CHAPTER THREE

SURVEY OF THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO GRADUATES

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two, the results of a life-skills questionnaire administered to first year, University of Pretoria students indicated that the respondents scored below acceptable levels of competence with regard to the life skills covered in the questionnaire. In this Chapter, an attempt will be made to discover whether or not graduates can be considered to be sufficiently life-skilled to meet the requirements of the world of work.

The aims are to attempt to ascertain the following:

*   which life skills do employers, the self-employed (e.g. private practitioners), Deans of Faculties (University of Pretoria), Councils, Associations, and those involved in Human Resources Development consider to be of value to graduates and to the world of work?

*   how proficient, with regard to life skills, do the above-mentioned people believe graduates are?

*   which, if any, life skills are being or should be deliberately and consciously taught at university?

*   which, if any, training courses in life skills are being offered so as to assist graduates to become either more employable and more productive sooner, or more able to maintain viable private practices?

In order to achieve the above, a three-pronged approach was used.

1.   An overview of the needs of employers and of private practitioners was gleaned from the writings of Mathee (1991:119-122) : Walters (1990:78-104), Lund (1993: 33-35), van Aardt (1993:8), Tothill (1993:40-44), Edey and Molin (1993:21) and McDonald (1993:62-64) and from short, confidential interviews (See 3.2. pp.41-55).

2.   Short, confidential, personal and/or telephonic interviews were held with, and a questionnaire was given to, both the Deans of the Faculties at the University of Pretoria (or a representative), and either Councils registering professional graduates or selected Associations/Institutes representing said graduates (See 3.3. pp.55-68). The Deans were selected to answer the questionnaire as it was believed that they would be in the best position to represent both their faculties and their students, and because contact is maintained between the university and the Councils via the Deans. Similarly, the Councils and Associations were selected because they are in contact with both the universities and the world of work (including graduates following given professions). Furthermore, the Councils are involved in the training of graduates in terms of the setting and maintaining of standards.

3.   An investigation of the material covered by a small sample of Human Resources Development Departments and Training Companies was made in an attempt to establish which, if any, courses that pertain to life skills training they offer (See 3.6. pp.80-82).

3.2   OVERVIEW OF THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS AND PRIVATE PRACTITIONERS

3.2.1   The needs of employers

A Report published in 1990 by the Department of Education and Culture on the evaluation and promotion of career education (known as the Walters Report 1990:78-104), made a number of observations with regard to the requirements employers had of school leavers. Those sections of the Report which showed some agreement with the findings of **inter alia** Lund, Kedian & Thurlow, van Aardt and McDonald (See pp.43-54), all of whom are concerned with requirements employers have of graduates, have been reproduced below. The observations of all these people would indicate that successful life skills training is not taking place either at school or at university level.

Cognizance is taken of the fact that Provincial Departments of Education are attempting to address the problem of life skills training. For example, the Transvaal Education Department introduced a new Guidance syllabus in 1993 entitled "Guidance for Living", which focuses on life skills. However, it would appear that, at this stage, universities

cannot simply presume students are in possession of necessary life skills and thus ignore any training in them if they wish to assist their graduates to become more employable.

According to the above-mentioned Report (Walters 1990:80-81), the following aspects may be singled out with regard to employers' requirements:

1. General work ability, attitudes towards work, personal characteristics, ability to think, social skills, language skills, bilingualism and arithmetical skills. Although considered important, employers tended to exempt school leavers from having an understanding of business concepts,

2. According to employers, the most important lack in terms of abilities of school leavers lies in the areas of work attitudes (work ethic) and thinking skills. Employers from the public sector also indicated serious shortcomings in terms of the language ability of school leavers,

3. Somewhat better levels of ability were found with regard to personal characteristics, language skills, bilingualism and arithmetical skills. The most acceptable level of ability was found in the area of social skills (Walters 1990:80-81).

Apparently, the majority of employers believe the responsibility for development with regard to personal characteristics, bilingualism, thinking skills, social skills, language and numerical skills belongs to schools or colleges. On the other hand, they are prepared to accept joint responsibility for training with regard to general work skills, attitudes and business concepts.

Further shortcomings identified by employers included: inadequate career guidance counselling and allied matters such as poor career planning, unrealistic expectations, little knowledge of how to conduct an interview and a general lack of knowledge of the world of work (Walters Report in Mathee 1991:120).

With regard to *work disposition and work ethic*, it would seem that employers feel that school leavers do not measure up to expectation in terms of:
*   general work attendance
*   willingness to work hard

*   the taking of initiative
*   the taking of responsibility for tasks
*   the taking of personal responsibility for self-development
*   the ability to adapt to changing demands at work
*   an understanding of the concept that work is a way in which to make a contribution to society
*   a willingness to let their superiors control their work
*   the ability to get on with the job as usual despite insecurity or uncertainty (in Mathee 1991:120-122)

With regard to *personal characteristics*, it would seem that school leavers do not measure up to employers' expectations in terms of:

*   thoroughness
*   motivation
*   perseverance
*   self-discipline
*   honesty
*   ability to make moral judgments
*   self-knowledge.

With regard to *social skills*, apparently school leavers do not measure up to employers' expectations in terms of:

*   the ability to work in a group or team
*   the ability to work under supervision
*   the ability to work with members of other race groups
*   leadership potential (Walters in Mathee 1991:120-122).

A similar project was done in Wisconsin in America (Grover in Steyn 1992:20), in 1985. A total of 23 000 of the companies surveyed mentioned the same or similar deficiencies in the readiness of school leavers for working life as those given above.

With regard to graduates, Kedian & Thurlow (in Lund 1993:33-35), in a survey of the views of commercial and industrial companies employing Natal University graduates,

obtained the following responses from both a postal survey (of 120 organizations) and a consultative seminar (to which 20 organizations were invited) conducted by them.

1.   In response to the question aimed at ascertaining which skills and attributes their companies looked for in recruits from **all** universities (emphasis mine), respondents noted the following:

* Leadership ability
* Management skills/administrative skills
* Independent, analytical and lateral thinking
* Critical evaluation
* Ability to work in a team
* Ability to work unsupervised
* Self-motivation
* Self-confidence
* High level of social skills
* Awareness of responsibility
* Good interpersonal and communication skills
* Holistic view
* Varied extra-mural experiences
* Awareness of the need for breadth of experience
* Versatility and flexibility
* Academic ability
* Organizational skills
* Ability to delegate
* Good problem-solving and decision-making skills
* Time management skills
* Business acumen/orientation
* Geographical mobility
* High level of adaptability, to social change and the workplace
* Trainability and the willingness to learn
* Breadth of perspective
* Well developed personal value system
* Literacy and numeracy skills
* Sense of reality

* Ability to apply knowledge (in Lund 1993:33-34).

2. According to the postal survey done by Kedian & Thurlow (in Lund 1993:34), the following ten skills and attributes were regarded as the most important by the respondents:
    * Leadership ability
    * Management skills
    * Achievement orientation
    * High level of motivation
    * Initiative
    * Ability to anticipate problems and solve them creatively
    * Flexibility/adaptability and willingness to learn
    * Ability to apply knowledge
    * Good communication skills (in Lund 1993:34)

Apparently, the skills and attributes *least often* found (in University of Natal graduates) included:
* Leadership skills
* Management skills
* Ability to apply knowledge
* Achievement orientation
* Communication skills
* Acceptance of high standards
* High level of numeracy and literacy
* Realistic perception of their own role in an organization
* High standards (Kedian & Thurlow in Lund 1993:34)

These researchers noted that some employers wanted graduates who could be considered "finished products" able to be fitted into particular jobs with little additional training; while others wanted graduates with a broader education and skills range. The latter usually represented large organizations which had their own training programmes; the former required more career-specific training. Nevertheless, apparently all respondents desired the general qualities mentioned above (Kedian & Thurlow in Lund 1993:34).

Lund (1993:34-35) conducted a similar survey but he focused on the views of the legal profession. General skills and attributes noted by him and not included in the findings of Kedian and Thurlow were as follows:

* Determination and drive
* Honesty and integrity
* Judgment and common sense
* Logical reasoning ability and independent thinking
* Quick comprehension and the ability to think on one's feet
* Thoroughness and commitment
* Compassion, social conscience, sense of justice and fairness, commitment to human rights
* Enthusiasm and keenness
* Research ability

According to Lund (1993:35), the qualities *least often* found in (all) university law graduates were as follows:

* Ability to apply knowledge to practice, to apply law to facts, to establish and assess facts
* Knowledge of practice, procedure and procedural law
* Ability to communicate
* Hard-working and self-disciplined
* Business acumen (including skills, understanding of business)
* Experience
* Research ability
* Analytical ability
* Creativity, initiative and lateral thinking
* Judgment and common sense
* Language ability
* Accounting knowledge or skills
* Compassion, social conscience, sense of justice and fairness
* Knowledge of law (including the integration of knowledge from different areas)
* Ability to draft documents
* Logical and critical thinking
* Technical skills e.g. computer literacy, presentation, negotiation

*   Appropriate behaviour (including humility and modest expectations)   (Lund 1993:35).

Where a few of the above *qualities* are indeed just that, a large number of them fall into the category of life competencies or skills.

Of the 13 qualities listed by both Kedian & Thurlow (in Lund 1993:34) and Lund (1993:35) himself, as being *most often* found in either University of Natal graduates or all law graduates, only 5 could be considered to fall into the category of life competencies or skills. These are

*   willingness to learn

*   ability to reason logically and analytically

*   appropriate behaviour and appearance

*   hard-working (work ethic)

*   technical knowledge (Kedian & Thurlow/Lund 1993:34-35)

In response to a question asking respondents to list the qualities they expected a university to produce in graduates generally, respondents seemed to value the following highly: communication skills, an independent and inquiring mind, integrity, hard work, problem-solving ability and research ability (Lund 1993:35).

Given the similarity between responses to his survey and those of Kedian and Thurlow, Lund (1993:35) concluded that "there is a group of skills, abilities and qualities, often called general transferable skills, that are highly desirable *in most, if not all*, work situations (italics mine).

The Graduate Recruitment Manager of Unilever, Mr Geoffrey McDonald, appears to agree with the above. As a representative of an employer, he considers the following to be some of the criteria that his company looks for when employing graduates:

*   Leadership ability

*   Extra-mural/extra-curricular experience (including learning how to delegate, how to chair a meeting, how to make certain judgments and how to make decisions i.e. skills considered important with regard to how to manage a business)

*   Initiative

*   Social skills
*   Effective communication skills
*   Ability to work in a team
*   Independence or self-reliance
*   Motivation
*   Intellectual ability   (assumed by all researchers mentioned to be present in graduates)
*   Decision making
*   The whole job-search process
*   Organization and planning skills

McDonald believes it is "...the possession of these attributes together with the degree that make the graduate employable" (McDonald 1993:63-64).

With regard to overseas trends, Tothill (1993:40-44), in a paper entitled Higher education and employment in the OECD: lessons for South Africa?, investigated the ways in which the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (comprising the United States, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Scandinavia and almost all of Western Europe) has dealt with calls for the provision of higher education to be linked more closely to economic needs, and the ways in which systems of higher education have diversified and expanded as a result of social and economic pressures. (The United Kingdom, for example, has implemented the concept of enterprise education.) (See Chapter Four 4.4. pp.95-101)

According to Tothill (1993:41), post-industrial theory maintains that the economies of developed countries have become increasingly knowledge-based, making an even more highly educated work-force increasingly necessary. Thus an ever greater proportion of the labour-force is becoming engaged in creating and manipulating *information* rather than *objects*. This new view of the economy is known as the information or service age (Tothill 1993:41; Patterson 1985:136; Smith 1993:68; Hopson and Scally 1982:7 and 1986:15).

Tothill (1993:41), maintains that, in OECD countries, post-industrial trends over the past 20 years have been towards:

*   "Information-processing occupations, with growing proportions of graduates employed.

* A growing proportion of graduates employed in high-level 'service' occupations, such as banking and finance, accountancy, computer services, management and marketing (OECD in Tothill 1993:41).

* High levels of unemployment, in part due to technological developments, with graduates less seriously affected than other sections of the population.

* Growing employment opportunities in small businesses and consultancy-type self-employment. This is due in part to an 'externalization of function', whereby large corporations contract out certain specialized tasks" (Tothill 1993:41).

Patterson (1985:135) poses the questions: "how do we orient our young people and adults across the life span to a new age of jobs, opportunities and basic skills?" He answers that we must shift from the systems and concepts that served the industrial age to new ideas and ways of serving the information era by taking cognizance of the new basic skills for success which are emerging; as well as concepts such as "career transferable skills" (Patterson 1985:137). Apropos this, he identifies the following as the "four basic skills of the information society":

* Decision-making skills

* Future-planning skills

* Life-coping skills or social and personal life skills

* Learning to learn or skills for becoming a good learner (Patterson 1985:137) (See Table 3 p.51).

In an attempt to adapt to the changing demands of the economy and society, Hopson and Scally (1982:7) maintain that there will be an increased focus on developing "a range of personal competencies that will equip young people to fulfill a variety of life roles in a rapidly changing world" (Hopson & Scally 1982:7). Table 4 (p.52) contains examples of the skills advocated by these authors.

Smith (1993:68), maintains that "the current world trend of the 'learning organization' emphasizes 'multi-skilling' and general knowledge" (Smith 1993:68).

Tothill (1993:42,44) considers the following to be a few of the skills and abilities employers world-wide are looking for, as the ability to process information becomes more important than possession of a specific body of knowledge:

* The need for life-long learning and flexibility in light of the rapid obsolescence of skills
* Personal transferable skills
* Skills of written and oral communication
* Logical thinking skills
* Problem solving abilities
* The ability to work in teams
* Skills related to taking initiative
* Presentation skills (Tothill 1993:42,44)

In the opinion of Tothill (1993:44), "OECD research gives content to the relationship between education, employment and economic development, a relationship often reduced to shallow slogans in South Africa. The OECD confirms that education and the economy are becoming increasingly intertwined - but emphasizes that the needs of the economy cannot be met by embracing a narrow vocationalist ethic". She further maintains that "with the internationalization of the world economy, South Africa cannot expect to remain untouched by the trends observed in the OECD" (Tothill 1993:44).

Finally, mention should be made of a study done by Edey and Molin (of the Placement Office of the Counselling and Careers Unit, University of the Witwatersrand) (1993:19-21), arising out of the premise that liberal arts graduates experience problems with being integrated into the work force. These authors conducted a survey of the (Faculty of Arts) graduates and postgraduates themselves. The study covered graduates who had completed their studies in 1990. In response to a question about which skills they commonly regarded as being essential to their jobs, respondents identified the following:
* Verbal and written communication skills
* Compiling, searching, researching, keeping records
* Instructing, teaching, training
* Managing, supervising, organizing (Edey & Molin 1993:21)

When asked if they would do a BA degree again, respondents said they would but they frequently included a 'but' clause. The proviso of interest here was that a BA degree should be more skills specific (Edey & Molin 1993:21).

TABLE 3 : THE FOUR BASIC SKILLS OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

DECISION MAKING	FUTURE PLANNING	SOCIAL AND PERSONAL LIFE SKILLS	LEARNING TO LEARN
Survival and success depend on a process for making well-considered decisions : * A personalised process for making well-considered decisions * Problem solving, critical thinking and logical reasoning skills * The capacity to develop long- and short-term goals * Skills for organising and managing information, resources and one's energy	Skills for life, career and education, including anticipation and projection into the future. Subskills include : * Future focus i) Technological literacy ii) The ability to establish a clear and positive vision of oneself in the future iii) Skills for learning from the present how to anticipate the future * Career life planning skills i) Skills for seeking and organsing knowledge of self and work ii) Identification with one's transferable skills as the foundation of career iii) Employability skills	Skills of responsibility, interpersonal relationship and self-esteem : * Responsibility includes : i) Moral and ethical knowledge and behaviour ii) Respect for self and others iii) A clear sense of purpose and commitment iv) "Other-oriented" values and habits of behaviour * Interpersonal relationship skills i) Clear expression ii) Careful, active listening iii) Conflict resolution iv) Stress management v) Networking establishing * Self-esteem i) Skills for achieving personal goals ii) Skills for achieving social goals	Skills for becoming a good learner. The elements include : * A liberal arts education of language, maths, social studies and science * Study skills * Achievement skills, habits and abilities to start, continue and complete tasks within a given time

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(Source : Patterson 1985:138-141)

TABLE 4 : REVISED CLASSIFICATION OF LIFE SKILLS ACCORDING TO HOPSON AND SCALLY

SKILLS OF LEARNING	SKILLS OF RELATING	SKILLS OF WORKING AND PLAYING	SKILLS OF DEVELOPING SELF AND OTHERS
Literacy Numeracy Information-seeking Learning from experience Using whole-brain approaches Computer literacy Study skills	Making, keeping and ending relationships Communication Assertiveness Being an effective member of a group Conflict management Giving and receiving feedback Parenting Influencing	Career management Time management Money management Entrepreneurship Choosing and using leisure options Preparation for retirement Seeking and keeping a job Managing unemployment Home management Setting objectives and action planning	Being positive about yourself Creative problem solving Decision making Stress management Transition management Managing sexuality Maintaining physical well-being Making the most of the present Proactivity Managing negative emotions Discovering interests, values and skills Discovering what makes us do the things we do Developing the spiritual self Helping others Developing the political self

(Source : Hopson & Scally 1986:15)

The above dealt with the conceived needs of employers (whether of school leavers or of graduates). It would appear that there is a remarkable similarity between the needs of employers both in South Africa and overseas. The needs of the self-employed will be discussed below.

3.2.2 The needs of the self-employed

Confidential interviews were held with a sample group of self-employed graduates. The sample comprised the following:
* a newly qualified Chartered Accountant
* two consulting engineers (one mechanical and one civil)
* a lawyer
* a medical doctor (a gynaecologist who also holds an MBA degree), involved both in private practice work and in the training of interns
* a psychologist, involved in private practice and in the training of interns
* a speech therapist
* an occupational therapist

A list of life skills was shown to the sample group. The below-mentioned were most often selected as skills and abilities the majority of them felt were essential for anyone considering self employment to have.
* Knowledge of business/business acumen/skills
* Entrepreneurship
* Management/administrative skills
* Organization and (future) planning skills
* Financial, stress and time management skills
* Assertiveness and initiative
* Knowledge of common/tax law
* Research/literacy skills (e.g. report writing)
* Computer literacy and numeracy skills
* Communication and interpersonal communication skills
* Problem solving and decision making skills
* Teamwork and networking skills
* Professional ethics and/or a well developed personal value system

* Adaptability/flexibility/versatility
* Independent/lateral/creative/critical thinking skills
* Ability to work unsupervised and take responsibility
* Ability to apply knowledge and to learn
* Self-motivation and self-confidence.

Apropos the above, van Aardt (1993:8), in a paper entitled "The labour market, the needs of the economy, and the Humanities", refers to the training of clinical, counselling and research (sic) psychologists. He states that "although their training is geared towards the acquisition of professional skills for conducting private practices, they are seldom, if ever, taught basic business skills such as accounting, how to set up a private practice, how to obtain clients, how to invest earnings, and how to expand and/or adapt their private practice over time. In this way, although they acquire the professional knowledge to become private practitioners, the world of private practice remains closed to many, owing to the lack of business skills and the business acumen to set up a successful practice" (van Aardt 1983:8).

Both Mr Dereck Jackson (Head: Educational Aid Services, Johannesburg North East) (March 1991), and Mrs Lynne di Giandomenico (Dental Association of South Africa) (June 1993), feel that one of the reasons many practitioners (in this instance, psychologists and dentists) cannot sustain private practices, is a lack of knowledge of how to run a business. According to the Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Pretoria (Seelinger June 1993), the Dental Faculty recently introduced courses for students on how to run private practices. These courses include training in computer literacy. The Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science stated in an interview (Couborough June 1993), that he is interested in the same package being made available to his students.

As can be seen from the above, self-employed graduates seem to value at least some of the skills and abilities required by employers.

3.3   SURVEY OF THE DEANS AND OF COUNCILS

Short telephonic and/or personal interviews were held with, and questionnaires were given to, the Deans (or their representatives) of the Faculties at the University of Pretoria.

Telephonic interviews were held with either Registrars or representatives of Councils, Associations or Institutes and a questionnaire almost identical to the one presented below (See 3.3.1. pp.55-66) was telefaxed to them. The aim was to attempt to survey the **opinions** of the respondents relating to both the **levels** of, and the **importance** attached to, given life competencies and skills with regard to students and graduates.

A 100% response was received from the Deans and 93.3% of the Councils, Associations and Institutes responded.

As regards the construction of the questionnaire and in particular general information such as a definition of a questionnaire, different types of questionnaires, characteristics of good questionnaires, the goal thereof, the experiential world of the respondents, the length, sequence, application and evaluation of a questionnaire, etc., refer Chapter Two (2.2. pp.21-25).

Questions were drawn from a variety of sources including personal interviews and discussions, the Questionnaire on Life Competencies and Skills presented in Chapter Two (See 2.3. pp.25-32), the University of Pretoria's Mission Statement, the writings of the aforementioned authors (See 3.2. pp.41-55), and the personal experience of the writer both as a lecturer and as a psychologist (career guidance counselling) in government employ and/or private practice.

Several test runs were done and appropriate adjustments were made before the questionnaire was given to the respondents represented in this study.

3.3.1 Life Skills Questionnaire submitted to Deans

Reproduced fully below is the Questionnaire on Life Competencies and Skills (Life Skills Questionnaire) given either to the Deans or representatives of the following faculties at the University of Pretoria.

* Faculty of Law
* Faculty of Education
* Faculty of Natural Sciences

*   Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences
*   Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
*   Faculty of Dentistry
*   Faculty of Medicine
*   Faculty of Veterinary Sciences
*   Faculty of Engineering
*   Faculty of Arts and Philosophy (Representative)
*   Faculties of Theology: Sections A and B
*   Dean of Student Affairs

QUESTIONNAIRE ON LIFE COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS

The **aim** of the following questionnaire is to attempt to gain some insight into the level or degree of competency of graduating students with regard to the below-mentioned life or core skills.

The questionnaire is presented in two parts. Each of questions **1** to **55** requires two responses. Space has been provided for responses to questions **56** to **59**.

Where it may be preferable to be able to make mention of specific faculty results in the overall analysis of data gathered, **confidentiality will be maintained** if so desired. Please indicate with a circle (see question number 60) whether or not you would prefer your answers to remain confidential.

Please feel free to draw on any and all sources of information available to you (e.g. student evaluations, lecturer evaluations, feedback from employers, professional boards etc.) in order to complete the questionnaire.

A **4 point rating scale** with the following *values* applies to the first response to questions 1 to 55. Please simply circle the *number* corresponding to the chosen answer thereby indicating the level or degree of competence, *in your opinion*, your students have. The *symbols* found alongside the above-mentioned numbers refer to the *importance each skill has, in your opinion, for students graduating from your faculty.* Please simply circle the chosen *symbol* underneath the relevant question.

1	uncertain	A	uncertain
2	inadequate	B	not important
3	competent	C	important
4	excellent	D	essential

Questions 56 to 59 should be answered in the spaces provided.

Please answer all questions to the best of your knowledge at the time of response.

A similar questionnaire has been sent to the relevant professional boards for the same purpose as stated in paragraph one.

For an example of the covering letter attached to the Questionnaire sent to the Councils, Associations and Institutes, see Annexure (p.170).

The Questionnaire consists of seven subfields, namely self management skills, personal development skills, thinking skills, life and work orientation skills, career planning and development skills, community and social development skills and physical and sexual development skills.

A   SELF MANAGEMENT SKILLS

1   *Effective Communications Skills* including oral and written communication

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

2   Skills for *seeking, organizing and managing information*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

3   Skills relating to the ability to *give and receive feedback clearly*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

4   Skills of *how to be an effective member of a group*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

5   *Public Relations skills* including basic relationship skills

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

6   *Interpersonal relationship skills*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

7   *Conflict management skills*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

8   *Negotiating skills*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

9   *Skills of learning how to learn* (including skills for seeking and organizing knowledge)

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

10   The ability to deal with *self-initiated projects*

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

11   *Time Management skills* (indicating management of resources with a clear sense of purpose and commitment in terms of the ability to start, continue and complete tasks punctually/within a given time span)

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

12   *Action planning and objective-setting skills*

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

13   *Proactivity and the ability to take initiative*

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

14   *Future planning skills*

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

15   *The ability to adapt to the changing demands of work*

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

16   *The ability to take responsibility for tasks and the self-discipline* needed to be able to finish what one has begun

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

17   *Stress management* including the ability to get on with the job despite insecurity or uncertainty

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

18   *Financial management skills* with regard to own affairs

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

B   PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

19   *Leadership skills* including being able to identify one's strengths and weaknesses

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

20   *Moral leadership*

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

21   The ability to *manage work and people* (supervisory skills)

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

22   The skills of *good organizational behaviour*

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

23   The ability to *assert oneself/be assertive*

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

24   The ability to *manage personal growth*

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

25   The ability to *influence one's peers*

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

26   The skills needed for *the maintenance of self-esteem* including the necessary social and personal skills that impact positively on the achievement of personal/social goals

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

27   The ability to *take personal responsibility for self-development*

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

28   *Literacy, numeracy and computer literacy skills* resulting in the availability of high levels of all three types of language competence

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

29   *Adequate technological awareness/skills* (including knowledge of modern forms of information seeking and communications)

1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

C   THINKING SKILLS

30   *A reasonably balanced education resulting in flexibility of thinking and open-mindedness* (so as to be able to accept and adapt to changing conditions or circumstances)

   1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

31   The ability to *learn from personal experience*

   1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

32   *Metacognitive and transference skills* (i.e. the ability to think about thinking and to employ skills already acquired over a broader spectrum than that for which they were originally intended)

   1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

33   *Access to whole brain approaches* (indicating a synthesis as well as analysis and creative problem-solving skills)

   1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

34   *Critical Thinking skills* (including logical reasoning and the ability to evaluate an argument in terms of cogency)

   1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

35   *Lateral/Creative Thinking skills*

   1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

D   LIFE AND WORK ORIENTATION

36   A good *Work Ethic*

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

37   *Good Work Values* (indicated via general work attendance and the willingness to work hard)

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

38   Skills for *establishing Networks* (indicated via the ability to organize effective study groups, activate resource data bases etc)

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

39   *Understanding of business concepts* necessary to entering the world of business/private practice (eg basic financial management/sound financial practices)

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

40   *General Work Disposition* including willingness to let superiors control one's work, honesty, loyalty, courtesy, thriftiness, and respect for others

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

41   Skills indicating *some knowledge of how to measure and manage productivity* (may be indicated via use of effective study methods)

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

42   *General management skills* indicating and including effective time, financial resources, business, work and people management

    1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

43   Skills indicating *knowledge of the interrelationship between business, social, economic and political environments*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

E   CAREER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

44   *Entrepreneurial* skills

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

45   *Skills of how effectively to plan and to develop a career* (eg the skills of finding, keeping and leaving a job)

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

46   Skills of *how to manage unemployment*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

47   *Transition management skills including future-planning skills*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

48   Skills relating to *critical path planning including problem-solving, decision making and goal setting skills*

      1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

F   COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

49   *Community responsibility* including a good community work ethic, sense of community responsibility and basic conception of work as a way in which to make a meaningful contribution to a multicultural society

       1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

50   *Basic political knowledge/skills* including the understanding of and ability to work with members of other race groups

       1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

51   *Awareness of fundamental human/legal rights* (eg street and/or labour law)

       1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

52   Skills for *maintaining overall Mental Health* indicating a balanced personal philosophy of life and a sense of personal integrity which underlies the ability to commit to reasonable ethical and moral codes of conduct

       1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

G   PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

53   Knowledge of the *dangers of substance abuse*

       1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

54   *Effectively healthy lifestyles* including knowledge of how to deal with both exertion and recreation

       1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

55   Awareness of the *dangers of contracting and how to prevent contracting AIDS*

        1   2   3   4   A   B   C   D

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN THE SPACES PROVIDED BELOW THEM

56   Are any of the above skills intentionally and deliberately taught by your faculty (other than as part of specific <u>academic</u> curricula)? If so, please specify which ones they are.

57   Which skills, if any, do you believe should be added to the above list?

58   Given the university's resources in terms of manpower and knowledge (eg access to experts in their fields, psychologists, student services/guidance departments and the like), do you believe it would be feasible for the University of Pretoria to consider offering elective and/or extra-mural, certificated courses in some or all of the above skills? Please specify.

59   Do you think that competence with reference to the above skills would increase both the employability and productivity levels of UP graduates? Please specify.

60   Do you wish results of this questionnaire to be kept confidential? Please circle your choice.

                        YES   NO

ANY FURTHER IDEAS OR INFORMATION YOU MAY WISH TO ADD OR TO CONTRIBUTE WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

Thank you for your kind co-operation.

3.3.2 Life Skills Questionnaire sent to Councils, Associations and Institutes

An almost identical questionnaire to the one presented above was telefaxed to either Registrars or representatives of the below-mentioned, selected Councils, Associations or Institutes. (Councils were preferred as the registering bodies of professionals. In some instances professionals are registered with Societies or Boards, in which case the questionnaire was sent to them.)

* The South African Veterinary Council
* The Teachers' Federal Council
* The Pharmaceutical Council of South Africa
* The Public Accountants and Auditors Board
* The South African Engineering Council
* The Institute for Mining and Metallurgy
* The Law Society of South Africa
* THe Institute of Personnel Management
* The Economic Society of South Africa
* The South African Council for Natural Scientists
* The South African Council of Architects
* The South African Medical and Dental Council
* The Medical Association of South Africa
* The Dental Association of South Africa
* The Psychological Association of South Africa

Questions 56, 58 and 59 differed from those in the previously presented questionnaire. They are reproduced fully below.

56   Do you believe it would benefit graduates in terms of future employment if any or all of the above skills were to be included in their (professional) training?

58   Given a university's resources in terms of manpower and knowledge (e.g. access to experts in their fields, psychologists, student services/guidance departments and the like), do you believe it would be feasible for the University of Pretoria to

consider offering elective and/or extra-mural certificated courses in some or all of the above skills? Please specify.

59   Do you think that competence with reference to the above skills would increase both the employability and productivity levels of graduates? Please specify.

A copy of the covering letter telefaxed with the questionnaire to the above-mentioned people is given in Annexure B (p.170).

3.4   PROCESSING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire consisted of 60 questions, 55 of which were closed questions requiring two responses each.

The first response attempted to ascertain the degree of **proficiency**, in terms of life competencies and skills, of students in the opinion of the Deans of the Faculties surveyed. Similarly, the Councils, Associations and/or Institutes (hereinafter referred to as the Councils) were asked to rate graduates in the same way. Choices included uncertain, inadequate, competent or excellent.

The second response attempted to ascertain how **important** the Deans/Councils considered the life competencies or skills to be in terms of either students graduating from their faculty, or graduates registered with their Professional Boards. Choices of possible responses included uncertain, not important, important or essential.

Questions 56 to 59 were open-ended questions with space provided for responses. Question 60 dealt with confidentiality and, lastly, respondents were invited to add or contribute any other information they felt might be of value.

3.5   RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

With respect to questions 1 to 55 of the questionnaire, the **Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test** (a nonparametric test) was applied to the data by the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria. The results were as follows:

1. Deans of Faculties

The test indicated statistically significant differences at the 5% level of significance between proficiency and value for:

- A. Self Management Skills
- B. Personal Development Skills
- C. Thinking Skills
- D. Life and Work Orientation
- E. Career Planning and Development
- F. Community and Social Development
- G. Physical and Sexual Development.

2. Councils

No statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance was indicated for:

- G. Physical and Sexual Development.

All the other components mentioned above did indicate statistically significant differences.

Results are given diagramatically in Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 (pp.71-76) and Annexure D (p.173).

With regard to questions 56 to 59 the following responses were obtained.

1. Deans of Faculties

Question 56: Are any of the above skills intentionally and deliberately taught by your faculty (other than as part of specific **academic** curricula)?

Of the respondents, 46,14% answered **no**: 7,69% answered **yes**, and 46,14% gave a qualified **yes** response. Qualifiers included critical/thinking skills, communication skills, leadership and moral leadership skills, flexibility, work ethic and values, knowledge of the dangers of substance abuse and of AIDS, healthy life-styles, computer training, environmental awareness, basic economics, self-esteem, and fundamental human/legal

rights. One respondent felt that student leaders should be offered management/strategic management skills, leadership, pro-active planning, and sexual and health development skills. He also stated that the above skills should be made available to ordinary students.

Question 57: Which skills, if any, do you believe should be added to the above list?

Of the respondents, 76,9% seemed to consider the list adequate and 23,1% added (restated) the following: written communication and language usage skills, personal development, career planning, entrepreneurship, goal setting and thinking skills. One respondent felt the political naivety of students should be addressed.

Question 58: Given the university's resources in terms of manpower and knowledge...do you believe it would be feasible for the University of Pretoria to consider offering elective and/or extra-mural, certificated courses in some or all of the above skills?

69,21% responded in the affirmative (agreed): 15,38% did **not agree** and 15,38% did not respond. Of those who did respond, 81,8% gave an unqualified yes answer and 27,27% mentioned the following qualifiers: financial skills and leadership development. One respondent suggested part-time, short courses should be offered to students.

Question 59: Do you think that competence with regard to the above skills would increase both the employability and productivity levels of University of Pretoria graduates?

Of the respondents, 92,28% agreed: 7,72% did not agree and 7,72% added the qualifier that "theory must be translated into reflective practice".

Five Deans responded to the invitation to contribute further ideas or information. These responses included:
* Skills training forming a part of the objectives of every subject
* Skills training being essentially practical in nature
* The necessity for logical/thinking skills
* The necessity for including skills of learning how to learn ("how to re-educate oneself").

TABLE 5: RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE TO DEANS AND COUNCILS.

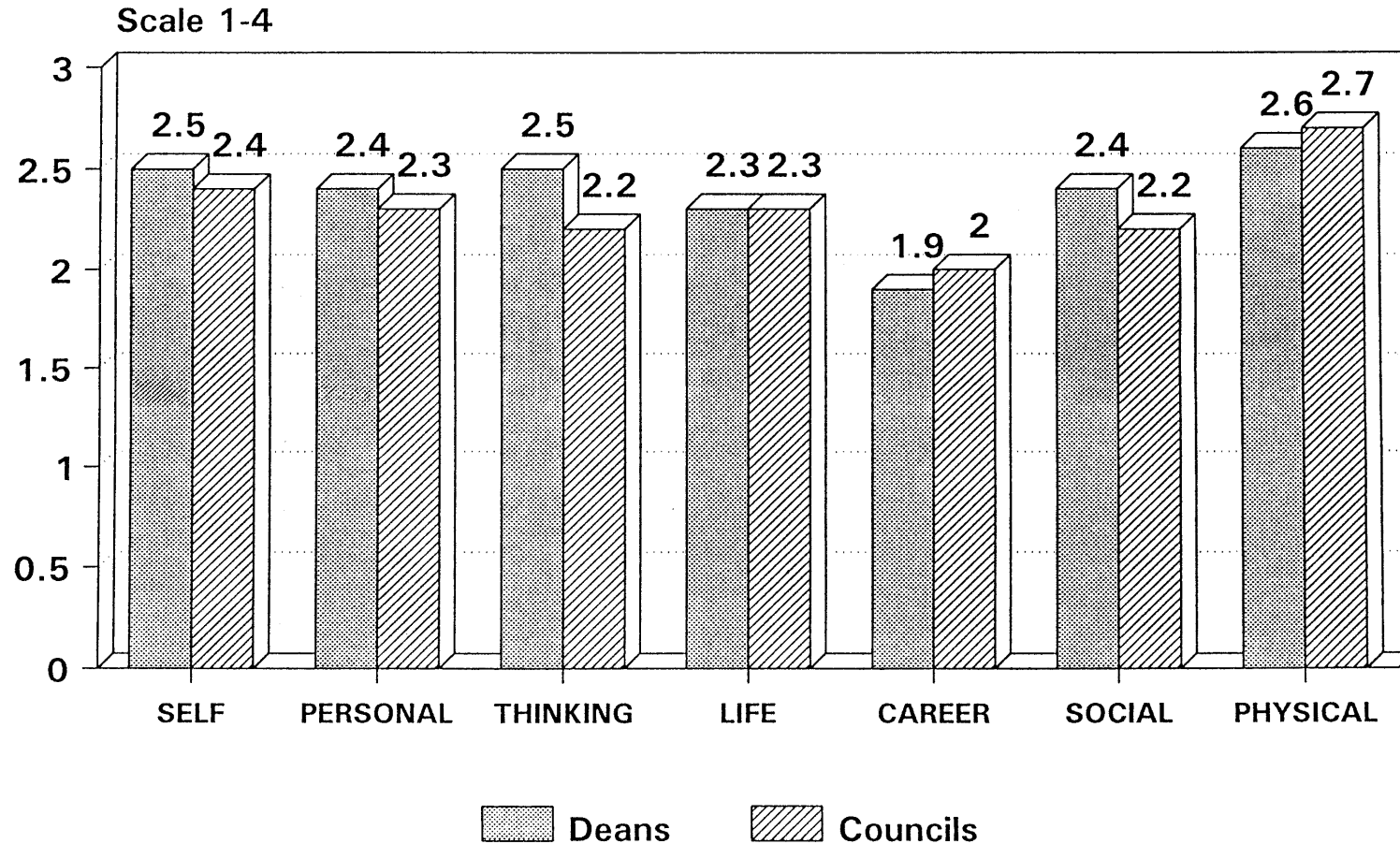
DEANS: N14   COUNCILS: N15   COMBINED: N29
100% RESPONSE   93.3% RESPONSE   96.5% RESPONSE

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONSES PER SUBFIELDS –
1. COMPETENCY LEVELS OF GRADUATING STUDENTS/GRADUATES

	DEANS %				COUNCILS %				COMBINED %			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
A	4.19	41.4	42.33	12.09	10.32	44.44	39.68	5.56	7.49	43.04	40.9	8.57
B	7.63	43.51	41.22	7.63	15.58	48.05	31.82	4.55	11.93	45.96	36.14	5.96
C	6.94	45.83	34.72	12.5	17.86	39.29	40.48	2.38	12.82	42.31	37.82	7.05
D	15.63	43.75	29.17	11.46	17.86	40.18	34.82	7.14	16.83	41.83	32.21	9.13
E	25.42	54.24	16.95	3.39	20.29	56.52	20.29	2.9	22.66	55.47	18.75	3.13
F	6.52	39.13	45.65	8.7	16.07	55.36	21.43	7.14	11.76	48.04	32.35	7.84
G	8.33	22.22	52.78	16.67	11.9	21.43	45.24	21.43	10.26	21.79	48.72	19.23
	9.16	42.6	37.86	10.38	14.69	44.6	34.72	5.98	12.15	43.68	36.17	8.01

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONSES PER SUBFIELDS –
2. LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE/VALUE OF LIFE SKILLS

	DEANS %				COUNCILS %				COMBINED %			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
A	0	3.26	40	47.44	0	5.95	50.79	43.25	0	4.71	45.82	45.18
B	0	3.82	54.2	33.59	3.9	11.04	62.99	22.08	2.11	7.72	58.95	27.37
C	0	5.56	43.06	40.28	2.38	5.95	55.95	35.71	1.28	5.77	50	37.82
D	3.13	5.21	39.58	43.75	0.89	7.14	57.14	34.82	1.92	6.25	49.04	38.94
E	3.39	8.47	52.54	27.12	4.35	10.14	62.32	21.74	3.91	9.38	57.81	24.22
F	0	2.17	60.87	30.43	0	19.64	37.5	42.86	0	11.76	48.04	37.25
G	0	5.56	72.22	13.89	7.14	11.9	61.9	19.05	3.85	8.97	66.67	16.67
	0.76	4.43	47.48	38.47	1.95	8.84	55.4	33.68	1.4	6.81	51.76	35.88

DEGREE OF SKILLS COMPETENCE

Scale 1-4

Deans   Councils

72

DEGREE OF SKILLS
IMPORTANCE

Scale 1-4

Legend: Deans, Councils

Categories: SELF, PERSONAL, THINKING, LIFE, CAREER, SOCIAL, PHYSICAL

Category	Deans	Councils
SELF	3.5	3.2
PERSONAL	3.3	2.9
THINKING	3.4	3.1
LIFE	3.3	3.1
CAREER	3.1	2.8
SOCIAL	3.2	3.1
PHYSICAL	3.1	2.9

73
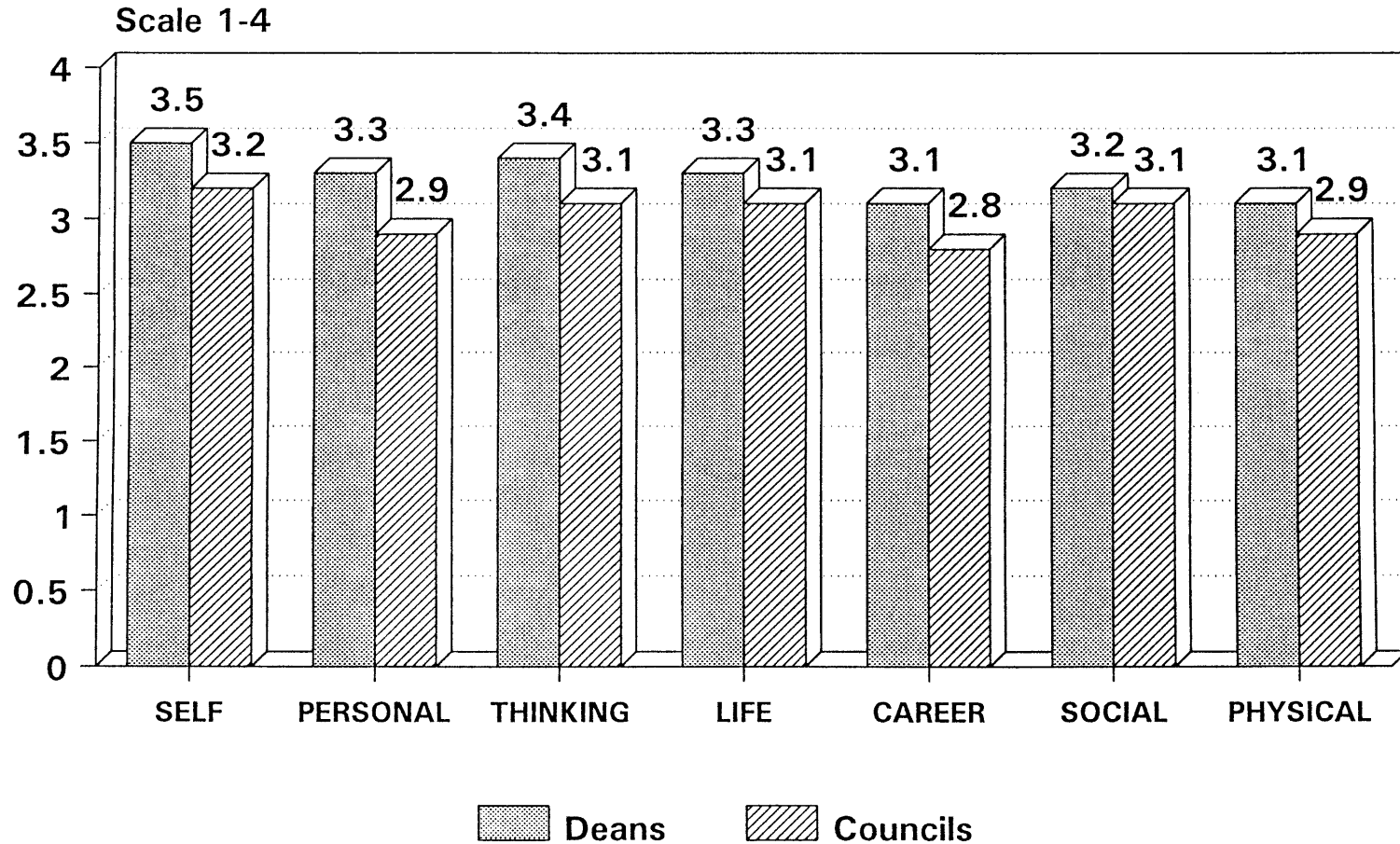
COMBINED DEGREE OF SKILLS COMPETENCE AND IMPORTANCE

Scale 1-4

DEANS AND COUNCILS

Competence Importance

DEGREE OF SKILLS COMPETENCE

75

Deans and Councils

DEGREE OF SKILLS IMPORTANCE

76

Deans and Councils

Self	Think	Life	Social	Personal	Physical	Career
3.4	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.1	3	3
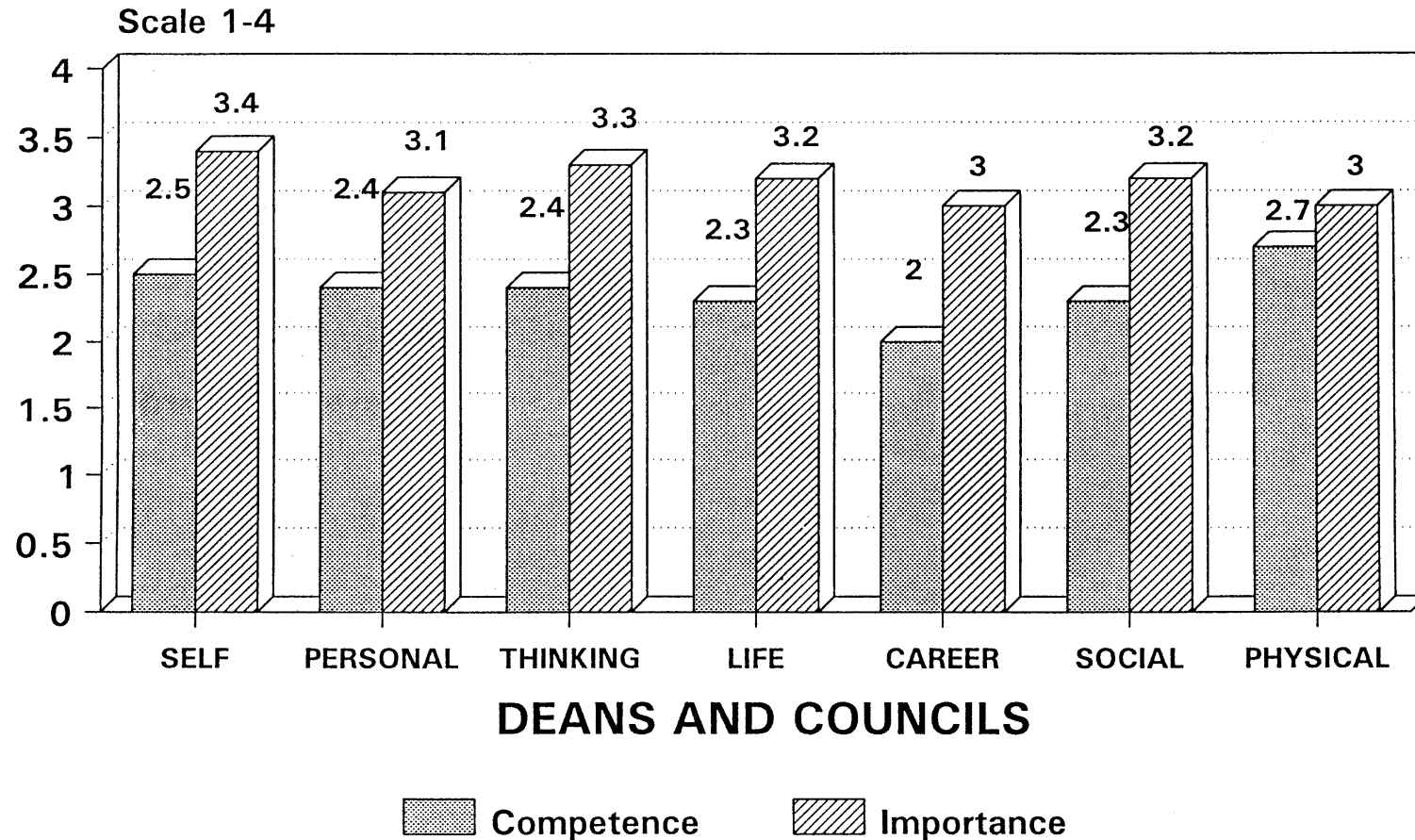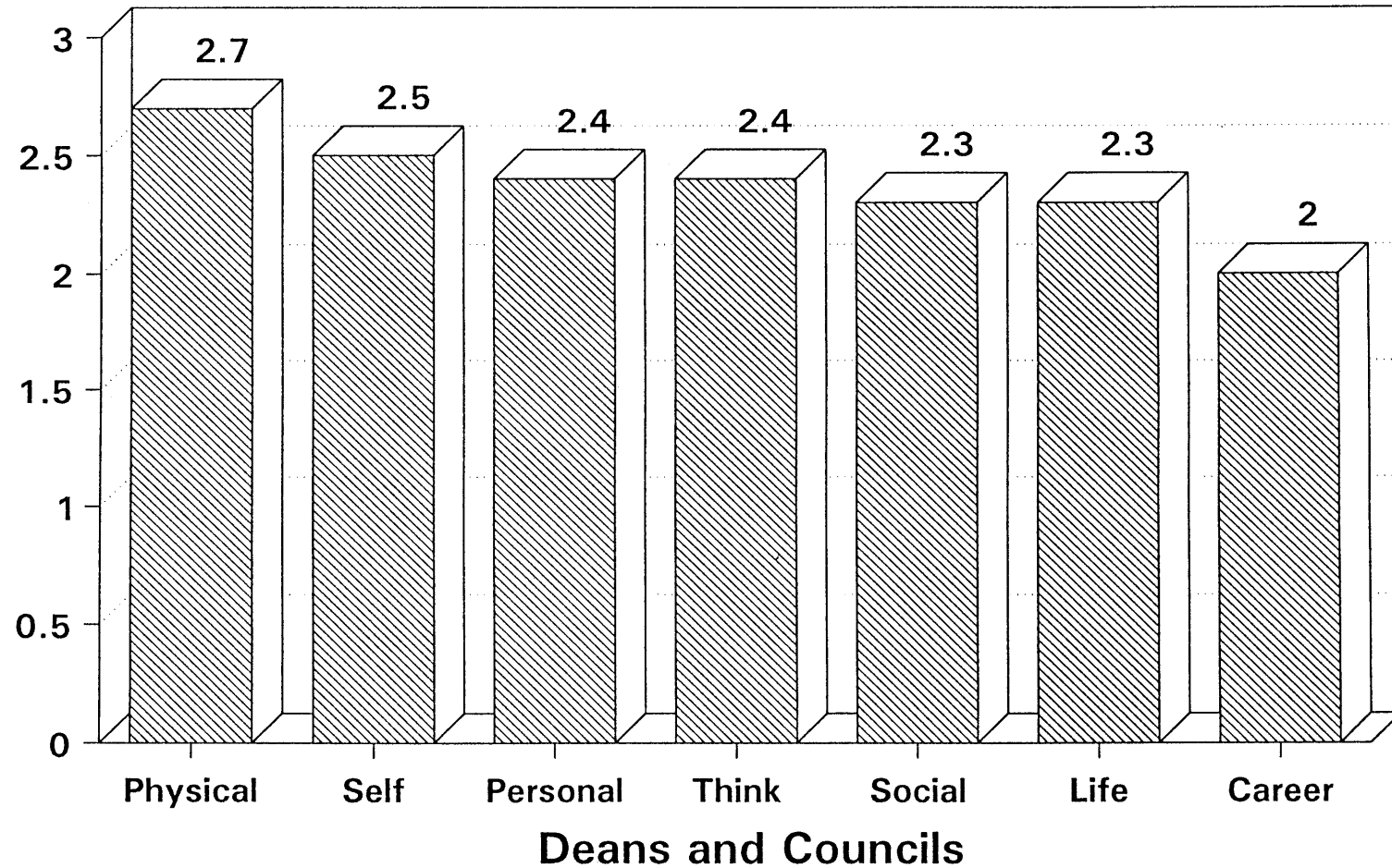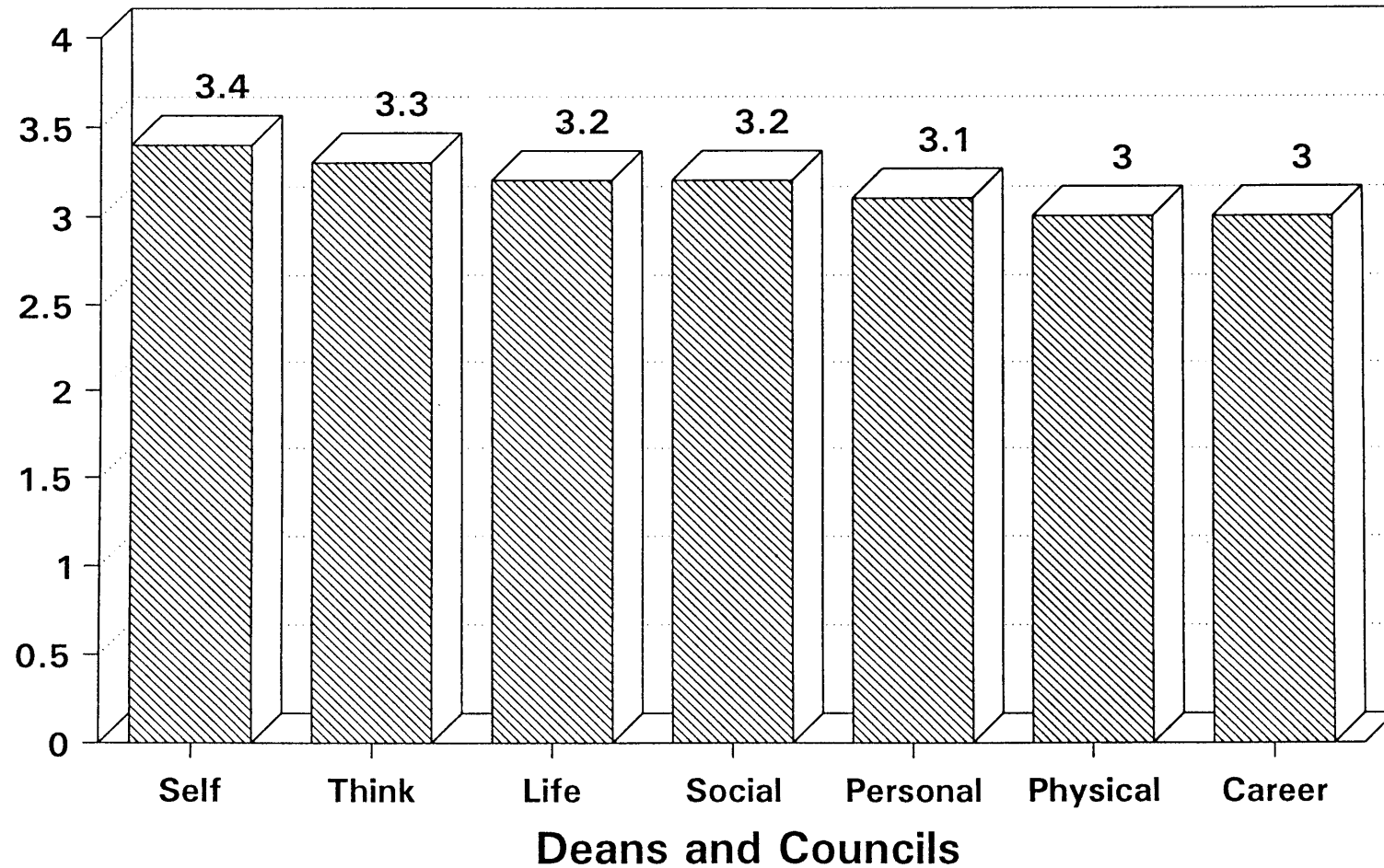
2.   Councils

Question 56: Do you believe it would benefit graduates in terms of future employment if any or all of the above skills were to be included in their (professional) training?

Of the respondents, 100% agreed with 42,84% qualifying to the effect that, as the academic curricula were already so full, time would be a problem.

Question 57: Which skills, if any, do you believe should be added to the above list?

70,14% found the list adequate and 28,56% added the following qualifiers: knowledge of how to market oneself within the (ethical/professional) codes of the appropriate Council; inclusion of the full ("commercial and financial") range of business skills; business management, community development, networking skills and practice management.

Question 58: Given a university's resources in terms of manpower and knowledge...do you believe it would be feasible for the University of Pretoria to consider offering elective and/or extra-mural certificated courses in some or all of the above skills?

There was 92,82% agreement with 1 failure to respond. 28,56% added to or qualified their answers.   One respondent qualified by saying that life skills courses should only be offered extra-murally as the academic curricula were already so full that no extra time could be allowed for anything else. Another respondent felt that skills training should rather be built into academic curricula as extra-mural courses might fail to stress the importance of such training to the world of work . Still another suggested that MBA part or full time modules should be looked at with the recommendation that they be included in (academic) curricula: while one respondent felt that life skills courses should form part of both the professional development and the continuing education of graduates. (See Chapter Four 4.5.2 pp.115-128).

Other additions included: skills of learning how to learn, communication skills, skills pertaining to how to interact with other race groups, the fostering of multicultural awareness and the suggestion that courses should be inter-disciplinary in nature with

students being offered the option to include "skill content based courses" (presumably in their general training).

Question 59: Do you think that competence with reference to the above skills would increase both the employability and productivity levels of graduates?

Of the respondents, 85,68% agreed, 7,14% disagreed and 7,14% were uncertain. 31,33% qualified their agreement. Two respondents stated that skills must relate to the world of work i.e. be market related, and one respondent felt that the answer depended on whether or not graduates were to be employed by the formal (state) or private sector. In his opinion, skills such as the ability to take initiative and critical thinking would not be valued by state employers of graduates registered in his profession. One respondent felt that productivity would be improved but was uncertain as to whether or not the same would apply to employability.

Three Councils responded to the invitation to contribute further ideas or information. Responses included:
* The difficulty of measuring competence ("Can graduates deliver?")
* A **caveat emptor** "not to raise employment expectations unrealistically (in graduates) as adaptation to the reality of post-university conditions is critical"
* the opinion that said courses would "add value" especially in terms of the "new dispensation in South Africa"
* The importance particularly in dealing with difficulties resulting from an open university policy
* The need to "educate some lecturers too" as many lack life skills and are finding it difficult to cope with multiculturalism.

3.   Combined Results

The following indicates combined percentages in terms of responses from both Deans and Councils.

With regard to Question 57 (see above), 70,26% of respondents found the list to be either adequate or comprehensive and 29,74% either failed to respond or accepted the list with qualifications.

With regard to Question 58 (see above), 80,05% of respondents agreed and 19,94% either disagreed or failed to respond.

With regard to Question 59 (see above), 87,04% of respondents agreed and 12,95% either disagreed or failed to respond.

As can be seen from Table 5 (p.71), a significant number of both deans and Councils' responses indicated that graduates may be considered insufficiently trained in terms of life competencies and skills to meet the requirements of the world of work. Similarly a significant number of both sets of respondents considered training in life competencies and skills to be valuable. Consequently it can be concluded that provision should be made for training in these skills.

3.6 SURVEY OF COURSES OFFERED BY HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENTS AND TRAINING COMPANIES

Finally, a small-scale survey was done in an attempt to ascertain which, if any, courses in life skills were being offered by Human Resources Development departments or independent Training Companies. Sources included the following:

*   The South African Breweries Beer Division: interview Mr S Jackson (January 1993)

*   Old Mutual: interview Mr P Gilbert (January 1993)

*   The South African Breweries Beer Division : Central Office Course Directory (1992)

*   The South African Breweries Information Systems Department : Course Catalogue (April 1992 - March 1993)

*   The South African Breweries Beer Division Training Course Catalogue : Training and Development - Beer Division (1992/1993)

*   Gillian Kat of GKA Development and Training (1992)

*   The Business Entrepreneurship Initiative (undated brochure)

*   IPM Training Course Directory (1993)

* The National Training Board (Annual Report 1991)
* Executive Development Africa (February - July 1993)
* MaST (sic) Public Seminars (May - December 1993).

A correlation of the courses which pertain to life skills training offered by the sources mentioned above indicated that said courses could be grouped under the following headings: community commitment, leadership, general management, communication and relationship skills, thinking skills and knowledge of the law.

Courses subsumed under these headings included those dealing with:

1.   Community Commitment
     *   The interrelationship between business, social, economic and political environments

2.   Leadership
     *   Situational/moral leadership
     *   Managing work and people (Supervisory Skills)
     *   Good organizational behaviour
     *   Assertiveness/empowerment
     *   Managing personal growth

3.   General Management
     *   Everyday service excellence
     *   Return on investment approach
     *   Measuring and managing productivity
     *   Management skills/team building/performance management (including stress, time, financial, resources, business, work and people management
     *   Action learning/critical path planning
     *   Business knowledge

4.   Communication and relationship skills
     *   Effective communication (including written communication) skills
     *   Interpersonal relationship skills including problem-solving and negotiating skills
     *   Conflict management skills
     *   Public relations skills

5.   <u>Thinking skills</u>

   *   Metacognition

   *   Mediated learning

   *   Cognitive skills training

   *   Organizational behaviour

   *   The establishing of career development systems

6.   <u>Knowledge of the law</u>

   *   Street law

   *   Labour law

   *   Common law.

Apropos the above, Penny Smythe presented a programme on Agenda (14 January, 1993), dealing with the availability of legal services to the general public. The conclusion reached was that legal services are so expensive as to be beyond the means of the average citizen. Where legal aid is available to the poor, the manpower provided is insufficient to cover demand. In light of this, it is understandable that training courses dealing with an understanding of the law are being offered.

3.7   CONCLUSION

It would appear from the above and in light of the aims stated in the introduction (See 3.1. p.40), that:

1.   A larger number of life competencies and skills are considered important by employers, the self-employed and those surveyed in this chapter, than graduates can currently be said to possess. Where it is not feasible to assume that universities could address all of them, provision could be made for tuition in quite a large number of them.

2.   Proficiency levels assessed in graduates with regard to the life competencies and skills covered in this chapter are not adequate to meet the demands of the world of work.

3.   Insufficient or inadequate deliberate and conscious teaching of life skills is taking place at university level.

4. Human Resources Development departments and training companies are providing courses in life competencies and skills in order to improve employability and productivity. At the same time courses are also being offered, for example by educational organizations such as Damelin Centre for Business Studies and Wits Graduate School of Business (as frequently advertised in the Sunday Times: Business Times) and via professional associations such as PASA, to the self-employed to assist them to remain economically viable.

According to Edey & Molin (1993:24), referring to problems associated with employability of Arts graduates, it is important for universities to acknowledge first and foremost that a problem exists. They believe that "whilst it is the responsibility of the individual to secure suitable employment, the institution must surely consider the ultimate destination of its 'products'. Investment in a university education is a waste of money from all points of view if graduates cannot contribute to the economy" (Edey & Molin 1993:24).

Mauer (1993:31-32), contends that "there is a frequently-encountered tendency among teaching staff to undervalue the need to prepare graduates for their chosen professions". Reid and Bates (in Mauer 1993:31), conducted a study in the United States of America and discovered that as few as 4% of teaching staff believed this to be an important aspect of their duties. Mauer (1993:31), believes there is a distinct possibility that the same situation applies in South Africa.

According to Mauer (1993:31-32), in order to assist graduates to become sufficiently skilled to cope with the demands of the world of work, university counsellors will have both "to join forces with teaching staff", with whom they will probably "have to be sufficiently persuasive to gain the necessary cooperation", and facilitate "the involvement of practitioners in the various disciplines as a link between students and employers" (Mauer 1993:31-32).

In Chapter Four, an attempt will be made to explore a way for universities to address the problem of underskilled graduates via the provision of Guidance Support.