



DRAFT

Competence, Capability and Context

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Can assessable representations of 'competence'

be reconciled with

the nature of high-level professional work?

Professional work (1)

- ❖ No simple definition of 'a profession' or what constitutes 'professional'
- ❖ Not confined to formal professions ... but not just knowledge-work
- ❖ In addition to expertise, involves independent thought and judgement and commitment to an ethos
- ❖ Work of professionals can range from the mundane and routine to the highly complex and unique
- ❖ Complexity of some professional work is only apparent
 - in relation to context
 - when able to discern reasoning and judgement.

Professional work (2)

complexity
(Eraut 1994)

ethical base
(Lunt 2008)

'delivery' to 'realisation'
(Schiff 1970)

independent
judgement
(Hoyle & John 1995)

profiteor:
commitment to ethos
(Lester 2014)

'swampy lowland'
v. 'hard high ground'
(Schön 1983)

self-management/development
(Stephenson 1998)

responsibility to
wider society
(Marquand 1997)

adequacy for
'messes' (Ackoff 1974)
and 'wicked problems'
(Rittel & Webber
1984)

tension between autonomy
and ordering/control
(Evetts 2014)

competent action
'negotiated in context'
(Elliott 1991, Billett
2009)

situated practice
(Lave & Wenger
1991)

decline of
predictable career
(Bayliss 1998)

Professional work (3): beyond technical expertise

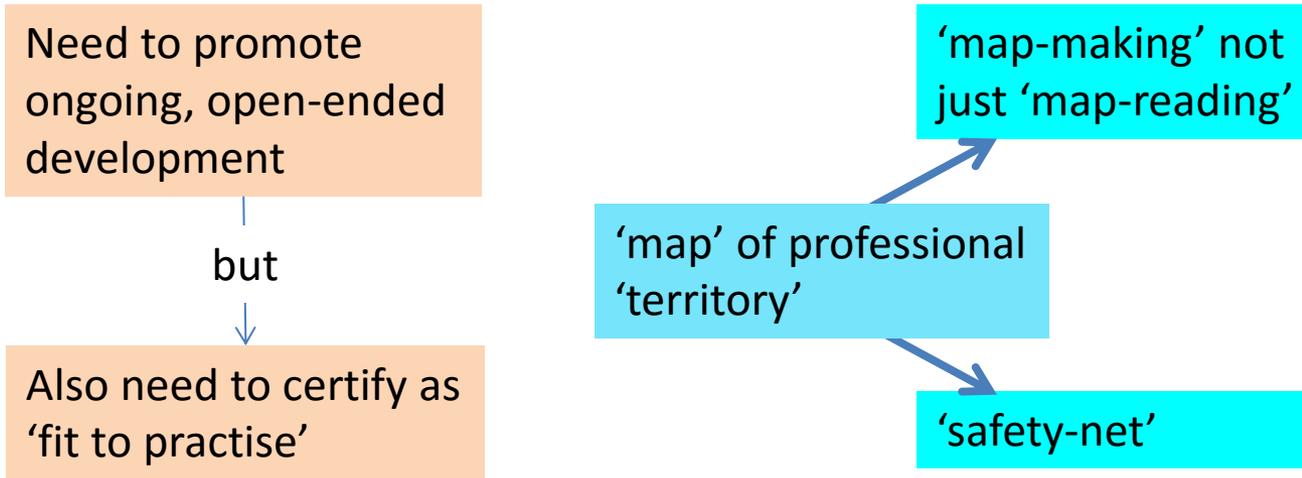
'Mode A' basic professionalism

- technical, logical; problem solving
- working within a system: parameters or norms taken for granted
- concerned with adequacy for solvable, convergent problems
- focus on solving problems; applying knowledge competently and rationally
- logic, efficiency, planned outcomes; cause-effect, proof
- objectivism: knowledge is stable and general; precedes and guides action (pure science, applied science, practice)
- validation by reference to others' expectations: standards, accepted wisdom, established discourse; 'truth'
- thinking primarily deductive/analytical; sceptical of intuition

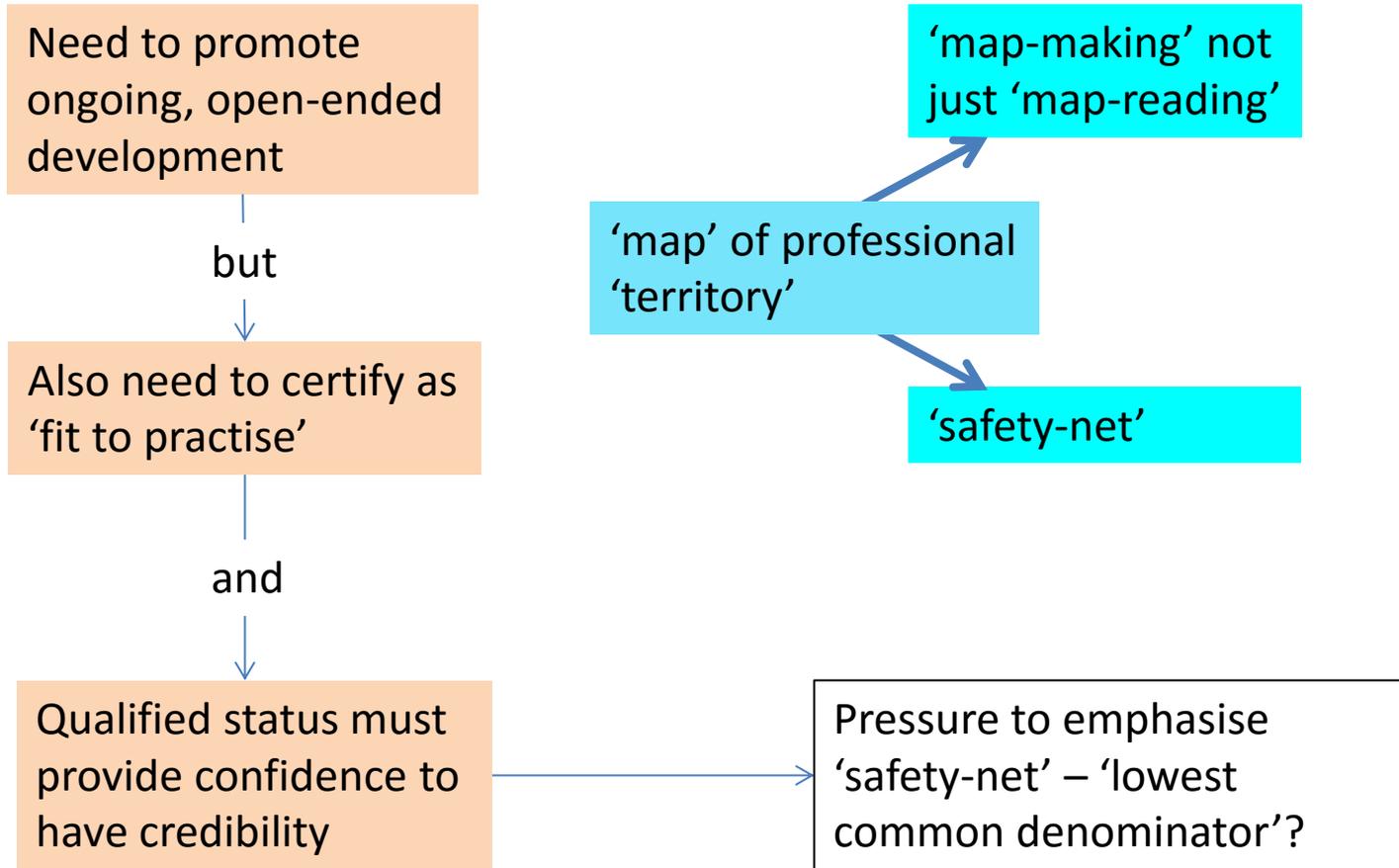
'Mode B' expanded professionalism

- creative, interpretive; design
- working 'on' a system: change parameters or norms
- valuable futures; 'messes,' problematic situations, divergent / 'wicked' problems
- understanding problematic situations and resolving conflicts of value; framing and creating desired outcomes
- values, ethics, congruence of both methods and outcomes; systemic interrelationships, theory, faith
- constructivism: knowledge is transient, situational and personal; both informs action and is generated by it (cyclic / spiral relationship between theory and practice)
- validation by questioning fitness for purpose, fitness of purpose and systemic validity; 'value'
- thinking inductive, deductive and abductive; use of 'intelligent intuition'

Professions' dilemmas



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'Competence'

OED: 'the **ability to do something** successfully or efficiently'

- ability, not performance
- action, not attributes

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ISO: 'the ability to apply knowledge and skills to **achieve intended results**'

KMK: 'involves integrating knowledge, methods, social and personal skills and abilities in the **capacity to act**'

'Competence' v. 'Competency'

US, 1970s - McBer behavioural model (e.g. McClelland 1988)

US/UK, 1970s - 'KSA' model based on Bloom *et al*

'Internal' models – attributes (e.g. K, S, A, B) of the person ('competency')

UK, 1980s – task competence (work study)

UK, late 1980s – functional model (Mansfield & Mathews)

'External' models – describe what the person needs to be able to do ('competence')

'Competence' v. 'Competency'

G geared to development

- but there is a gap between having competencies and being competent
- can build in presuppositions and prejudices if required of practitioners

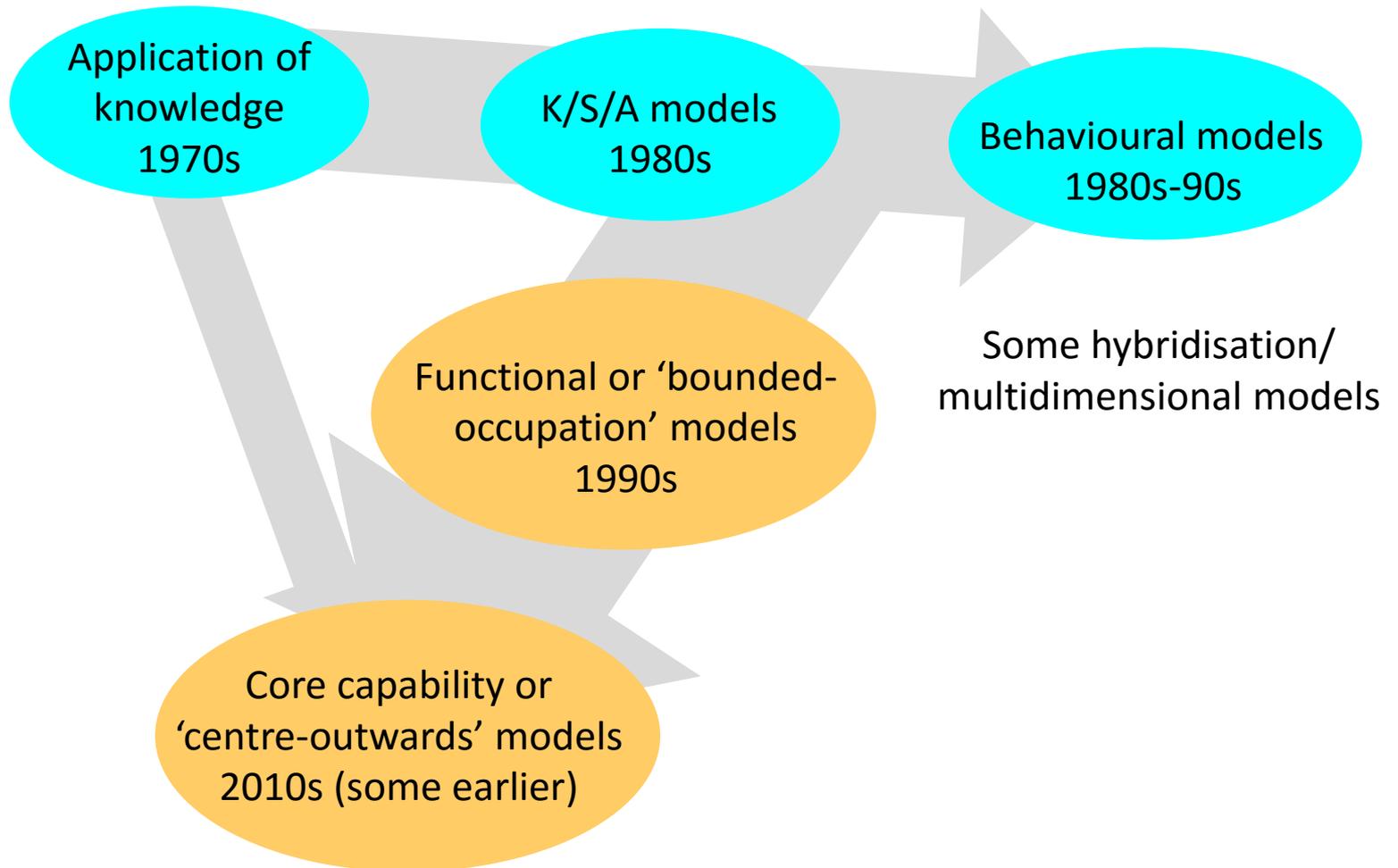
'Internal' models – attributes (e.g. K, S, A, B) of the person ('competency')

G geared to practice/assessment

- but leave what needs to be developed as a 'black box'
- dominant models located in 'Mode A' thinking

'External' models – describe what the person needs to be able to do ('competence')

Evolution of 'competence' descriptions in UK professions



'Bounded-occupation'

Confidence in ability to work in a defined occupational role

Functions + standards for each function

Commonly core + options/specialisms

Detailed specification – typically 100+ pages

Need frequent updating

Assessment – ability to do job to an acceptable standard

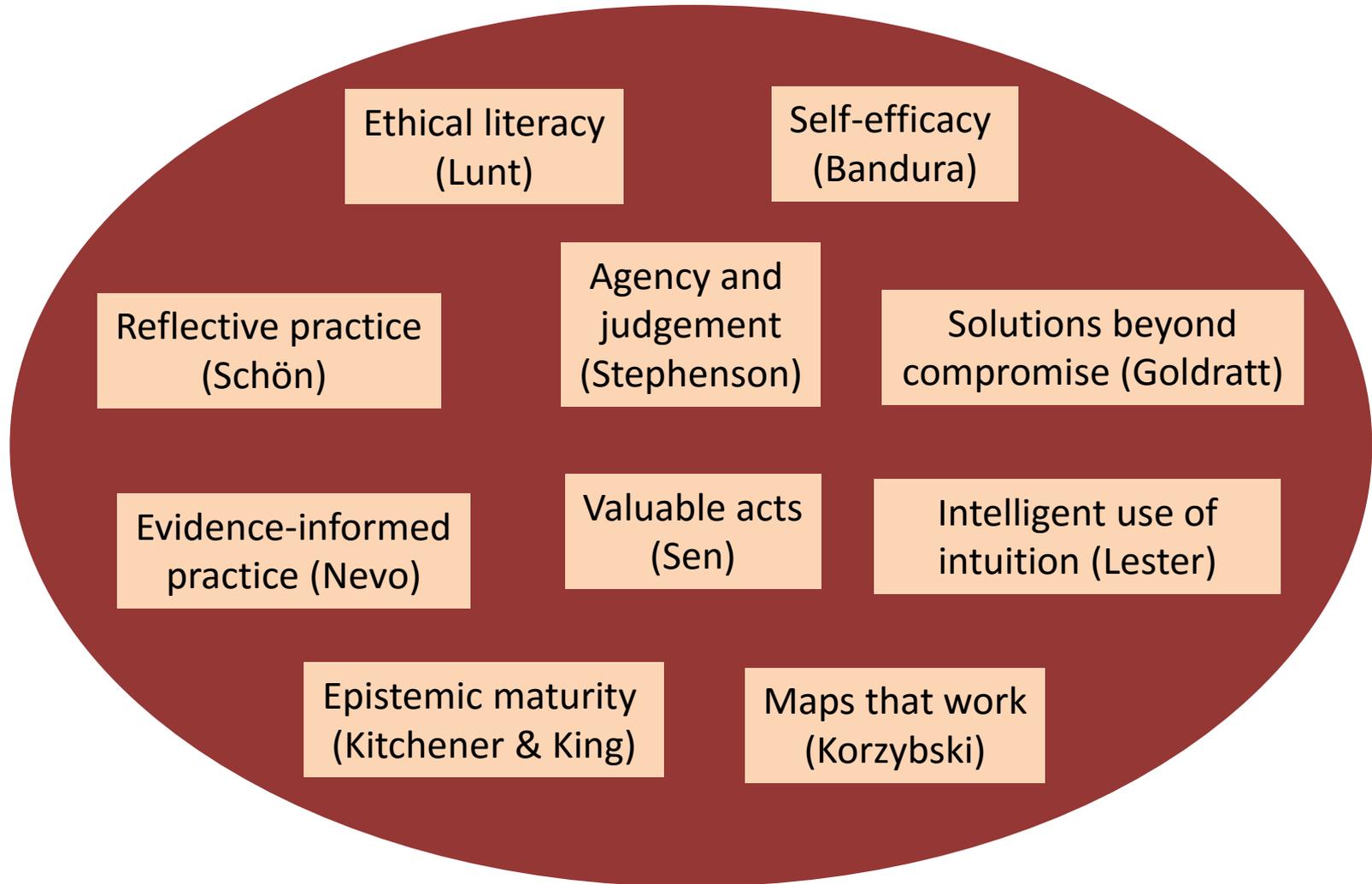
Competent/not yet competent

Frequent mismatches between standards and practice

Change of role = different area of competence (can lead to 'stamp-collecting?')

Most UK occupational standards

The idea of 'capability'

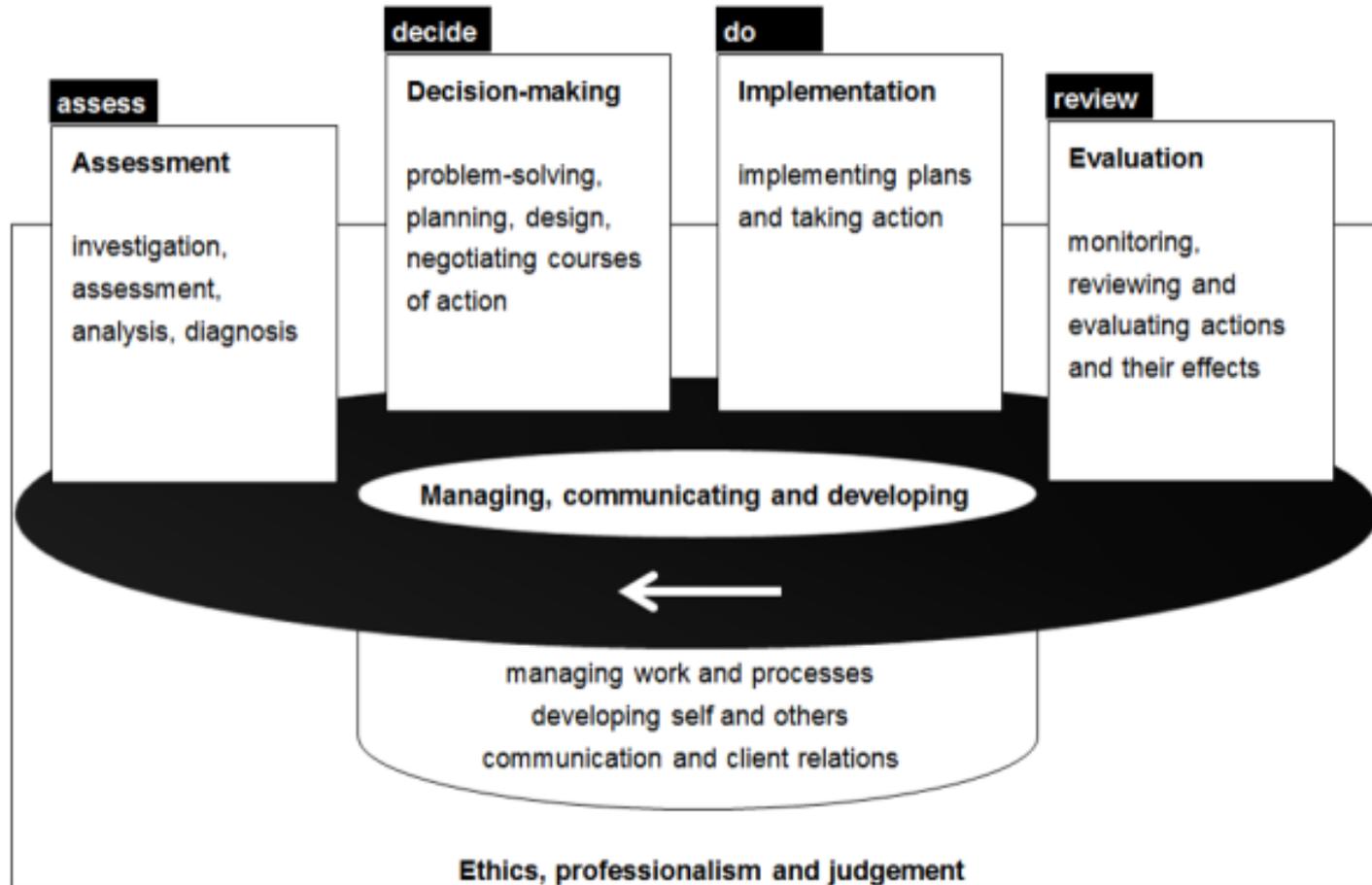


The challenge of capability

- ❖ Not easily defined – can only ‘be seen in its reflection’ (Brown & McCartney 1999)
- ❖ Person-centred, rather than practice-centred
- ❖ Developmental – even aspirational – rather than assessable?
- ❖ Can lead to focus on ‘type of person’?

Use principles of capability to inform competence models?

Lester 'core capability' model



From Lester (2014a), p50.

‘Centre-outwards’

Confidence in ability to work in a profession, including (within reason) in new/evolving roles

Activities central to the profession

Emphasise standards rather than functions

Usually universal – applies to all practitioners

Concise specification – typically 6-12 pages

Resilient – 10+ year lifespan

Assessment – action in context as example of wider capability

Progression through scale with threshold – e.g. novice to expert

Allows for different roles, contexts, specialisms

Professional standards in conservation, law, engineering (UK Spec), landscape architecture, environment

ComProCom

EU Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership

Test the model in the context of different European countries

Germany, Greece, Ireland, Poland and Austria
+ expertise from UK

Funded via IKY (State Scholarships Foundation, Greece)

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”.



- ❖ www.comprocom.eu
- ❖ devmts.org.uk/comprocom.htm



ComProCom approach to competence

‘The ability to do something successfully or efficiently’ (OED)

‘The ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results’ (ISO)

External

Defines what it is that is to be done – as opposed to the skills, knowledge and abilities needed to do it

Centre-outwards

Focuses on what is central to acting effectively in the profession or field, rather than on specific occupational roles and functions

Universal

Applies to all practitioners in the field – rather than taking a ‘core and options’ approach (possibility of using ‘subset’ standards).



Five frameworks, 'EQF level 5+':



Die Berater – Austria

Business management for entrepreneurs



Agency for Local Gov't and Communities – Greece

Social entrepreneurship



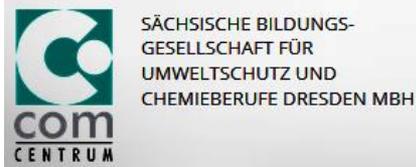
Institute for Sustainable Technologies – Poland

Innovation management



Institute of Training and Development – Ireland

Training and development



SÄCHSISCHE BILDUNGS-
GESELLSCHAFT FÜR
UMWELTSCHUTZ UND
CHEMIEBERUFE DRESDEN MBH

SBG-Dresden – Germany

Chemical engineering (Meister level)



Stan Lester Developments – UK

Methodology, academic output

The model

Investigate/Assess ...

Plan/Design ...

Implement ...

Review/Evaluate ...

Managing self/own work

Develop self/prof'n

Working with people

Ethics and judgement

Concepts and principles

Field-specific areas
- cyclic structure

Generic professional
areas

Principles underlying
the whole area of work

The model

Investigate/Assess ...

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Concepts and principles

1. Assessment of material heritage

Understand the significance and context of the heritage to be assessed, along with any implications for potential conservation measures

- *factors for consideration include how the heritage is used or displayed; the design and environmental context of the heritage; any personal, cultural, historic, spiritual, symbolic or financial significance; and ownership of and responsibility for the heritage*
- *you may need to undertake both visual / material and historic / archival research*

Assess the physical nature and condition of the heritage

- *the methods used for assessment must not threaten the condition or integrity of the heritage to any significant extent*
- *you must refer to other competent sources where analysis lies outside of your area of personal competence or requires specialist resources*
- *you must demonstrate a good understanding of the material properties and typical degradation patterns of heritage in the area that you work*

Assess the impact of the environment and potential changes on the heritage

- *this needs to be applied as appropriate to the context of your work: e.g. it may involve asking the owner of an object about its current and proposed environment and use, it could involve carrying out a detailed assessment of a collection or site, or assessing the impact of development proposals or other potential changes on a site or structure*
- *you must refer to other competent sources where analysis lies outside of your area of personal competence or requires specialist resources*

Assess the implications of taking no further action

- *this will include implications for the heritage under consideration and, as relevant to the situation, any risks to other objects or structures, the environment or surroundings, and to health and safety*

Report the findings of the assessment

- *depending on the context, findings may involve verbal, written, software-based and graphic representations*
- *the coverage and detail of the report or records need to be appropriate to the context of the assessment*

The model

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Plan/Design ...

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Working with people

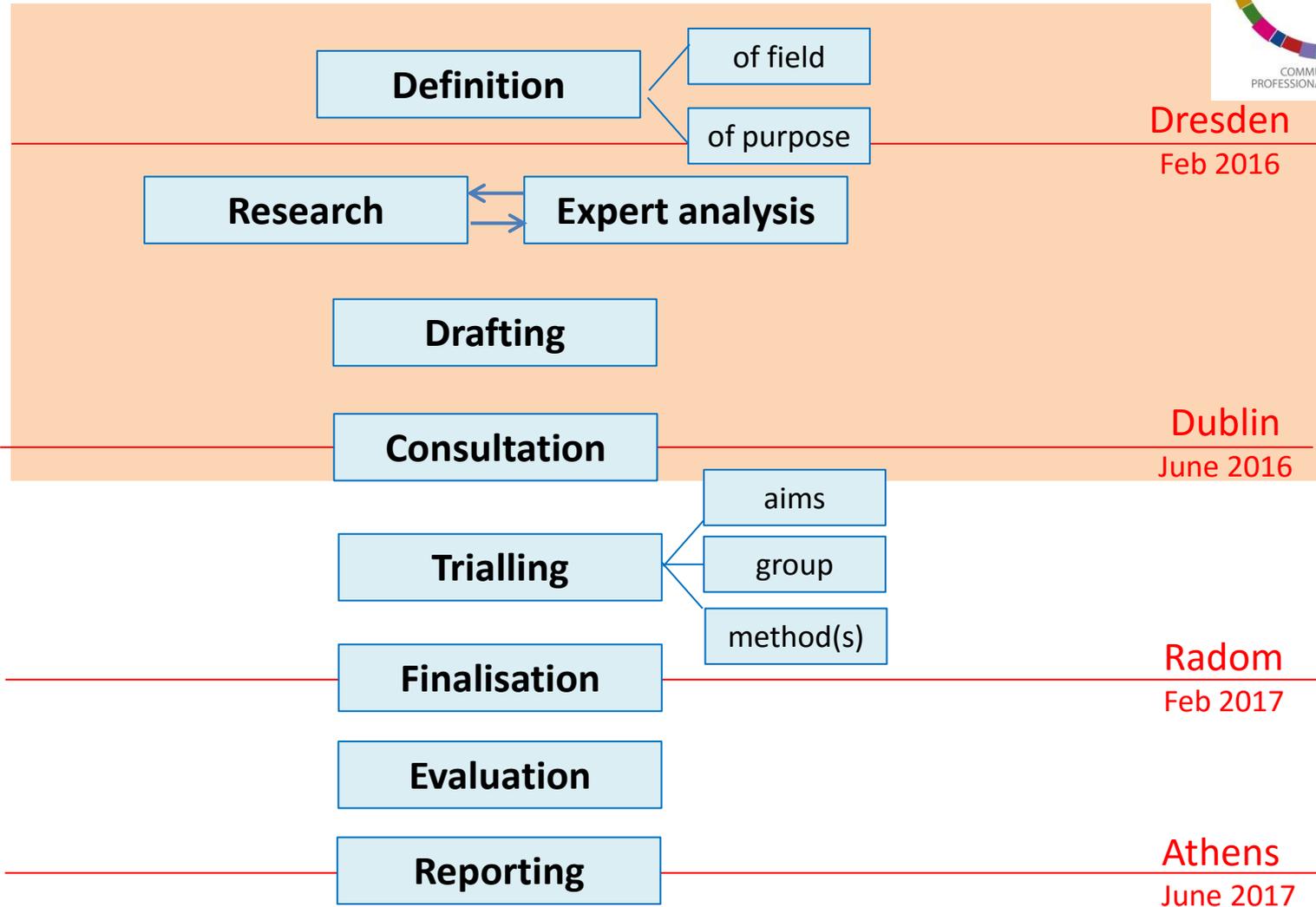
Ethics and judgement

Concepts and principles

Professional judgement and ethics

- understand the principles of conservation and demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the specific area(s) of your practice
- be conversant with national and international principles, philosophies and guidelines relevant to your practice
- understand the wider contexts in which conservation is carried out, the implications of context for practice, and the implications of conservation measures for the context
- use an adequate level of critical thinking, analysis and synthesis in approaching conservation problems and developing appropriate solutions
- appreciate and be prepared to consider alternative, valid methods and approaches that are relevant to your practice
- understand the ethical basis of the profession and the responsibilities of the conservation professional to cultural heritage and to wider society
- understand and observe your professional body's code of ethics and practice
- observe legal requirements and obligations, including those relating to health and safety, employment and contract law, and international agreements
- take responsibility for the care of the material heritage within your influence
- act responsibly and ethically in dealings with the public, employers, clients and colleagues
- act with awareness of and respect for the cultural, historic and spiritual context of objects and structures
- be able to handle value-conflicts and ethical dilemmas in a manner which maintains the interests of cultural heritage
- understand the limits of your own understanding and abilities, and practise within them.

Progress





Progress

Cyclic structure adopted in all five fields, some adaptation e.g. 3, 5 or 7 stages to cycle

Concepts and principles section generally not used

Drafting a universal, 'core capability' framework is harder than it looks!

Universal model may be too general for some applications.

From functions to standards

(second-level headings - from social entrepreneurship)

Plan the resourcing and development of the enterprise

- Develop a business plan for the enterprise
- Develop a human resources policy and strategy for the enterprise
- Develop a communication plan for the enterprise
- Develop a quality monitoring system
- (...and what else?)

Plan the resourcing and development of the enterprise

- Develop plans, policies and strategies to ensure the effective and sustainable operation of the enterprise
- Ensure that policies, plans and strategies contribute to the organisation's purpose and are congruent with its ethos

A spectrum of professional capacity

Bounded-occupation

Occupational orientation – perform a defined role

Functional competence for the role

Confidence in the ability to perform the role as presently defined

Competence

'Model A' practice: work within a system; technical-rational, solutions to problems

Centre-outwards

Professional orientation - act effectively across a profession or field

Core capability associated with the profession

Confidence in the ability to act effectively in the profession now and in the future

Capability-informed

'Model B' practice: work on a system; creative-interpretive, developing ways forward

Transdisciplinary

Transprofessional orientation – act effectively and with professionalism

General capability applied in a context defined by the practitioner

Confidence in the ability to work effectively at a given level

Capability