



Project background and research

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Introduction

This presentation introduces some of the background and research behind the project ComProCom.

There are links to some of the papers referred to on the ComProCom web site, www.comprocom.eu.

There is also a short video in which I give a brief summary of the research findings.

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ComProCom

EU Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership – Key Action 2
(Transfer/Development of Innovation)

Funded via IKY (State Scholarships Foundation, Greece)
Project leader EETAA, Athens

September 2015 to August 2017

Aim “to improve the way that professional competence is described and represented, particularly in relation to complex work in higher-level occupations where outcome-based conceptions of competence have proved most challenging”.

Informed mainly by recent developments in independently-governed professions rather than in national VET systems.



UK professions

Developments in UK professions since mid-2000s – including heritage conservation, engineering, landscape architecture, law ...

2007 research on entry-routes and qualifying requirements (21 professions):

- Lester, S. 2008. *Routes and requirements for becoming professionally qualified*. Bristol: Professional Associations Research Network.
- Lester, S. 2009. Routes to qualified status: practices and trends among UK professional bodies. *Studies in Higher Education* 34 (2), 223-236.

2012 research on competence/practising standards (40 professions):

- Lester, S. 2014. Professional competence standards and frameworks in the UK. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 39 (1), 38-52.
- Lester, S. 2014. Professional versus occupational models of work competence. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 19 (3), 276–286.
- Lester, S. 2014. Professional standards, competence and capability. *Higher Education, Skills and Work Based Learning* 4 (1), 31-43.

All papers at devmts.org.uk/publications.htm

Findings (1): From competencies to practising standards

- ◆ By 2012 the majority of professions had moved to ‘external’ or activity-based descriptions of competence (describing what a practitioner should be able to do), rather than ‘internal’ ones based on an adapted syllabus or a set of skills or behaviours.
- ◆ This is consistent with final sign-off as fit to practise, separately from completing an educational programme or ‘apprenticeship’.
- ◆ It can also provide a standard of practice as an ongoing reference-point for associations/regulators, practitioners, and sometimes employers, clients and the public.
- ◆ There are some exceptions – mainly frameworks concerned with continuing development, which tend to have a focus on knowledge, skills and sometimes personal competence or behaviours.

Findings (2): From functions to whole fields

- ◆ Rather than describing occupational roles and functions, there was a trend towards holistic standards that apply to all practitioners across the profession – regardless of role or context.
- ◆ A few professions had ‘subsets’ of their standards applying to different levels, or for sign-off and experienced practitioners.
- ◆ e.g. the “UK Spec” in engineering describes what is expected of an engineer (at 3 different levels), without reference to different specialisms or job types.
- ◆ A small minority had frameworks that could be mapped on to different specialisms and roles – e.g. surveying, personnel and development.

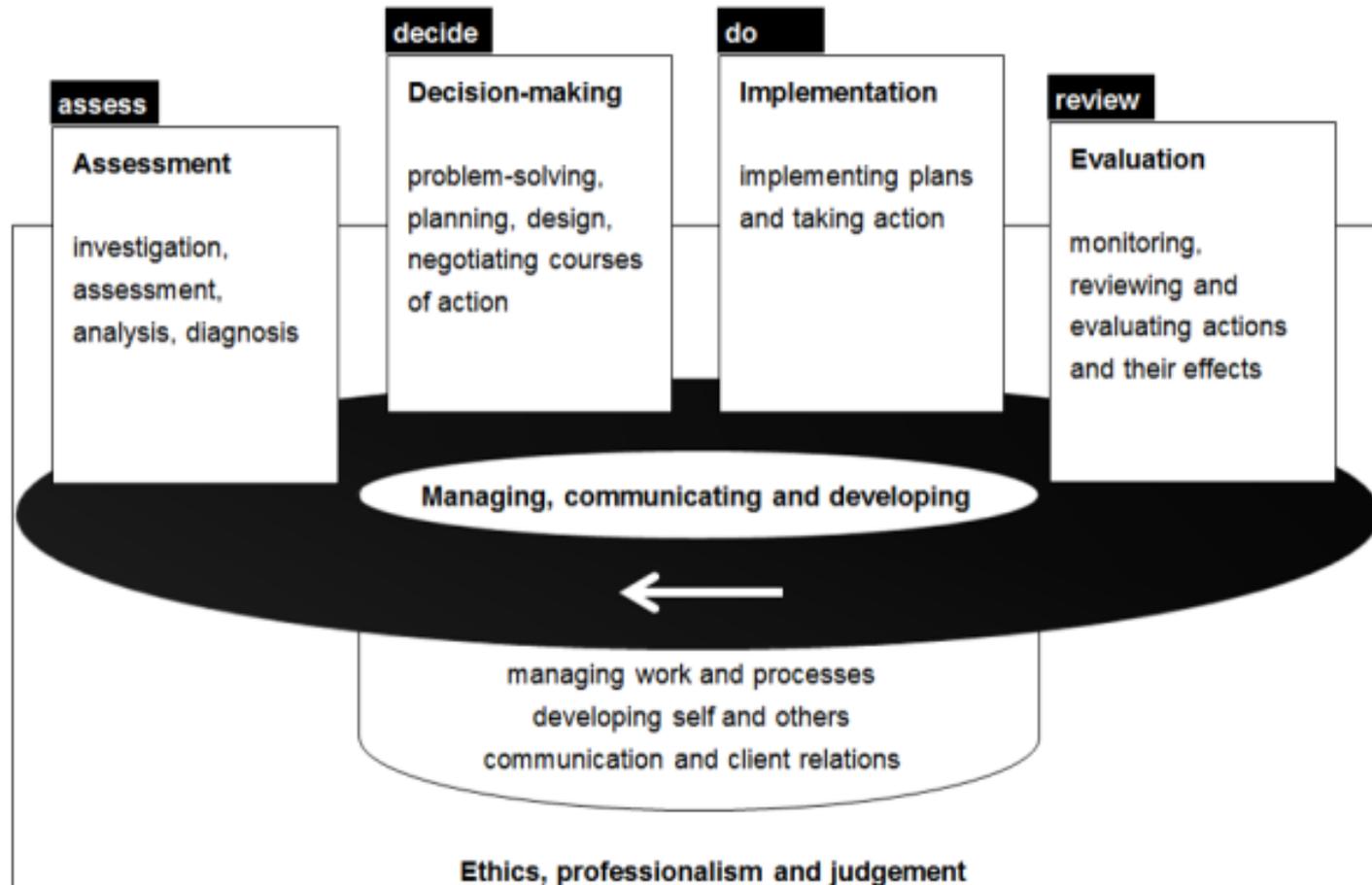
Findings (3): More concise descriptions

- ◆ Typical professional standards were 3-14 pages in length: much more concise than for instance UK National Occupational Standards.
- ◆ The best examples were precise enough to use as assessment criteria, but also allowed interpretation into different contexts.

Findings (4): Towards a 'project cycle' model?

- ◆ A majority of standards could be grouped into a 'project cycle' – assessment and analysis, planning and decision-making, implementation and action, review and evaluation (see next slide).
- ◆ Not universal, and difficult to apply in some professions, which were easier to structure by theme (e.g. accountancy – structured into accounting, financial management, taxation, audit etc.).
- ◆ Most professions also referred to underpinning activities such as (self-) management, self-development, communication, client relations etc., as well as underpinning principles and ethics.

A cyclic model of practice



From Lester, S. (2014) 'Professional competence standards and frameworks in the UK', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* vol. 39 no. 1, pp. 38-52.



From research to project

Concern that some models being used in European VET – based on British occupational standards or on the ‘knowledge, skills competence’ structure of the EQF – could be improved on.

Discussions between potential partners suggested that some of the findings could be applied outside the UK, and outside of formal professions.

The project proposal was developed in 2014-15 and resulted in a successful Erasmus+ bid.

Five partners each developed a framework in their country and in a different occupational field (see next slide), drawing on principles informed by the research.



Partners and their fields



Die Berater – Austria
Business management for entrepreneurs



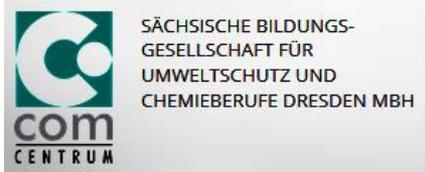
Agency for Local Gov't and Communities – Greece
Social entrepreneurship; management of the project



Institute for Sustainable Technologies – Poland
Innovation management; comparative research



Institute of Training and Development – Ireland
Training and development; developer course



SBG-Dresden – Germany
Chemical engineering (Meister level)



Stan Lester Developments – UK
Methodology, academic output



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