicate, *in person*, how they can contribute to the organization. By fostering these competencies, cooperative education programs have supplemented the formal educational experience and further enhanced the likelihood of internship and career success.

While these efforts are important steps in the development of social skills, additional work is needed. Specifically, if the benefits of a cooperative education internship are to be optimized, an increased emphasis needs to be placed on providing more comprehensive preparation in the area of social skills. In doing so, at least three potential benefits can be identified.

First, by providing social skills instruction prior to the internship, the student intern will more likely

be able to deal effectively with the eccentricities that often arise within the socially constructed work environment. Additionally, by acquiring social skills expertise beforehand (and learning how and when such knowledge is appropriate), student interns will have a more comprehensive foundation upon which to foster additional professional growth. As etiquette entrepreneur Susan Huston notes: social skills are: "a tool people can use to climb the corporate ladder. If you have manners, then you stand out from those who don't." (p. 2Q, as quoted in Hopper, 2000)

Second, social skills instruction will likely complement an organization's own socialization efforts. That is, social skills instruction can help sensitize student interns to the notion that organizations have their own distinct social cultures and that these cultures are subsumed under the broader context of social skills. As a result of the sensitization process, interns' willingness and ability to adapt to the specific corporate culture during the internship is more likely to be enhanced.

Finally, social skills instruction will more likely provide student interns with a greater competitive advantage after the internship has been completed. In particular, since employers ordinarily pre-qualify job candidates based on evidence of technical expertise, appropriate social skills training could make the added difference in terms of being extended a job offer. As Thomas of Protocol Advisors Inc. explains: "There used to be a time when technical skills could distinguish you from your competitor. Today, technical expertise is assumed, and what distinguishes [you now] is how well you present yourself." (p. 18, as quoted in Scott, 1999)

An Overview of Work-Related Social Skills

Although a comprehensive review of all work-related social skills is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief overview can provide a foundation upon which to understand the broad nature of such skills. In general, work-related social skills can be classified as either: (1) strategic social skills, (2) facilitating social skills, or (3) supplemental social skills.

Strategic social skills are those that are typically directed at achieving specific outcomes within some well-defined social context (e.g., negotiating, team-building, leadership). Conversely, facilitating social skills are tactically-oriented skills that provide a means to accomplish strategic social skill objectives. For example, the ability to be a successful team builder is contingent not only on an ability to understand and effectively utilize team building skills (a strategic social skill), but an ability to understand how to effectively utilize appropriate listening and speaking skills to enhance the probability of team building success.

Finally, supplemental social skills are peripherally-oriented skills that provide a basis for the effective implementation of strategic and facilitating social skills. These supplemental skills include such seemingly innocuous behaviors as a handshake, proper forms of address, and basic etiquette. And, although they may be relatively tangential to higher-order social skills, they play an important role in determining overall performance. For example, employees may not always remember that even when they are not in the office they are still representing their company. To illustrate the importance of maintaining discretion, etiquette consultant Sabath recalls a story of "two employees who left a meeting and began haranguing a client in the bathroom, completely unaware he was sitting in the stall, listening to their every word. Minutes later, the company lost a $4 million dollar account." (p. 8B, as related in Williams, 1998)

With the aforementioned discussion in mind, a review of the professional and academic literature suggests a growing concern regarding the current status of social skills in today's work environment. At the strategic social skills level, Kemper (1998) notes that negotiation skills have largely "been taken for granted in the corridors of global commerce" with much of his criticism focusing on the inability of Americans to secure a reasonable deal. (p. O-05) Negotiations expert Paul Wineman presents an even bolder assessment: "Americans don't have the foggiest idea how to negotiate. They don't like to negotiate — they feel it is demeaning to ask for a lower price...The seller has a take-it-

or-leave-it attitude. Americans almost always take it." (p. O-05, as quoted in Kemper, 1998)

Whether such sentiments represent a fair evaluation is, of course, subject to some debate. What is less debatable is that there appears to be a growing concern for the development of better negotiating skills. To accentuate the importance of negotiating skills, Chester Karras concludes: "You don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate." (p. 14, as quoted in Edson, 2000)

There is also a growing concern for additional development in the area of facilitating social skills. For example, while a recent study of business executives reported that although 80% of the respondents listed listening as the most important skill in the workforce, 28% also rated it as the skill most lacking. (as reported in Salopek, 1999) In some occupations, listening skills appear to be particularly salient. Ingram, Schwepker and Hutson (1992), for example, report that listening skills represent a significant explanatory factor in the determination of personal selling success. Despite its presumed importance in personal selling, however, Lapp (1985) has argued that poor listening skills are the number one weakness of most salespeople.

Finally, concern for the level of supplemental social skills has also been noted. In this regard, even seemingly innocuous skills as the handshake have been the subject of concern. For example, weak handshakes may convey the impression that the person lacks determination or decisiveness. Conversely, an unduly strong handshake may communicate that the person is overly enthusiastic or domineering. And it's not just the actual handshake that factors into the equation but whether or not the person has used effective "positioning" skills. For example, "At business receptions, one should always hold the beverage in your left hand, leaving the right hand free for your handshake." (p. 12, Sabath as quoted in "The Profits of Polish," 1998)

In summary, it appears reasonable to suggest that social skills are an important component of the performance equation. As such, developmental processes that seek to foster such skills should result in higher levels of performance for individuals and their organizations.

The Conceptual Framework

In general, the concept of social skills is a term used to describe the ability of an individual to communicate effectively in an interpersonal environment. In the context of a cooperative education internship, social skills might be defined more specifically as the ability of a student intern to communicate effectively in an interpersonal business or other work environment. In this regard, the term "communicate" refers to all of the verbal and non-verbal actions and behaviors that can potentially affect an interpersonal relationship.

A review of the literature suggests that there are six basic characteristics of social skills that should be considered in the development of a social skills training program. These are summarized in Table 1 and are classified under the acronym: SKILLS. As the table illustrates, the SKILLS acronym stands for: Sensitivity, Knowledge, Intangibility, Listening, Learning, and Socialization. Together, they provide a conceptual foundation that can be used to explain the nature and scope of social skills in today's work environment.

Component 1: Sensitivity

Social skills sensitivity refers to the ability of an individual to understand both the intrapersonal and interpersonal environment in which he or she lives and works. Intrapersonal sensitivity represents the ability to understand one's own internal environment (e.g., self- concept or self-awareness) while interpersonal sensitivity represents the ability to understand the external environment surrounding him or her (e.g., an understanding of others). Both are necessary for the development of effective social skills.

1a: Intrapersonal Sensitivity. Intrapersonal sensitivity is characterized by an objective understanding of one's own attitudes and behaviors. As an individual's self-concept becomes more objective, he or she will tend to become more sensitive to the attitudes and behaviors of others. Conversely, when an individual's self-concept becomes less

Table 1
The Social Business Skills Framework

General Components	Specific Components
1. Sensitivity	Focus of Sensitivity: a) Intrapersonal b) Interpersonal
2. Knowledge	Form of Knowledge a) Declarative b) Procedural
3. Intangibility	Attributes of Intangibility a) Difficult to measure b) Lack of direct accountability
4. Learning	Locus of Learning a) Experiential learning b) Learning from experience
5. Listening	Stages of Listening a) Marginal b) Evaluative c) Active
6. Socialization	Formality of Socialization a) Formal b) Informal

objective (i.e., biased or distorted), the extent to which he or she will be sensitive to the external social environment is likely to be reduced. Developing an objective self-concept, therefore, can help to enhance interpersonal sensitivity.

One way to foster intrapersonal sensitivity in a social skills training program is through the use of illustrative examples and concepts. Consider, for example, the individual who routinely blames "others" (e.g., customers, other employees, inanimate objects such as the photocopying machine) when things go wrong (e.g., reports are late, a sale is lost) and can't seem to grasp the fact that he or she is, at least partially, to blame. The value of this example is that most people can relate to it. And, in the unlikely event that a student believes that such behavior is acceptable, it allows others in the training session the opportunity to debate this issue in greater detail. Such an open discussion also encourages students to provide their own real life examples. In doing so, intrapersonal sensitivity is likely to be improved.

Aside from the use of examples, foundational concepts can also be used to sensitize students to the nature and scope of intrapersonal sensitivity. In this regard, two concepts presented by Taylor (1998) are particularly relevant: Assumed Similarity and Ethnocentrism/Denigration of Differences.

Assumed Similarity is based on the assumption that beliefs and values are similar across cultural domains. Such assumptions can often lead to unintended interpersonal conflict and poor performance outcomes. For example, Walker (1999) relates his experience at a Human Resource seminar that was attended by professionals from around the world. He was surprised that many of the American speakers chose to use colloquialisms and jargon that would likely not be readily understood by those from other cultures. Phrases such as: "This is the 'meat and potatoes' of human resources" and "It's a 'dog-eat-dog' world" were cited as examples.

Assumed similarity can also take the form of non-verbal gestures. As Agnes and La Rouche (1999) note: "On the international business stage, no gesture is too small. First, remember that there are no truly 'universal' gestures. Nodding 'yes' in most of the world, means 'no' in Greece and Bulgaria, while beckoning in Asia means 'go away'

in the U.S. and Europe. And the 'A-OK' sign may mean things are just great in North America. However, gesture this way in Japan and your companions will think you want money under the table. Worse, in Brazil, Russia, and Germany, they'll accuse you of obscenity." (p. 123)

It is important to note that assumed similarity is not restricted to the multicultural arena. Given the diversity in today's work environment, it is possible that individuals working at the same firm will have different personal values and beliefs about the world. For example, with the increasing trend toward vegetarian diets, an assumption that all people eat meat could prove problematic when planning a business-related banquet.

Ethnocentrism/denigration of differences differs from assumed similarity in that it is based on the extent to which an individual believes his or her own ethnic group, nation, or culture is superior to others and views these differences in a negative light. For example, Champy (1999) notes that: "It's now *de rigeur* in America to try to develop long-term relationships in selling. In many countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, a relationship is only a collection of transactions. Every deal stands on its own. A relationship is nice to have, but the only thing that matters is the quality of your last deal." (p. 25) Such ethnocentrism may ultimately translate to denigration of differences when either side takes a dogmatic stand; in essence, refusing to acknowledge the value of the other side's social norm. As such, cross-cultural conflict is likely to arise and lessen the effectiveness of the overall negotiation.

Given the potential for ethnic diversity in the domestic work environment, it is likely that ethnocentrism/denigration of differences and assumed similarity can occur within the parameters of the organization as well. Therefore, efforts to minimize the potential for problems should be taken in the form of: (1) gaining greater knowledge of other cultures, (2) confronting prejudices, (3) resisting judgmental reactions, and (4) improving communication skills (Taylor, 1998). With this in mind, Taylor warns: "Being receptive to differences doesn't come naturally. Acknowledging negative reactions is the first step to becoming effective in a multicultural environmental." (p. 32)

1b: Interpersonal Sensitivity. While intrapersonal sensitivity is necessary for the development of social skills, it is insufficient because it says little about how effective the individual is in responding to the external social environmental. For example, an individual may be aware that he or she is not very reliable with regard to showing up on time, but may fail to understand how this ultimately affects performance. This is an example of the too familiar "I know I'm usually late to things, but what's the big deal? I get my work done." In this case, the individual has an objective self-concept with regard to reliability but is insensitive to how such behavior is affecting others. If the individual is ultimately terminated, he or she will most likely blame some external factor or factors despite being told the primary reason was tardiness.

While this example may be in the extreme (indeed, it is an exception to the general proposition that intrapersonal sensitivity tends to foster interpersonal sensitivity), it is useful in social skills instruction because it illustrates one of the most troubling trends in today's social environment: a lack of consideration for others. Consider, for example, the increased use of cellular phones in public places. Although some might view it as a mere annoyance, a recent survey reported that 59 percent of respondents said they would rather visit the dentist than sit next to a person using a cell phone. (Danbom, 1999)

To further illustrate the poignancy of interpersonal insensitivity, consider the following story as related by Joinson (1997): "While waiting in a hotel lobby, Sandy Anglin, president and owner of Anglin and Associates, a hospitality training firm, overheard an employee at the counter make a private call to a friend. 'In that phone call, she discussed in graphic detail her boyfriend's problems and sex life — and had no idea whatsoever that she was doing anything inappropriate,' say Anglin." (p. 84)

The importance of these examples is that they encourage additional dialogue. By doing so, students develop a greater understanding of how others in

the interpersonal environment view varying degrees of inconsiderate and inappropriate social behavior.

Component 2: Knowledge

If sensitivity to the social environment enhances an individual's motivation to improve social skills, then the development of a social knowledge structure is the goal of such motivation. Although social skills knowledge can be characterized in a number of ways, perhaps the most useful is to distinguish between its declarative and procedural components. In this sense, declarative knowledge is defined as knowledge about the specific attributes or facts regarding a particular social skills category. Conversely, procedural knowledge is comprised of the techniques and sequence of events that one would apply to a particular social situation in order to reach a stated objective.

Most people who have developed effective social skills tend to organize their declarative knowledge by grouping social situations into broad categories and then associating certain specific actions with each of these categories. In doing so, social skills knowledge is not only more efficiently stored in memory, but more easily retrieved. Table 2 illustrates how social skills can be hierarchically categorized and scripted. As the table illustrates, declarative knowledge is defined by the categories of social situations (e.g., entertaining skills, cyberspace skills, office skills). Procedural knowledge is then defined by the series of appropriate actions or scripts that are associated with each category (e.g., how to..., when to..., where to...). To better illustrate this point, consider the use of name tags. Declarative knowledge is knowing that one should wear a name tag during a business conference. Procedural knowledge is knowing how the name tag should be placed on the shoulder (note: the name tag should be place on the right shoulder since this is where people's eyes are ordinarily directed when shaking hands).

Although having knowledge would presume that it is utilized, there is emerging evidence of a "knowing-doing" gap in business today. Developed in the organizational theory literature, the knowing-doing gap argues that while companies allocate considerable resources towards gaining strategic business knowledge, such knowledge often produces little change. The developers of this concept identify numerous "traps" that contribute to the knowing-doing gap (Pfeffer and Sutton, 1999). Three of these can be readily adapted to the concept of social skills:

1. It is easier to talk about what should be done than to actually do it. This helps explain why people who are undoubtably aware of the correct social behavior chose not to exercise it (e.g., using a cell phone during a business meeting).
2. It is easier to rely on memory and precedent, rather than on critical thinking. Some people may be resistant to change regardless of their knowledge of appropriate social behavior because it is easier to do what they have always done.
3. The reward system may focus on particular objectives thereby ignoring other potentially important issues. Since social skills are less likely to be incorporated as part of the performance objectives for most jobs, they can be de-emphasized relative to more tangible objectives (e.g., meeting sales quotas).

To overcome the potential knowing-doing gap, social skills training should emphasize the relationship between the use of social skills knowledge and performance outcomes.

Component 3: Intangibility

Webster's dictionary (1970) defines intangibility as something that "cannot be easily defined, formulated, or grasped." (p. 731) This definition helps characterize the concept of social skills. When Organ's (1988) definition of a related social skills concept is included (i.e., Organizational Citizenship Behavior), the issue of intangibility is further clarified with regard to performance: "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization." (p. 4) Note that this definition implies that, despite being intangible, social skills can have a positive influence on organizational effectiveness.

Empirical research in the area of organizational

citizenship behavior" has provided support for the proposition that social skills increase effectiveness (e.g., Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1994; Walz and Niehoff, 1996) Duchseneau and Gartner (1990), for example, found that entrepreneurs whose companies were successful engaged in more communication with others and were more effective in this activity than entrepreneurs whose companies had failed. Therefore, social skills instruction should emphasize that while such skills and behaviors may appear intangible on the surface, they will likely have a positive influence on effectiveness. As a result, social skills should be considered a conduit to the achievement of long-run performance objectives; the better the social skills, the higher the level of overall performance and vice-versa.

One useful example comes from the area of "dining rules." While most individuals would probably not see a direct correlation between pre-seasoning food during a meal and any measure of interpersonal effectiveness, some people believe that pre-seasoning food sends a subtle message to others; the individual pre-judges the world around him or her (LaBlanc, 1998). While it may be unfair to make such assessments, it is important for students to understand that such evaluations are commonly ascribed to even the subtlest of social behaviors.

Component 4: Learning

With regard to the development of social skills, it is important to distinguish between the concepts of "learning from experience" and "experiential learning." Following Usher (1993), Garrick (1998) notes that "learning from experience happens in everyday contexts and is rarely recognized, whereas experiential learning is a key element of a discourse that has this everyday process as its subject and constructs it in a certain way, even though it appears to be merely a term to describe the process." (p. 129) In other words, experiential learning tends to be a more formal process while learning from experience tends to be a more informal process.

Both formal and informal learning experiences have implications for the development of social skills. Perhaps most importantly, formal learning is often a necessary foundation for the efficient acquisition of informal learning. From a technical skills aspect, most professional accounting positions require evidence of formal training in accounting. Once this foundation has been developed, the individual can tailor his or her learning to the particular requirements of the position for which he or she has been recruited.

From a social skills perspective, most personal interviews will result in an evaluation of the applicant's foundational "people skills." Not surprisingly,

Table 2
Selected Areas of Social Skills Knowledge

1. Business entertaining
   - Dining issues
     - Ordering skills
     - Eating skills
     - Conversational skills
     - Seating skills
   - Gifts
     - Selection of appropriate gifts skills
     - Presenting and receiving skills
     - Timing skills
   - Events
     - Selection of events skills
     - Behavioral skills
2. General office communications
   - Forms of address skills
     - Use of title skills
     - Introduction skills
   - Cyberspace communications
     - Memo writing skills
     - E-mail skills
     - Telephone skills
     - FAX skills
   - Meetings
     - Seating skills
     - Discussion skills
   - Attire
     - Dress casual skills
     - Dress normal skills
3. Cultural norms
   - Intracultural
     - Domestic culture skills
   - Intercultural
     - International culture skills
4. Customer/client relations
   - Customer/client inquiry skills
   - Negotiation skills

individuals who can exhibit evidence of acceptable social skills will likely be recruited over other equally qualified applicants who do not exhibit such skills. It is after the individual has been recruited, however, that he or she will need to develop additional social skills that are tailored specifically to the organization for which he or she has been hired. To the extent that the individual has a solid foundation, the acquisition of social skills through an informal learning process will be more efficiently achieved. In essence, a basic premise of the formal learning process is that it seeks to teach students "how to learn on their own."

There are numerous examples of how cooperative education programs facilitate the formal and informal learning process. For instance, formal orientation sessions and the setting of individual objectives serve to facilitate the informal learning process by reminding the student intern of the purpose of the internship. In other words, the intern is more likely to be receptive to informal learning experiences if he or she has been provided with basic guidelines. From the perspective of a formalized program of social skills instruction, students will be provided with a useful foundation upon which to effectively adapt to the particular social culture of the organization.

In summary, informal social skills learning is likely to be facilitated when formal processes of instruction are used to complement the more informal process of learning by experience.

Component 5: Listening

The process of listening is an important factor in the development of social skills. Allesandra, Wexler, and Barrarra (1987) describe a hierarchical model of listening styles that can be effectively integrated into social skills instruction. Marginal listening (the lowest level of listening), occurs when the individual hears the words that are said but is easily distracted. When this happens, the individual is more likely to miss important information (e.g., forgetting names). Evaluative listening occurs when an individual hears what is said but does not process the non-verbal (e.g., facial expression) or subtle verbal (e.g., tone of voice) cues of the communication message. Instead, the individual focuses on the literal meaning of the message itself. As a result, the evaluative listener is more likely to misinterpret incoming messages which could cause him or her to respond less effectively. Finally, active listening is the process by which an individual processes all relevant information, both verbal and nonverbal. In doing so, active listeners are less likely to misinterpret an incoming communication message.

Since active listeners are less likely to misinterpret incoming messages, they are better able to develop higher levels of social skills. Therefore, it would make sense that social skills instruction should seek to foster active listening. One way to accomplish this objective is to provide a series of verbal and nonverbal communication techniques as part of the instruction (see Table 3 for examples). As an introduction to this subject, students should be informed that a recent study found that words communicate only seven percent of the content of the message, the rate and inflection of speech communicates 38 percent, and the nonverbal cues (body gestures) exhibit 55 percent (p. 18, as reported in Scott, 1999). In doing so, students are reminded of the importance of non-verbal communication.

Another supplemental example that reinforces the importance of nonverbal communication is provided by Bell (1990). He describes how the president of a large East Coast consulting company demonstrates the power and importance of nonverbal communication to new employees:

> Raising his right hand, he touches his point finger to his thumb to form a circle, then asks new employees in the session to do likewise. When everyone has a finger-thumb circle formed, the president tells them to touch that circle to their chin — but as he does, he touches his own finger-thumb circle to his cheek. (p. 162)

About 80 percent of the group members followed what they saw the president doing (touching his cheek) rather than what they heard (touch your chin). The lesson is obvious; when words conflict with nonverbal cues, people will believe the message sent by the nonverbals.

Table 3
Nonverbal Communication Techniques

When Listening:
1. Lean forward slightly: leaning back may be a sign you are relaxed, but it may also be interpreted as disrespectful and not giving the speaker your full attention.
2. Be aware of your posture: sit up straight and don't cross your legs; both feet should be flat on the floor. If standing, try not to shift body weight from one foot to another. Don't lean against walls or doorways.
3. Don't fidget: don't finger your jewelry, hair, or clothing while someone else is speaking. It comes across as impatience, boredom, or discomfort with the subject being discussed.
4. Make eye contact: it indicates that you are paying attention and are at ease with the topic. Don't stare, though; this may be interpreted as aggressive or hostile.
5. Pay attention to your arms and hands: arms folded across the chest suggest you are feeling defensive rather than receptive. But clasping your hands in your lap gives the impression that you are in control and making critical evaluations.
6. Nod your head from time to time: it's a sign you are actively listening. Note, however, men and women may interpret this body cue differently. For women, nodding typically means "I'm paying attention," while for men, it usually indicates agreement.

When Speaking:
1. Don't get too close: if you are "in someone's face," the listener may feel threatened and defensive.
2. Don't use flamboyant gestures: using your hands to emphasize a point can be an effective tool, but keep hand movements to a confined area; about the width or your body. Excessive gestures can be distracting or give the impression you are out of control.
3. Don't point at your listener: it can come across as aggressive and hostile.
4. Avoid a monotone: modulate your voice, changing the rate of speech throughout the conversation for emphasis. Use inflection and moderate changes in pitch and volume to engage the listener's attention. Be aware that high pitches and fast rates of speaking can be a sign of tension.
5. Face the listener directly: don't sit at an angle or face away from the other person. You don't want to seem indifferent or come across as rude.

("More than Words Can Say" 2000)

Component 6: Socialization

Socialization in the context of the organization is defined as the process "by which employees learn about and adapt to new jobs, roles and the culture of the workplace. (Fisher 1986, Van Maanan and Schein 1979)" (p. 47, Klein and Weaver, 2000) Saks and Ashforth (1997) note that most organizations use some type of formal orientation training as part of the socialization process. Although the inherent personal characteristics of the intern will help determine the extent to which he or she will ultimately respond to an organization's socialization process (Fisher, 1986; Jones, 1983, 1986; Saks, 1995), it is logical to suggest that a cooperative education orientation session that emphasizes the importance of organizational socialization will increase the intern's willingness to engage in formal and informal socialization processes. Furthermore, an increased sensitivity to these socialization processes will more likely result in positive socialization outcomes for the intern. (cf., Holton and Russell, 1997)

Application, Monitoring and Evaluation

The SKILLS framework is considered useful to the extent that it is appropriately applied, monitored, and evaluated.

Application

Application of the SKILLS framework consists of two major parts; a timing component and a structural component. With regard to timing, social skills instruction should ordinarily be provided

prior to the student intern's entry into the work environment. Since cooperative education programs typically have an orientation session that precedes such entry, this would seem to be the best time to introduce the training. To the extent that such training cannot be provided during this orientation, alternative scheduling should be provided. In any event, if the effects of social skills training are to be realized, the program should be implemented at or near the start of the internship period. In most cases, this means sometime during the first half of each school term.

With regard to the structural component of the instructional program, the following general guidelines should be considered:

1. Introduction: Define the topic of social skills and provide the rationale for the training session. (The front-end of the current paper provides a useful foundation).
2. Quiz: Provide a preliminary quiz (about 20-30 questions should suffice). The questions should cover a range of topics. The purpose is to show that social skills are not always intuitively obvious. It also sensitizes the students with regard to their self-concept.
3. Lecture/Discussion: Use the SKILLS model to organize the lecture/discussion section. First, describe the components of the SKILLS model and explain why they are important to developing social skills. Some of the components will likely take more time to explain that others. After this initial introduction, break the lesson into the individual knowledge components (see Table 2 for an example) and provide information on each of the areas.
4. Developing this part of the training section may take time, but useful information is readily available through published sources. Some of these are listed in the reference section of this paper.
5. Behavior Modeling Training: Goldstein and Sorcer (1974) developed a behavior modeling technique that can reinforce the material emphasized in the lecture/discussion section of the training session. Following recommendations by Kraut (1976) and Szymanski (1988), the four major learning activities of the technique are:
   - Modeling: Trainees watch films of model persons behaving effectively in a problem situation.
   - Role playing: Trainees practice and rehearse the vicariously learned behaviors.
   - Social reinforcement: The trainer provides reinforcement in the form of praise and constructive feedback.
   - Transfer of training: Encouragement is given to ensure that the training session behavior is employed effectively on the job. (p. 75, 1988)
6. Conclusion: Provide a brief written summary of the session material. This does two things: (1) it reminds attendees about the importance of social skills and (2) it provides a reference source that students can use after the session has been completed.

While the aforementioned guidelines suggest a relatively lengthy workshop (e.g., 4-8 hours), a lengthy workshop is not mandated. If, given certain time constraints, some programs find that they cannot allocate sufficient time to cover all of the prescribed guidelines, some elements could be omitted or abbreviated for the sake of efficiency. For example, instead of a 20-30 question preliminary quiz, the instructor might simply select a few representative questions. Similarly, the extent of the lecture material may also need to be abbreviated. Finally, the behavior modeling portion of the workshop may need to be condensed and/or modified to cover only selected portions of the proposed learning activities. In sum, although the framework is perhaps best utilized in its entirety, practical considerations may often dictate that a shorter workshop be considered. The proposed framework allows for such flexibility.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The processes that cooperative education programs use to monitor and evaluate internships can also be used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of social skills training. Specifically, the evaluation report that is ordinarily submitted by the employer at the conclusion of the internship can be used to monitor the program since it usually includes a set of ratings on various aspects of social outcomes. If not, the evaluation form should be modified to account for measurement of social

outcomes. For example, measures of "effect on other employees" and "reliability" are two common aspects of social outcomes.

Since the recorded evaluations provide no comparative information, additional analysis is needed to determine the extent to which the program is effective. With this in mind, there are at least two approaches that can be used: (1) a longitudinal comparison between the time period when the program was first put in place and the preceding time period when it was not in place and (2) a direct comparison between evaluations for students who attended a training session and those that did not (during the same period).

The first comparison is a quasi-experimental design that examines whether or not the introduction of the program has improved evaluations on the social skills dimensions. If the program has been appropriately implemented, it should be expected that the social skills evaluations will be higher for students in the post-instruction program.

The second comparison is also a quasi-experimental design but evaluates differences between those students who attended an instructional session during the school term and those students who did not. Although the comparison is made during the same time period, the design is not a true experimental design since the groupings will not ordinarily be randomly defined. That is, the groupings will be the result of some students opting out of the training session for any of a number of reasons (e.g., poor social skills?). As such, care should be taken when making inferences about the results of the evaluation since the non-attendees may simply have less developed social skills. With this caveat in mind, the comparison can be regarded as preliminary evidence regarding the relationship between social skills instruction and social effectiveness.

From a theoretical perspective, each of these techniques has limitations with regard to the design (hence the term "quasi"). However, the impracticality of developing a true experimental design may necessitate their use during the early stages of the evaluation process. Since no empirical examination has reported on the effectiveness of formalized social skills instruction, any reasonable evidence (e.g., quasi experimental designs) would likely increase our understanding of the role that such skills training has on performance.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has argued that social skills are an important factor in the success of a cooperative education internship. Despite the presumed importance, however, social skills are less likely to be formally included as part of the higher education curriculum. Unless such preparation is provided elsewhere, interns will likely enter the workforce with less than adequate social skills. While cooperative education administrators are certainly under no mandate to provide social skills instruction, doing so would likely improve the quality of their programs. Additionally, the importance of cooperative education in the overall educational experience will be further enhanced.

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[2]The author wishes to thank the editor and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.